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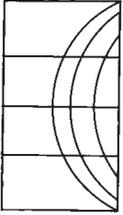
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What is This?

Vern Baxter and Steve Kroll-Smith

Normalizing the Workplace Nap: Blurring the Boundaries between Public and Private Space and Time

Introduction

Sociologists seldom examine sleep. In tribute to Parsons' inclusiveness, he does mention dormancy in his 1951 opus, *The Social System.* Sleep, for Parsons, is functional for the equilibration of social life (Parsons, 1951: 396). Twenty years later, Barry Schwartz picked up this functional theme, added a dash of social psychology and hailed sleep as the body's most 'effective periodic remission' activity, though not without some risk to the individual who 'taking leave of the world, relinquishes his control of it and himself' (Schwartz, 1970: 495). Zerubavel links the biology of sleep to the sociology of time, noting that while sleep might qualify as a 'biotemporal' pattern, or a rhythm of nature, it is nevertheless intricately intertwined with what he calls 'sociotemporal' patterns (Zerubavel, 1981: 12). Kroll-Smith (2000) examined the emergence of the 'drowsy person' as a risk to self, others and corporate profits. And Simon Williams (2002) makes a strong case for the multivocal relationship of sleep to the quotidian world of human affairs. A thread common to this literature is the close relationship of dormancy to social order and the implicit idea that changes in the seemingly picayune arrangements of sleep and sleeping both create and express broader changes in the boundaries between bodies, self and society.

This article adds to this small but evocative literature on the dormant self by examining the nap; more specifically, the recent emergence of the workplace nap. Our point of departure is Harvey's idea that 'Power relations are always implicated in spatial and temporal practices' (Harvey, 1989: 225). The nap at work is a small, lucent permutation in social life that reveals in its details alterations in the relationships between employees, employers and the

worksite. Once a taboo act engaged in by those who knew they were violating company rules, workplace napping is emerging, albeit unevenly, in American work culture as a tolerated, if not prescribed, behavior. The intention of this exploratory study is to examine existing evidence of this practice, add some evidence of our own, and develop the idea that normalizing the workplace nap is part of a softening, indeed blurring, of the once clear boundaries between public and private time and space. The firm boundaries that divide timed labor from the rest of life are giving way in some sectors to greater integration of work and private life, an integration that ultimately extends the public realm of work and social discipline. The jury is out on just how the workplace nap impacts employee control of time and space at work but it is clear that the nap is part of an intensification of work and an extension of the work day that is blurring modern boundaries between what is public and what is private space and time.

The modern construction of time is firmly tied to ideas of human effort and progress that accompanied the transition from task-based work performed by craftworkers in a putting-out system to time-based work performed by factory operatives paced by the clock and/or the machine (Thompson, 1967). Efficiency and productivity in the modern factory demand that time be measured in units and prudently managed. Wasted time is 'lost' time spent on 'dispensable' or 'unnecessary' activities. Zerubavel refers to the first as 'net time' and the second as 'gross time' (Zerubavel, 1981: 67; see also pp. 52, 56). A key property of modernity is a rigid boundary between the public world of work (net time) and the private world of puttering, playing, sleeping and other human diversions (gross time).

The epitome of public time is Frederick Taylor's scientific management of work in a bureaucratic organization where disciplined bodies move in synchronized repetitive patterns at fixed time intervals in standard temporal locations established and monitored by managers (Moore, 1963; Taylor, 1911; Zerubavel, 1981). Following Thompson's (1967) observations on the English working class, we might infer the epitome of private time as an evening at the pub followed by a night's sleep. Signaled in Taylor's and Thompson's imagery is the rigid segmentation of work from the rest of life, which makes *place* essential to the study of time. Public time is work time, its place is a manufacturing plant or an office. Private time, on the other hand, is dispensable time; its place is defined largely by what it is not: it is *not* work space. Sleep happens during private time, typically in the most private space, one's bedroom.

Public and private space–time are poles on a continuum of relationships between person and role that help classify the experience of spatial-temporal location (Bell and Tuckman, 2002; Nippert-Eng, 1996: 38). There have always been people who do not live a highly segmented temporal existence. Zerubavel (1981: 148) argued over two decades ago that occupants of high

status professional occupations (e.g. doctor, engineer, priest) live a more integrated life that commands trust and creates both temporal flexibility and continuous accessibility for work. For example, the doctor is free to go home after hospital rounds but she or he may be called back on short notice to treat a sick patient. This article suggests that normalizing the workplace nap is part of a larger and contradictory shift in the boundaries between public and private space–time that extends employee accessibility and capacity for work in a variety of occupations and sectors.

Recent debates about the spatial/temporal effects of global competition and the revolution in micro-chip technology on the social organization of production and reproduction focus on the meanings and implications of flexibility. The various meanings of flexibility include a blurred boundary between home and work, changes in the organization of work (internal flexibility), and new relations between firms (external flexibility). Boundaries between firms shift as information technologies allow more rapid and precise coordination of economic activity across multiple locations. Networks of firms with flatter hierarchies are now likely to be flexibly linked by relational contracting and outsourcing arrangements (Benner, 2002: 16). Labor markets are more fluid as contracting and project-based employment supplants stable jobs with one company. Bouts of intense work followed by periodic unemployment characterize the careers of many contemporary workers and professionals (Benner, 2002).

Bell and Tuckman (2002) argue that annualized hours, the contractual promise that extra work performed one day is compensated by fewer hours worked another day, is an instance of internal flexibility that changes the temporal organization of work. Annualized hours desegregate public time at work from private time at home for lower status workers who are often 'on call' and are expected to be reachable by telephone or pager. The boundary between public and private time blurs along with the distinction between holidays, rest days, weekends, and work days (Bell and Tuckman, 2002: 121). The company gains flexibility to smooth cyclical demands for labor and reduce overtime costs that are typically paid when the company encroaches on the employees' private time.

Flexibility in the boundary between home and work refers to the ease of shifting the time and place where activities like work and sleep are performed (Ashforth et al., 2000). The integration of home and work is made easier by technologies like the cell phone, fax, pager, Internet and email that facilitate telecommuting and other forms of home-based work; and by programs like flex-time, daycare centers, and workplace naps that integrate work with activities formerly performed at home (for a review see Desrochers and Sargent, 2004). Information technologies condition a reunion of work and life that some argue will culminate only when the project eclipses the job as the dominant form of work organization (Benner, 2002; Lee and Liebenau,

2002). Lee and Liebenau (2002) argue that telecommuting, video conferencing and the communication power of home computers already create virtual work environments that allow for increased employee direction and control of work and relieve spatial constraints on where work is performed. People can be networked together in teams where trust of employees is high and surveillance is internalized by people who demand more control of their time, but not necessarily fewer hours of work. The virtual workplace is task and project driven and it demands accommodation to deadlines and time pressures that require people to multi-task and blend work with personal life (Lee and Liebenau, 2002: 133).

Arlie Hochschild (1997) counters that home–work boundaries are not transformed by technology alone, but also by employer demands for increased productivity and work hours, and by innovations like just in time inventory that require more accessible workers who are efficient at work and at home. Family-friendly programs like workplace childcare centers and flex-time legitimate increased employee accessibility and attachment to work required by a competitive workplace culture that demands more from employees. This suggests a link between the flexibility debate and shifts in the cultural frame that distinguishes the public world of work from the private worlds of home and sleep

Students of work debate the implications of flexibility in contemporary employment systems that reframe public and private time so trusted employees are better able to meet the exacting temporal and mental challenges of work in the new, post-Fordist economy. Among the questions begging attention is Wilbert Moore's (1963) well-known query. Moore asked does the convergence of increased leisure time and increased urgency at work result in the colonization of private leisure time by the public world of work in the post-Fordist era? E. P. Thompson (1967) asked another, more optimistic, sort of question: can the tensions at work compounded by increasing temporal demands be resolved by a generalized prosperity that warmly blurs the boundaries of work and private life? Arlie Hochschild (1997) is less sanguine, posing her question this way: isn't the integration of public and private time a mystified speed-up that creates debilitating time binds that subtract from the quality of human life?

The emergence of the workplace nap is an opportunity to examine an element of the flexibility debate that relates to changes in spatial-temporal boundaries. Preliminary evidence addresses how inclusion of a formerly private time–place behavior into public time at work extends employee trust and control over time at work. Another central concern is with how expert knowledge on sleep combines with workplace policies promoting the nap to legitimate a more flexible configuration of the workplace. In those work spaces where sleeping is allowed or promoted a key private-time act is converted to a public space–time behavior. This conversion both expresses

and creates an altered spatial-temporal organization of the workplace wherein employees acquire a new measure of jurisdiction over their time and bodies with an accompanying expectation: alert and perspicacious employees will likely avoid mistakes and increase production.

Method and Organization

Sleepiness, napping and their relationships to work and public life are not a mature social issue with a substantial literature. It is, rather, a nascent idea and practice, acquiring added value as a cultural and political phenomenon as new thinking about employee errors and performance originates in contemporary work environments. In spite of its emergent character, however, sufficient data can be found to inquire about the situated, real-time practices of the workplace nap, the various literatures defining and promoting it, and its theoretical implications for interpreting changes in the deployment of public and private time and space.

This article marshals data using two research strategies: key-informant interviews and documentary analysis. Eight informant interviews[1] and two follow-ups were conducted in all. Two interviews were conducted with the chief executive officers (CEOs) of the two largest consulting businesses in the US that focus on alertness management strategies. Six interviews were conducted with the CEOs or managers of various businesses that have implemented a napping policy at the workplace. Each interview lasted between one and one-and-a-half hours.

Each of these informants are particularly well placed to provide expertise on the emergence of the workplace nap and its relationships to time and productivity. Key informants work in the same fashion as consultants (Werner and Schoepfle, 1987), wise and knowledgeable people capable of elaborating, explaining and, at times, suggesting whole new lines of inquiry. Names of key informants were culled from newspapers, magazines and websites. These eight interviews cannot in any way be understood as representative of the range of expert thinking about workplace naps and napping policies. They are, however, voices of informed people who are devising and implementing plans and policies for sleeping at work. Moreover, their stories shed considerable light on the emergent justification for workplace napping and two of the principal types of napping policies now in place: breaktime napping and worktime napping.

Two sources of documentary data complement the interviews. The first and more substantial is the cardinal reports and policy documents found in the US on the issue of employee fatigue, sleepiness and worksite sleeping. Included among them are the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) report on alertness, napping and circadian management;

policy reports from the National Commission on Sleep Disorders and the National Sleep Foundation; and a research report from Circadian Technologies Incorporated on the importance of breaktime naps. In addition to these private and public texts, we surveyed newspaper archives in the US and abroad for coverage of workplace napping, siestas and related practices. Key search engines (Google, Yahoo and Dogpile) were examined to identify websites dedicated to alertness management strategies and sleep disorders. Finally, scholarly sources were pursued on both the science of sleep and the fate of the siesta and its equivalent, the *xiuixi*, in China.

Two discussions about the use of time at work are presented to begin with. The first calls attention to the problem of fatigue and the introduction of work-breaks in the early modern era of muscle labor and the supervision of timed work. The second discussion examines the problem of drowsiness and productivity in the contemporary era of mental labor organized around flexible, project-based work schedules. Next, evidence documenting pivotal shifts in the cultural understanding of sleepiness is introduced. Sleepy people, we argue, are increasingly accused of making faulty judgments, reducing productivity. Nascent efforts to select and regulate the workplace nap as a flexible solution to daytime drowsiness are reviewed in some detail. The novel US initiative to nap at work is then compared with the marked decline of the midday siesta in places like China and Spain. A final section links the nap to larger changes in the definition and regulation of temporal efficiency at work and what that says about the relationship of flexible employment and change in the sociotemporal order.

From Fatigue to Sleepiness: Making the Cerebral Worker

The academic discipline of industrial psychology was born in the search for qualified employees with internalized work discipline (Rose, 1975). Early industrial psychologists like Hugo Munsterberg developed tests to assist business owners in their search for the best and most industrious employees, to find out 'whether a man was moral or honest and whether he was likely to go to sleep on the job' (Baritz, 1960: 49). By the turn of the 20th century, studies that timed and quantified the body's capacity to express energy claimed to have isolated the economies of force in the human nervous system (Rabinbach, 1992). Proper sleep and naps, it is safe to say, were not among those 'economies of force'.

If discussed at all, sleep was more often than not regarded as a necessary evil by many moralists and capitalists, who warned that 'wasted hours are wasted money, too much sleep parboils the flesh, and sleep is a felon that steals precious time' (quoted in Thompson, 1967: 88). Part of the moral vocabulary of the person, sleep fell outside the purview of scientific management. It

wasn't sleepiness per se that vexed scientific managers, it was fatigue. Fatigue was thought of as a state of physical exhaustion. Depleted bodies unable to meet the demands of timed, muscle-driven industrialism simply quit working (Baritz, 1960; Rabinbach, 1992). The convergence of managerial recognition of the problem of fatigue and overwork with employee demands for periodic breaks contributed to expansion of work-breaks to create quasi-private time for employees at work. Meanwhile, the workplace nap lurked in the catacombs of the factory as what de Certeau (1984) calls a clandestine form of rebellion against the discipline of work.

If fatigue was the primary problem of working bodies in the era of industrial labor, it is safe to say that drowsiness, defined as the absence of mental acuity, is the primary problem of working bodies in the era of flexible employment and mental labor (Kroll-Smith, 2000). Indeed, the drowsy, soporific body is frequently identified as a contributing cause of many contemporary social problems and misfortunes (Moore-Ede, 1993; Rosekind et al., 1995). If sleepiness was once thought of as simply a benign transition state, a prelude to sleep, it is now often described as a potential risk to self, others and the interests of business. In testimony before a Congressional Subcommittee on Health and the Environment, a Stanford University professor agrees and makes this startling claim:

> The grounding of the Exxon Valdez, the near meltdown at Three Mile Island, the Bhopal catastrophe, and the explosion of the space shuttle Challenger [were] all caused totally or in part by sleepy people. (Dement, 1998)

The National Commission on Sleep Disorders (1993) estimates that sleep deprivation costs US$150 billion a year in higher stress and reduced productivity. The National Sleep Foundation (NSF, 2000) reports the results of a Gallup poll where 51 percent of a random sample of adults admit that sleep deprivation negatively affects job performance. Fatigue, we are suggesting, focused on the problem of the tired body. Drowsiness, it appears, spotlights the tired mind. The drowsy person is someone who is not thinking clearly, is prone to bad judgment and is likely to employ faulty reasoning. This is a sobering problem in a highly automated, information-driven economy where a premium is placed on mental acuity.

Enter the Workplace Nap: Some Preliminary Data[2]

Sleep deprivation remains a badge of honor worn by hard-working entrepreneurs, professionals and working parents. The maxim, 'if you snooze you lose', is still widely applied. But there is evidence that this heroic orientation to labor without reprieve is changing. A research institute dedicated to the identification of trends listed workplace naps as among the top 10 new habits

of 1996 (Celente, 1996). In a review of 23 napping studies conducted in various countries since 1970, David Dinges (1989) estimates that an overall mean of 61 percent of respondents report taking at least one nap of 1.2 hours' average duration each week, while an overall mean of 30 percent of respondents report napping at least four times a week. Seventy percent of 1000 respondents to a non-systematic Internet survey conducted by Anthony and Anthony (1999) report that they sometimes nap at work. In a more systematic study, 16 percent of employees surveyed by the NSF report that their employers sanction napping at work, and one-third of the adults surveyed said they would nap at work if they could (NSF, 2000).

A new cultural frame is emerging, one that valorizes the workplace nap. While many employees still experience sleeping at work as a subversive act performed in a niche of invisibility, aside this more typical, covert act, is the increasingly visible, prescribed, workplace nap. The emergence of the workplace nap in the US cannot be separated from contemporary problems of alertness, drowsiness and performance that mark a shift from an economy driven by brute strength and time to an economy dependent upon information technology and extended performance of the subtle work of cognitive and mental acuity.

Sleep Research, Alertness Managers and Normalizing the Workplace Nap

A growing body of scholarly literature and a cottage industry of consultants now trumpet the benefits of integrating naps into comprehensive workplace health and safety programs that promise fewer accidents and a fatter bottom line. Proponents of the workplace nap cite growing evidence which supports the conclusion that napping is a normal part of the human sleep–wake cycle and that naps provide observable benefits for persons during prolonged, irregular and/or sustained work schedules (Dinges, 1992, 1995; Naitoh and Angus, 1989; Rosekind et al., 1995). Claudio Stampi (1992: 13) writes that a key to managing the modern employee is understanding 'what is the minimal sleep duration necessary to maintain an acceptable level of performance'. Some sleep scientists theorize that human beings are biphasic sleepers. Biphasic sleep is a much shorter sleep–wake cycle, much like a dog's, three or four hours of sleep followed by an active three to four hours of wide-awake activity, followed by a return to sleep, and so on (Broughton, 1975; Dinges, 1989, 1992). Signaled in this research is the outline of a novel, more flexible work schedule that assumes mistakes will subside and productivity increase if employees are permitted to stop, nap and rekindle mental acuity.

A seminal study of airline pilots conducted for NASA concludes that in-flight naps 'promote performance and alertness during subsequent critical

phases of flight' (Rosekind et al., 1994). Pilots in the study were divided into two groups, a 'rest' group and a 'no-rest' group. Pilots in the rest group were provided a 40-minute in-cabin nap opportunity during flight.

> The brief, planned, in-flight nap obtained by the Rest Group was associated with better subsequent performance and physiological alertness compared to the No-Rest Group. (Rosekind et al., 1995)

The authors advocate the inclusion of 'strategic napping' as part of an overall alertness-management program that can help maintain or improve perform-ance during operations. Soon after release of the study, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) convened an industry/government working group to investigate controlled rest policies in the airline industry (Rosekind et al., 1995). British Airways and most continental European carriers now allow pilots to nap during flights, while the FAA allows pilots to nap on inter-national flights but prohibits napping on domestic flights.

   A recent Canadian study of freight railway workers found that naps, in combination with other fatigue counter-measures, reduce drowsiness and drowsiness-induced micro-sleep incidents (Mardon, 1996). Several rail carriers subsequently experimented with controlled napping on the job. After exhaustive biomedical research demonstrated the benefits of napping, a Sleep Management System (SMS) was developed for the US Army by researchers at the Walter Reed Air Institute for Research (WRAIR, 1997). The SMS is a controlled effort to address the effects of sleep deprivation on cognitive and combat performance. Appropriately timed catnaps, a computer-regulated online sleep activity monitor, safe stimulants and sleep induction and reawakening drugs are all part of the effort to efficiently manage combat personnel alertness (WRAIR, 1997).

   Sleep scientists like Mark Rosekind (Alertness Solutions), Martin Moore-Ede (Circadian Technologies) and Bill and Camille Anthony (The Napping Company) took their research expertise and founded consulting firms. These firms advise clients about how to integrate naps into larger alertness management efforts designed to improve performance and occu-pational safety and health. The alertness manager is a mutation of Taylor's scientific manager with a novel message about how to properly use time at work.

   Alertness Solutions bills itself as a scientific consulting firm that trans-lates knowledge of sleep, circadian rhythms, alertness and performance into practical strategies that improve safety and productivity in a 24-hour society (Alertness Solutions, 2002). Circadian Technologies (CTI) is dedicated to 'develop human alertness technologies . . . for 24 hour transportation and industrial operations' that 'optimize the 24/7 workforce' (CTI, 2002; Mardon, 2000). According to one CTI staff member, the company promotes changes in workplace culture driven by sleep science: 'all of our work here

is very science driven behind research on alertness and the circadian spaces in the brain that control alertness' (Interview 2). The company markets the 'CTI Alertness Recovery Center', which includes rooms at the worksite for breaks, exercise and napping. A less technical and more popular workplace management firm, The Napping Company, started 'National Workforce Napping Day' in 2000 to draw attention to the benefits of the workplace nap (Interview 1). Companies that participated in the first napping day were subsequently deluged with requests for interviews from television and print media intrigued by a quirky trend.

Research on the workplace nap in tandem with the emergence of the alertness manager are creating a new way of thinking about sleeping at work. By demonstrating the relationship between workplace napping and mental agility in both controlled studies and workplace settings, a new meaning of the nap is constructed. No longer simply a cloak-and-dagger act that cheats the company of productive labor, now the nap at work is a rational strategy for increasing productivity and extending the capacity for work. Indeed, one consulting group refers to a doze on the job as a 'productivity nap' (Anthony and Anthony, 1999: 116).

Launching the Workplace Nap

The nap is almost always integrated into the normal workday to improve safety and performance, and to reinforce the work ethic of a committed workforce. Most company representatives interviewed spoke about how naps are most beneficial when tasks require extreme mental attention, especially during odd or extended work hours. A science-based movement to promote workplace napping is centered among lower status shift workers and those who perform time-sensitive jobs in the transportation sector. Flexibility in this setting is likely to mean allowing employees to nap during breaks and/or the introduction of strictly regulated naps whenever an employee feels drowsy. We refer to this as *breaktime napping*. Another style of flexibility is associated with napping policies in workplaces whose employees fit the post-Fordist ideal of the motivated, high status professional engaged in intense, project-driven mental labor. A wider range of employees in these organizations are trusted to nap for as long as necessary whenever they feel the need for sleep. We refer to this latter approach as *worktime napping*. As alertness management strategies normalize the nap, we watch it shift from a fugitive rebellion against the goal of production to a prescribed strategy invited by post-Fordist ideas about flexibility that valorize sleeping at work as a strategy to increase the capacity for productive labor.

Breaktime Napping: Workplace Naps among Shift Workers
The NASA-sponsored research on airline pilots has undoubtedly done the most to increase awareness of the unique physiological demands of unusual, extended, or changing work/rest schedules. Increased awareness has helped spread the workplace nap among shift workers employed by companies that operate 24 hours a day. Nearly half of the 550 firms contacted by CTI in a 2000 survey of human relations professionals either openly encourage or permit breaktime naps. Results indicate that 15.4 percent of companies surveyed either permit or openly encourage breaktime naps, 32.4 percent permit naps if they are taken discreetly, 20.7 percent forbid naps but do not discipline employees who nap at work, and 31.5 percent forbid naps and discipline employees caught napping on the job (Mardon, 2000).

Most discussions of napping in the manufacturing and transportation sectors cite the desirability of increased employee vigilance. Kent Sutherland, human resources manager at BASF, a recycled paper manufacturer in Tennessee, says this about allowing naps during scheduled breaks:

> . . . we let people nap because we have to be realistic – our workers need the rest. They work a grueling schedule, plus they rotate and put in a lot of overtime. (Mardon, 2000: 3)

Science and common sense often converge on the conclusion that long work hours or rotating shift work schedules wear people down, especially since they are also likely to work hard while at home. In this context, consideration of the whole person breaks down barriers between home and work, between private time and public time. Inserting a regulated nap into the acceptable uses of quasi-private work-breaks is viewed by many managers and workers alike as a sensible solution to the problem of excessive daytime sleepiness in a '24/7' society.

The Alertness Recovery Program at Nova Chemicals grew from concerns about the impact of mental sluggishness on safety and performance of shift workers. A senior technical advisor for occupational health at Nova said that instead of having shift workers fall asleep on the job, the company created a Controlled Alertness Recovery Program that includes an option to nap. The company sponsored research on ways to help employees remain alert on the night shift, and the results lent credibility to the introduction of controlled napping (Interview 5). Alertness consultants from Circadian Technologies helped Nova develop an alertness training package that was integrated into an existing employee wellness program that includes sleep disorder management at health centers located on site. Subsequent meetings with plant managers led to construction of 'alertness recovery rooms' at all Canadian, one US and one British plant, and soon official company policy was revised to allow napping by shift workers.

Controlled naps are now permitted for operating employees at ConRail,

Canadian National Railroad, Union Pacific and the Burlington Southern Santa Fe Railroad (Wilner, 2000). The expanded napping program at Union Pacific allows all operating personnel (e.g. conductors and engineers) to nap for up to 45 minutes when the train is stopped. Pilot programs launched in 1999 extended the policy to yard personnel and office staff (Interview 6). A director of alertness management at Union Pacific sounds an emerging theme about the flexible boundary between public and private time, between work and home: 'You can't separate your private life from your work life, it all flows together' (Holland, 2001).

Scientific evidence and successful pilot programs demonstrated to top Union Pacific managers the potential benefits of breaktime naps. But the director of alertness management also believes the napping policy was accepted by upper level management because 'it was probably seen as people were already doing it and we could probably put safe parameters around it so now we govern it' (Interview 6). As the workplace nap moves from a clandestine and private to a public-time behavior, management loses the power to punish workers who sleep on break and workers gain greater flexibility in the use of breaktime. But viewed from another vantage point, sleep management programs extend the disciplinary power of the corporate gaze into the personal world of dormancy. Once a traditional gross-time behavior, the workplace nap is increasingly tied to the net-time demand to reduce on-the-job accidents.

Worktime Napping: Workplace Naps and Mental Labor

The nap is an acceptable part of the work day in many organizations where the demand for lucid, creative thinking is likely to create 'brain fag' that compromises inventiveness and performance. A design manager at a furniture marketing warehouse addresses the problem of the 'fuzzy brain:'

> *Respondent:* Another idea was the problem Arnie talked about of the 'fuzzy brain.' He gets 'fuzzy brained' in the afternoon and a nap helps.
>
> *Interviewer:* Did others in this discussion agree with the 'fuzzy brain' problem?
>
> *Respondent:* Yea. Some afternoons we all walk around like zombies. (Interview 4)

Importantly, the more a company is organized around projects that require creative brain work, the more likely it is to allow napping during work hours and not simply during scheduled breaks.

Not surprisingly, workplace napping is an increasingly common practice among professionals in the computer industry who work long hours to meet project deadlines (Mardon, 1998). Informant interviews were conducted with managers at architectural, computer software and consulting firms and furniture design companies who believe workplace naps promote trust, relieve stress and increase mental acuity in an atmosphere where hard work and long

hours are the norm. Nearly all informants emphasize the relationship of naps with enhanced employee motivation and increased productivity in the demanding world of project deadlines. The associate vice-president of an architectural consulting firm conceived of allowing employees to nap at work after seeing a tired employee asleep at his desk:

> One day I went to the office and I saw one of our really productive people sitting at a desk snoring. I thought . . . we do lots of all night shreds [brainstorming sessions], and when you get on a project there is never enough time. He had been up very late for two or three nights and I thought, this is ridiculous. So we started out doing a napping room. (Interview 7)

Another informant at a contract furniture maker speaks about creation of a nap room as progressive management in a fast-paced, stressful and competitive business:

> The owners of the company were looking at how to improve the work experience. . . . And you know, the furniture dealership side of the business is a fairly high stress side of the industry, and they were looking to create something, giving back some way to the employees. The idea of creating, you know, fitting inside a space within the showroom where people could go and have some quiet time. (Interview 8)

The nap is often part of a larger management commitment to increase employee autonomy over how time is spent at work in exchange for the expectation that employees will work as long as it takes to get the job done. For example, the furniture company provides employees flexible work schedules and a child-friendly workplace:

> You know, it is about making flexible the hours you work, but also getting the understanding that you'll get your work done. So, you know, if you do take an hour in the wellness room, if there's a deadline you'll stay a little later and get your work done, or you know, make up that time at some point during the week. But again, it's not monitored, it's absolutely on a trust basis. (Interview 8)

While flexibility and trust are important, so is the bottom line. After banner years in 1999 and 2000, the company was forced to downsize in 2001. Remaining employees work under greater uncertainty and time pressure, and the nap option is considered important by many to sustain alertness, morale and performance.

The owner of a metal fabrication company told us that he 'manages from the heart'. To back it up he opened company books and created a profit-sharing plan to build ownership and stake-holding among employees, and 'legalized a laid back laissez-faire attitude' that includes permission to nap at work (Interview 3). A nap room was built as part of a larger wellness center that includes a dog kennel, work-out room and daycare center arrayed around a central lobby. The idea is to treat employees like adults, which builds trust, ownership and a self-policing culture that translates into hard work and profit for everyone involved.

Regulating the Workplace Nap

The workplace nap is moving, albeit in fits and starts, from its secret place in the catacombs of the workplace to a more open and tolerated, if not prescribed behavior. Not surprisingly, it is also becoming regulated. Several strategies are used to govern this once fugitive act: from strict supervisory control and sanctions against those who deviate from procedures; to expansive, trust-based regimes where employees internalize napping norms consistent with intense work schedules and transgressions are handled by peer pressure.

The napping policy at Nova Chemicals is strictly regulated but employees decide when to nap. The program grants employees 10 minutes to find and brief a replacement and prepare for the nap, 20 minutes to nap and 15 minutes after the nap as an alertness recovery period. The purpose of the alertness recovery period is 'to offer a strategy for improving alertness and reducing the risk of fatigue in a safe and controlled environment' (Interview 5). The program received 'a passionately positive reaction' from most shift workers and strong support from senior vice-presidents, and it eventually precipitated 'a huge paradigm shift because, not very long ago, people were being fired for sleeping at work' (Interview 5). The policy is widely credited with reduction of fatigue-related incidents and increases in morale. The result is a strictly regulated reform of a previously prohibited practice that is widely praised by employees.

Operating employees at Union Pacific Railroad also respond favorably to the napping policy because it legitimates a widely practiced behavior for which they could previously be fired. According to the director of alertness management,

> I found early on that it [napping policy] was beneficial from an employee relations perspective because it was something outside the box, something contrary to what the culture had been, and it was the employee that felt that if you'll go outside the box and do something that is contrary to the culture you must really be serious about trying to help us, to do something that for 150 years was a terminal offense and to now say you can do it with impunity, well that's brought a lot of trust that we intend to work for change here. (Interview 6)

The napping policy at Union Pacific is part of a larger worker wellness program that aims to adjust home–work boundaries by assisting railroad employees and family members with counseling and literature on making a restful, less stressful home life. Recalling Donzelot's (1979) idea of the 'tutelary complex', videos and brochures have been designed to educate families – to change their beliefs and practices – around the somatic inevitability of fatigue and sleepiness. Intended here is the refashioning of private or gross-time behaviors around the production demands of public or net-time labor.

More prevalent than the controlled napping programs at Nova Chemi-cals and Union Pacific is napping that occurs on existing work-breaks without the employer's knowledge, or where the employer looks the other way while employees nap. A furniture marketing company executive discusses how a 'don't ask, don't tell' napping policy works:

Interviewer: What would you do if you saw someone napping during work hours?

Respondent: My job would be to wake them up. I wouldn't report them though, not if they did it once or if they were sick or just tired from all the things that go on in life besides a job.

Interviewer: Would you wake someone up from a nap now that this policy is in place?

Respondent: Well it's not a formal policy. But no, I guess not. Unless someone was disturbing others or not getting the job done. . . . Our 'Don't ask, don't tell' policy, if you want to call it that, is about napping during work hours. If I want to cat nap for a few minutes before a meeting, for example, I can do it. I'm just not going to run around and announce it.

Interviewer: How long can you nap?

Respondent: No one talked about a time. But I think we all know that 20 maybe 30 minutes is the limit. We're all dedicated workaholics here. I don't think anyone would take advantage of this thing. (Interview 4)

Flexibility is created informally in this setting for both employers and employees, but employers still decide when to allow or prohibit naps.

Some companies include all employees in a napping policy regulated by internalized discipline and peer pressure. Naps at the metal fabrication company are part of 'managing from the heart', without the need for either management or labor union regulation:

Higher productivity and morale come from communication and the larger company policy of openness and trust. No labor union is needed, that separates people and gets in the way. With open books and profit sharing, unions are not necessary. (Interview 3)

When asked whether the flexible management style invites abuse, the owner said:

Some employees dog it here, but if they do they are out the door. The associate next to them tells them to leave if they are dogging it. They sort of police them-selves so you don't have to be the big bad guy. (Interview 3)

The napping policy is not often abused because 'At this company our policy is you can nap when you want, which is self-regulated by peer pressure' (Interview 3). The vice-president of another company that allows napping at any time for any employee notes:

I've never noticed any situation with someone taking advantage . . . if you are

> there for 30 minutes or an hour, you need to be there. If they feel that they need to stay an extra half an hour because they have something that needs to be done, that's up to them. But it's not mandated, it's not monitored at all, not at all. (Interview 7)

Another respondent comments on both accessing and monitoring the company nap room:

> Number one that it's there and it's accessible to everybody, and number two that it's not monitored. I think that, you know, we all feel very comfortable, and it's restful going there from time to time . . . people feel as, you know, the owners of the company caring a lot about their well being. (Interview 4)

These companies strike a flexible bargain with hard-working employees who have internalized a committed and disciplined approach to work. Employees are trusted to nap when they need sleep and are then expected to work until the job gets done, regardless of when or where the work is performed.

Each of the several management schemes for normalizing the nap at work move this once secretive act of mutiny against the demands of production to a routine, regulated aspect of the workplace. In officially recognizing the nap and managing it with a variety of strategies, the nap shifts from an archetypal private-time behavior into the realm of socially disciplined public time.

The Workplace Nap in Global Context: A Modest Test of Our Ideas

If the workplace nap is tied to shifting boundaries between public and private time and space in a flexible economy what is happening to the sociotemporal organization of work in cultures moving at various paces through Fordist and post-Fordist regimes? Accelerated industrial growth in China and various Mediterranean and Latin American countries challenges prevailing sociotemporal orders and provides a modest answer to this question and an equally modest test of our own assumptions. Consider first China.

The Status of Xiuixi in China
The nap has a long and contradictory history in China. Taoist cultural influence endorses napping as harmonious with nature, while Confucian traditions disdain the nap and encourage continuous effort to improve family and society (Li, 2002). The succession to power in Communist China of Deng Xioping in the late 1970s brought strong pressure to abandon the idea that working people have the right to rest and instead required pursuit of a more modern approach to production. A very public commitment to rapid industrial growth was accompanied by cultural criticism of the daytime nap as a sign of sloth and inertia. As part of a drive for more efficient use of time

and to accommodate foreign business, the Chinese State Council in 1985 ended the traditional three-hour midday closing of offices during summer and the two-and-a-half-hour midday closing in winter. According to Li Jixun, Minister of the Chinese Post Office,

> In the past, we saved everything except time. Now, time is money and efficiency is life. We should get rid of everything that hinders modernization, including the nap. (*Beijing Review*, 1985)

The Chinese have largely embraced a continuous, time-based approach to work consistent with the sociotemporal order in the modern, industrialized West.

External flexibility for many transnational corporations involves increased use of contract labor and piece-work payment systems, and the export of assembly line production of toys, shoes and apparel to the sweatshops of Guangdong Province in south China. Young women in these factories typically work split shifts that total 12–14 hours per day with very few days off and little time for breaks or leisure. The sociotemporal arrangement here is reminiscent of the early industrial West, when all a worker really had time for was work and sleep. Workers in Guangdong factories toil by the clock and daytime sleep is clearly viewed as lost production and as cause for termination. The paradox here is that the decline of the midday nap in China is considered part of the price of modernization while its emergence in the post-Fordist West is treated by many as an improvement in the quality of work life that, if managed correctly, also increases productivity (Li, 2002).

Transformation of the Siesta

The word *siesta* comes from the Spanish word for 'sixth' and refers to a traditional afternoon break taken six hours into the work day (usually 2–5 p.m.). Long associated with Mediterranean and Latin cultures, the midday break is a time for food, exercise and a nap. Calls for a more standardized transnational timetable to accompany NAFTA and the European Union (EU) confront siesta cultures with demands of the modern sociotemporal order. Hard data are scarce but a national survey conducted in 1999 reveals that only 24 percent of Spaniards still regularly take siestas, and that an increasing fraction of the population works continuously through the afternoon with only a one-hour break for lunch (Daley, 1999). According to Eduard Estivill, head of research at Barcelona's Dexeus Institute:

> Here in Catalonia, businesses are trying very hard to keep up with the rest of Europe and the timetables in other European countries. This, of course, means that the siesta is a serious casualty. (*Financial Times*, 1999)

A swirl of economic and cultural forces define the controversy in Spain about the future of the siesta. Important cleavages based on region, gender, economic sector and generation are revealed in journalistic and Internet

discourse on the siesta. The traditional midday siesta is defended by some against those who want to scrap it in favor of a standard European work day with no more than a one-hour break for lunch. Others want to redefine the siesta as a more public, role-centered workplace nap, modeled on the American 'power nap'. Rural and small town dwellers, and residents of the southern province of Castile are most likely to continue the tradition of the three-hour afternoon siesta while big-city dwellers and residents of the more industrial northeastern province of Catalonia are most likely to conform to the standard European work day (*Financial Times*, 1999).

The discrediting and redefinition of the siesta are emblematic of larger cultural struggles in contemporary Spain. Many young people and corporate executives work through the afternoon and call siesta takers slackers. A director of a multinational company in Madrid said about the siesta: 'It's viewed as a sign of weakness; in Madrid's professional environment, the siesta is for weekends only'; while Jose Ortiz, director of human resources for Banco Bilbao Vizcaya, adds, 'those who can take siestas do, but those who are really serious about working do not' (Boudreaux, 2000; Daley, 1999). In addition, more Spanish women now work outside the home so they are not as available to prepare the big midday meal that lies at the heart of the traditional siesta. Finally, growth of the suburbs increases commute time, which means that a long midday siesta contributes to an excessively long work day for suburban dwellers.

Fede Busquets recently founded a chain of 18 'siesta shops' throughout Spain, where clients sit in ergonomic easy chairs and listen to new age music while they take a midday nap (*Financial Times*, 1999). Shorter lunch breaks and longer commutes preclude a trip home to nap, so sleep-deprived Spaniards provide demand for these centers. Similar to the Chinese case, Spanish proponents of the workplace nap repeat arguments popularized in the US that short naps dispel anxiety and increase productivity, and that progressive companies allow it. A recent study released by the College of Psychologists in Andalusia celebrates napping, but only for 10–40 minutes at a time (*Financial Times*, 1999; Nash, 2001). The demands of economic modernization make the workplace nap a palatable alternative to the traditional midday siesta for people who are expected to increase the duration and intensity of work.

Discussion and Conclusion

This article proposes that the small, picayune act of sleeping at work provides insight into the changing boundary between public and private time and space. Once a tactical, jerry-rigged private rebellion against the discipline of work, the workplace nap is an increasingly normalized activity

that is integrated into the work role and the work day. Napping is tolerated or introduced at work to increase mental acuity and amplify efficiency in ever-demanding work environments. It also normalizes a formerly covert practice into the rule-governed structure of organizations. The nap and larger alertness management movement is designed to improve safety and performance and reinforce the work ethic in a '24/7' society where increased flexibility blurs the boundary between work and home, between work and sleep.

Normalizing the workplace nap begins with the burgeoning world of sleep research. The soporific employee, it would appear, is a common hazard and the 'restorative nap' is a flexible solution to the dangers of excessive drowsiness. The identification of sleepiness as a workplace problem and identification of the nap as an apparent remedy combine to alter the modern cultural distinction between work and rest, between private and public space–time arrangements. Regulated and disciplined, the workplace nap shifts from a clandestine expression of private-time behavior to an officially proscribed, if not scheduled, public-time behavior. Normalizing what was formerly a mini-act of rebellion appropriates this behavior into the public realm of work.

The extension of employee discipline and alertness management to the formerly private and secret realm of sleep is widespread, if uneven, and depends on factors like economic sector, occupational status, task requirements and sociocultural context that highlight the variable nature of flexibility. Task- or project-oriented work defined by information technology and professional expertise traditionally features flatter hierarchies, greater employee autonomy and temporal accessibility than traditional industrial work (Burns and Stalker, 1961; Zerubavel, 1981). In these settings, flexibility means more employees toil at home and for extended hours at the workplace, and they are trusted to nap at work or sleep late at home to recover alertness required to complete demanding projects. Internalized discipline and group norms, more than supervisory pressure and formal rules, regulate time in these settings. Flexibility is more formal and restrictive in industrial settings where shift work, strict time schedules and union contracts govern employment. Where workplace naps exist in these settings, their parameters are strictly regulated, but the result still expands employee discretion over breaks and may even extend those breaks. 'Don't ask, don't tell' policies retain formal prohibitions against sleeping at work while giving employers the flexibility 'to look the other way' while employees gain the option to sleep at work.

A cross-national perspective reinforces this preliminary analysis of the workplace nap. Changes in work/rest cycles are uneven across the globe and, as already mentioned, depend on variables like economic sector, stage of development and the sociocultural context of change. In the US, the blurred

distinction of public and private time follows a redescription of drowsiness as a workplace risk, the expansion of project-organized mental labor and research on the economic and health benefits of a short nap at work. In China and Spain (as in Italy and Mexico), the more Fordist the production process the less likely the traditional *xiuixi* or siesta will survive. Moreover, even in those production niches where cerebral labor dominates, traditional two- to three-hour private time periods in the middle of the day are being replaced by continuous work days and corporate sponsored 'power naps'. In China, Spain and elsewhere, encroachment of public, role-centered time into private siesta-time represents the pressure of modernization to conform the work day to clock time, separate the public world of work from private time at home, and transform traditional rest periods into regulated, if not supervised, behavior. Regardless of whether temporal flexibility expands or contracts, the common thread in all cases is increased time demands on employees in a global economy that operates '24/7'. Particular sociotemporal outcomes are contingent on processes of change that vary across cultures, economic sectors and the division of mental and manual labor.

It is premature to label the workplace nap another positive step on the road toward a post-Fordist utopia where boundaries between work and home blur and trusted, problem-solving workers can use time as they see fit as long as they get the job done. It is also premature to label the workplace nap a neo-Taylorist extension of class- and knowledge-based discipline to the most private of activities. Elements of both explanations and more time are required to make a full accounting of this evocative behavior. But one thing is reasonably clear from this preliminary analysis: the workplace nap highlights an increasingly ravenous and stressful work culture that encroaches on modern boundaries between work and home; a work culture capable of transforming private, non-productive acts like workplace naps into regulated, public time–space behaviors. This small change may be a harbinger of larger transformations in the modern sociotemporal order.

Notes

1   The eight interviews are as follows, and referred to by number where cited in the article:

    1.   Camille Anthony, vice-president, The Napping Company.
    2.   David Mitchell, staff associate, Circadian Technologies.
    3.   Craig Yarde, president of Yarde Metals.
    4.   Jill Gaston, design manager, Cascade Furniture Warehouse Marketing Office.

5. Wendy Joel, senior technical advisor for occupational health, Nova Chemicals.
6. Dennis Holland, director of alertness management, Union Pacific Railroad.
7. Karen Gould, associate vice-president, Evans Associates.
8. Nanci Scouler, vice-president, marketing, OP Contract Furniture.

2   Sleep researcher David Dinges defines the nap as 'physiological sleep of a duration less than or equal to half that of the typical major daily sleep episode of a person' (Dinges, 1995) His colleague and student of chronobiology, Claudio Stampi, writes of three types of naps: replacement, appetitive and prophylactic (Stampi, 1992: 12). A replacement nap might be taken to respond to drowsiness at work.

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