

**Linking “broad connections” with “specific transactions”:
An Embedded View of Work-Family Arrangements**

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Abstract

In this paper I argue that work-family arrangements in everyday life are connected to broader institutional contexts through the domain of social relations. I argue that the ways in which work and family activities and particular work-family strategies insert men and women into social hierarchies constructed through the state, labor and consumer markets, and gender forms a critical social context for understanding work-family strategies in everyday life. Other recent arguments for placing “specific transactions” between work and family in everyday life into broader contexts are primarily interested in how social and economic contexts erect barriers to the implementation of desired arrangements for combining work and family (Barnett 1998; Gross 2001). In contrast, I emphasize the role of social context – defined as an interinstitutional context of practical and discursive resources – in shaping individual preferences for, and organizational interests in, particular work-family strategies.