

# Chapter Eleven

## ▶▶ **HOUSEHOLDS, WORK AND FLEXIBILITY** **Survey Comparative Report**

### **Does family friendly policies influence the costs of being flexible?**

#### **The interference of paid work with family life in different social policy contexts**

[ Mattias Strandh and Mikeal Nordenmark, University of Umea, Sweden ]

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## INTRODUCTION

In most European societies gender equality is an important item on the political agenda. As a result, the extent to which men and women engage themselves in both paid and unpaid labor has increased slowly over the past few decades. This change is something that implies an increasing individual flexibility when it comes to shouldering multiple roles, i.e. one role as an employee and one as a household worker and parent. The increase in multiple social roles across Europe is however happening in very different social policy contexts, something that might mean that the experience of it differs across Europe. In this chapter we will use the HWF-survey to explore whether it is easier or harder to combine family life with paid work in a context that is characterized by extensive family friendly policies aimed at facilitating participation on the labor market, represented by Sweden, as compared to countries characterized by varying degrees such policies.

Most research on the implications of having multiple social and the experience of role conflicts has been conducted in a US context. However, in recent years a growing number of studies have analyzed the consequences of multiple roles in Europe too. Nonetheless, multiple roles and their impact on individuals still remain uncertain. According to some empirical evidence, individuals have more to win than to lose from being strongly engaged in both working and family life, thereby supporting the role expansion theory. On the other hand, some studies indicate that multiple social roles are mainly burdensome and stressful for the individual, thereby supporting the role

stress theory. In addition to studies analyzing the significance of these two theories, some studies have also explored whether it is easier or harder in certain social contexts than it is in others to combine paid work with family life.

What few studies have done is to look at variations in the levels of role conflicts between different social policy contexts. There is, however, good reason to believe that the variations in social policy between different countries affect the degree to which participation in paid labor interferes with family life. In some countries there has been a concerted effort, through what could be called 'family-friendly' policies, to facilitate the reconciliation of participation in paid labor with family life. Examples of such 'family-friendly' policies include the provision of affordable services, such as full-time day care, or parental rights, such as shortened workdays or paid sick leave when a child is ill. In other countries family policies have been markedly less interventionist, with less labor-market rights for parents, and childcare seen as the responsibility of the family or market. These differences in social policy context could be expected to influence the possibility of a successful combination of the roles as employee and household worker, not least for women. Although 'family-friendly' policies might be universal insofar as they are directed toward the household, or contain rights for both parents, the traditional household division of labor (where women carry the main responsibility for the unpaid housework) means that they are to a large extent directed toward facilitating female participation on the labor market.

## 1. MULTIPLE ROLES AND ROLE CONFLICTS IN VARYING SOCIAL CONTEXTS

Research into the degree to which social roles conflict with each other, and the types of situation in which this conflict occurs, has been conducted using varying samples, methods, and measures. A central question within the research field has been the impact on the individual of multiple social roles—one role as an employee and one as a household worker and parent. Is the combination of a strong engagement in paid work and a strong engagement in family life beneficial or detrimental to the individual? Do multiple social roles cause or prevent stress and mental illness? Are there higher risks for role conflicts in certain social contexts than in others? The following section gives a picture of how earlier research efforts have tried to answer these questions.

Research into the meaning of multiple social roles can be sorted according to two broad theories, namely the role stress theory and the role expansion theory. Research conclusions supporting the role stress theory maintain that multiple social roles are most commonly apprehended as a burden on the individual. Theories and empirical results supporting this perspective indicate that the combination of family and employment often creates more demands than one can handle. Consequently, there is a high risk of role conflicts, meaning that work in the home often conflicts with paid work outside the home. In the long term, this can bring about role overload, stress, and psychological illness (Bahr et al. 1983, Bolger et al. 1990, Cleary and Mechanic 1983, Doyle and Hind 1998, Glass and Fujimoto 1994, Hall 1992, Kinnunen and Mauno 1998, Lundberg et al. 1994, Moen and Yu 1998, Nordenmark 2002, Ozer 1995, Reifman et al. 1991, Scanzoni and Fox 1980, Scharlach 2001, Walters et al. 1998).

The role expansion theory, on the other hand, argues that multiple roles in general are beneficial for the individual. Research supporting this theory shows that a strong engagement in both family life and employment has a positive effect on health and well-being. One explanation is that the alternative resources provided by multiple roles

outweigh the possible stressful effects on well-being that a strong involvement in both working and family life can have. The assumption is that this situation generates social resources and makes it possible to find satisfaction and support in one life area when having trouble in the other. Another positive side is assumed to be that, by providing control over financial and family matters, having multiple social roles generates feelings of personal worth and control over one's own life situation (Barnett et al. 1992, Barnett and Hyde 2001, Pietromonaco et al. 1986, Sieber 1974, Thoits 1983, Verbrugge 1986).

However, it is of course not simply a question of whether multiple social roles are a resource or a burden for the individual. The answer may be both, and to a varying degree dependent on factors such as the level of involvement in work and family, gender, civil status, stage in life cycle, work environment, educational level, geographical location, welfare state structure, and so on. It is possible that having one role as an employee and one as a household worker and parent is beneficial up to a certain limit, but can become a burden when the level of engagement gets too high. For instance, the psychological benefits received from multiple roles have shown to be greatest when the workload, in the form of number of working hours (Aryee 1992, Hall 1992, Scharlach 2001) and responsibility for small and/or many children (Moen and Yu 1999, Ozer 1995, Scharlach 2001, White et al. 1986) is not too heavy. In this case we will have a curve linear relationship between well-being and the level of engagement in the working and the family life. It may also be the case that it is harder and more burdensome for individuals with a poor work environment to handle multiple roles. Studies have shown that it is more problematic to be strongly engaged in both working and family matters when the job is characterized by insecurity and poor relationships to supervisors (Hall 1992, Kinnunen and Mauno 1998, Moen and Yu 1999, Scharlach 2001).

A crucial variable here might be gender. Some results have shown that it is more problematic for wage-earning women with children to combine paid work with family life than it is for men in the same situation. In these studies, women with multiple roles report more role conflicts and psychosocial distress symptoms than men with multiple roles do (Bolger et al. 1990, Cleary and Mechanic 1983, Doyle and Hind 1998, Lundberg et al. 1994, Reifman et al. 1991). Also labor-market research into the relationship between psychosocial work environment and psychological distress shows that employed women in general have more physical and psychological symptoms than employed men, and that this fact is hardly explained by only referring to factors connected to the work environment. The lower levels of well-being among employed women is assumed, at least to some degree, to be caused by the heavy responsibility that women still have for household work and childcare (Karasek and Theorell 1990, Kilbom et al. 1999). However, researchers are far from united over whether significant gender differences exist or not. Some results show that conflicts and stress among employed fathers can also be traced back to the same extent to multiple roles (Glass and Fujimoto, 1994, Kinnunen and Mauno 1998, Moen and Yu 1998, Scharlach 2001).

It seems to be more beneficial for those who hold non-traditional gender-role attitudes to combine work and family roles. Those with an egalitarian gender-role ideology benefit more from having multiple social roles than those with a traditional gender ideology. Men who believe that childcare is a woman's job do not benefit from childcare, and women who prefer to be housewives do not benefit from employment (Hoffman

1989, Marshall and Barnett 1993). On the other hand, Greenstein (1995) found that there was a significant effect of working hours on marital disruption among women with an egalitarian gender ideology, but not among those with a traditional gender ideology. This result can be an indication that multiple roles, contrary to the results above, are more difficult to handle for women with liberal gender-role attitudes. There are also studies that have pointed out that couples who experience the least conflicts are those who divide labor traditionally (Bahr et al. 1983, Moen and Yu 1998, Scanzoni and Fox 1980).

One explanation for the results indicating that women with non-traditional gender attitudes find the multiple demands from employment and family life more stressful to handle than women with traditional gender attitudes is related to how an unequal distribution of labor is perceived by the individual. Women having one role as an employee and one as a parent are in general, independent of their gender ideology, more involved in household work than men in the same situation are. The assumption is that women with a traditional gender ideology will not perceive this situation as unfair, unequal, or problematic to the same extent that women with a more liberal gender ideology will do. The reason for this is that a traditional gender ideology is consistent with an unequal division of household labor, but a non-traditional gender ideology is not. The consequence of this is that women with a liberal gender ideology will react toward the inequality by expressing a higher degree of role conflicts and marital dissatisfaction than women holding a more traditional gender ideology will do (Greenstein 1995).

## 2. DIFFERENT FACES OF SOCIAL POLICY

The findings in national studies dealing with the importance of social context for the level of conflict between paid work and family life suggest that it might be possible to find similar differences

between countries. The factors found to affect work-family conflict might vary according to social policy context. The existence of such variations between countries, and their very real im-

pact on the individual level as well as on an aggregate level, is something that is widely accepted in the academic literature on welfare states. Over the last twenty years, a number of typologies have been developed that point out the main differences in ideology, functioning, and/or outcomes between welfare states (see, e.g., Anttonen and Sipilä 1996, Duncan 1996, Esping-Andersen 1990, Gallie and Paugham 2000, Lewis 1992, Pfau-Effinger 1996).

From the previous findings on the importance of social context, we can see two main ways in which social policy context could affect the level of work-family conflict. When it comes to cause and probable effect, the first way is relatively clear-cut. A social policy context with 'family-friendly' policies designed to ease the pressure from the labor market or the family should result in less strain than a social policy context that does not. A second possible way, where the predictable effect perhaps is not so clear given the somewhat previous contradictory findings, can be deduced from the found importance of gender ideology in the household. Feminist academics have pointed out that the social policy contexts are not gender neutral and are representations of, and are embedded in, systems of gender relations that can vary between countries (see, e.g., Duncan 1996, Lewis 1992, Pfau-Effinger 1996, Walby 1994). The social policy contexts thus also represent gender ideologies and can maintain/change systems of gender relations in a given society. As representations of gender ideology, the social policy contexts of course represent a macro-level phenomenon in relation to individuals. It is, however, quite possible that they could be related to the level of work-family conflict on an individual level in a similar way as micro-level gender ideology, not only insofar as they are formed by or form individual attitudes, but also through presenting normality in relation to gender roles and life-course choices. A social policy context characterized by a larger emphasis on egalitarianism and equality in relation to gender roles could in that case be expected to have a different effect on the level of work-

family conflict as compared to a social policy context based on more traditional gender relations.

In this study we will look at work-family conflict in five different national settings available in the HWF survey: Sweden, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. These national settings can be said to represent at least four distinctly different social policy contexts. Sweden here represents a welfare model that uses strong state intervention aimed at enhancing the individual's independence from the market and the family. In relation to the possibility to combine work and family, this has meant extensive use of 'family-friendly' policies, where the state has taken an interventionist and regulatory approach to the labor market and gender/family-related policies in order to facilitate the successful combination of work with family responsibilities. Programs include rights such as full-time paid parental leave for 480 days, paid leave when children are ill, a working-day reduction to six hours while the children are younger than eight years old, and the public provision of full-time day-care facilities for both pre-school and school age children (Boje and Strandh 2002, Esping-Andersen 1990). These policies form part of conscious measures directed toward providing conditions ripe for increased gender equality, and are very much aimed toward making it possible for married women and mothers to stay on the labor market, making social citizenship more gender neutral. This can be described as a push toward a household dual breadwinner system (Lewis 1992, Sommestad 2001).

In the Netherlands, social rights are to a large extent dependent upon social status, leading to the preservation of status differences. The welfare model in the Netherlands provides transfers rather than active intervention on the labor market or in services. This leaves the provision of social services to the family instead. There are thus relatively few interventionist programs directed toward enhancing the possibility to combine work and family. There are parental rights to six months' unpaid leave despite the inadequate pro-

vision of full-time childcare facilities outside the family (Jaeger 2002). These factors create disincentives for married women and mothers participating on the labor market, and are part of what could be labeled as a strong male breadwinner system. Together with the connection between labor-market participation and social rights, such a male breadwinner system will make the social citizenship into a predominately male citizenship. These gendered effects of the conservative welfare regime, however, have been somewhat mitigated by the rising availability of part-time work over the last 15 years. These short-hour jobs that entail the same employment protection and many of the same social rights as full-time jobs have principally been directed toward married women and mothers (Esping-Andersen 1990, Jaeger 2002, Lewis 1992, SCP 2001).

The United Kingdom represents a liberal type of welfare regime where market-led solutions are preferred to state intervention. Welfare-state activities are limited to a large extent to means-tested benefits and modest social insurance plans directed at dependent citizens, while at the same time stimulating private welfare schemes. With a largely deregulated labor market and little public provision of services, there is consequently little done by the government to facilitate the combination of work and family. Parental-leave regulations were introduced only in 1999 following the EU Directive on parental leave (96/34/EC), and were then limited to the directive's minimum requirements of 13 weeks' unpaid leave. Childcare is viewed as a private responsibility, and to be solved through market mechanisms, while part-time positions, though widely available, entail small earnings and poor conditions. Although there is a commitment to equal opportunity in the United Kingdom, the state thus does very little to facilitate the outcome, and the result could be labeled a strong male breadwinner model where women's incomes are secondary to men's (Cousins and Tang 2002, Esping-Andersen 1990, Lewis 1992).

Our final two countries, Hungary and the Czech Republic, are as transitional countries often neglected in studies of welfare systems and labor markets. One obvious reason for this is that they have been in transition and have thus not easily been categorized. On the other hand, the very transition in itself represents an experience that is very much real for a substantial part of Europe's population. The communist legacy of Hungary and the Czech Republic is, on the whole, a generous and interventionist social policy, which was based on the right (and to some extent duty) of full-time employment for both men and women. From the perspective of 'family-friendly' policies, these countries resemble to a large extent the situation in Sweden, with extensive labor-market rights and the provision of caring services available for parents. This legacy is still very strong, although there has been some pressure toward reforming these systems in connection with the transition process. First, the transition from communism meant that both countries experienced stark employment crises, with rapid rises in unemployment and a large-scale withdrawal from the labor market. Second, the expenses of previous systems were not sustainable. Third, a dramatic drop in real incomes led to a need for poverty alleviation. Against this backdrop there has been a series of reforms moving the welfare systems more in the direction of other EU countries. The legacy of the employment-centered communist regimes is, however, still present, and with this probably both the inflexibility of standard full-time working hours as well as the relatively unquestioned role of women in the labor force (Sik and Nagy 2002, Vecernic 2002, Wallace 2002a).

After having looked at the social policy contexts in the various countries, we can conclude that they should indeed provide very different institutional settings under which men and women try combining work and family. Returning to the previous discussion on the ways in which the social policy context could affect the level of work-family conflict, we can deduct two



contradictory hypotheses to be tested in the article. Previous findings in national studies of the effect of pressure from home and at work on the work-family conflict level suggest that a social policy context designed to alleviate this pressure should, all other things equal, result in reduced work-family conflict. The social policy context could also be seen as a representation of different systems of gender relations. A social policy context that tries to enhance the possibility for the combination of paid labor with family life would from this perspective present a more egalitarian gender ideology, where both men and women are presented with the combining of paid labor with family responsibilities as a normality. However, the effect of such a more egalitarian gender ideology, expressed through the social policy context, is not immediately clear. Previous national studies of micro-level gender ideologies have been contradictory and a more egalitarian gender ideology has in different studies been found to be both positive and negative in relation to the combination of paid labor with family life for women. With these contradictions in mind, we suggest

two different hypotheses on the relationship between the social policy context and the level of work-family conflict to be tested:

- A social policy context that tries to facilitate for both women and men the combination of employment and family life (represented in this study by Sweden, but also to some extent by Hungary and the Czech Republic) results in a lower level of work-family conflict as compared to a social policy context that does not (in this study represented by the Netherlands and the United Kingdom). This should be especially evident for women, given the traditional household division of labor.
- Women living in countries with a social policy system that tries to facilitate for men and women the combination of employment and family life (in this study represented by Sweden, but also to some extent by Hungary and the Czech Republic) experience a higher level of work-family conflict as compared to women living in a social policy context that does not (in this study represented by the Netherlands and the United Kingdom).

### 3. VARIABLES USED

In order to measure the central issue of the article, the level of conflict between participation in paid labor and family life, we use two measures provided in the HWF survey. Both these were in the form of statements to which respondents replied how often they felt this was the case:

- My work makes it difficult for me to do some of the household tasks that need to be done.
- My work makes it difficult for me to fulfill my responsibilities toward my family and other important persons in my life.

For each statement, the respondent placed her-/himself on a scale from 0 to 4, where 0 represented that the respondent never felt this way and 4 that the respondent always felt this way. These two variables are used separately in the article but are also combined. When the two main dependent

variables are used in combination, a short Likert scale is used where the two measures are simply added together. The result is a role conflict index going from 0 (answering 'Never' to both questions) for the lowest level of work-household conflict, to 8 (answering 'Always' to both statements) for the highest level of work-household conflict.

The central independent variable in the article is naturally the country in which the respondent lives and the institutional context that this represents. The article, however, uses a number of other variables as controls in order to equalize the variations in household situation and employment conditions faced in the various countries. These differences could otherwise very well be expected to affect the level of work-household tension. The way the household looks can be expected to influence the tension experienced by the



respondent. Differing household compositions can, for instance, mean varying housework demands on the respondent but also differing availability of other persons who can assume responsibility for the demands connected with managing the household. To control for this, the article uses information on the civil status, the labor-market status of any partner, and the presence of children in the household. In connection with the household situation, the age of the respondent is also used as a control. This age can be a proxy for life-cycle position, both connected to domestic and labor-market careers.

The working conditions that the respondent faces on the labor market could of course also be expected to be of great importance for the level of work-household conflict. Differing working conditions can mean differing predictability, time pressure, and responsibilities, all of which could vary the degree to which the job comes into con-

flict with household responsibilities. The article uses first the employment status as a control for working conditions, i.e., if the respondent is self-employed, full-time employed, part-time employed, or is doing casual work. As the demands and the responsibilities faced in the job can also be expected to be of importance for work-household tension, the article uses the respondent's income, the respondent's level of education measured through one-digit ISCED codes (International Standard Classification of Education, see UNESCO 1997) and the respondent's occupation measured through one-digit ISCO codes (International Standard Classification of Occupations, see ILO 1988) as proxies for demands and responsibilities faced in the job. In addition, three more direct measures of job pressure are used as controls: the actual weekly working hours (missing for the UK), other employment, and overtime.

#### 4. RESULTS

In the light of the presentation of the social policy contexts, as represented by different countries, one can conclude that the structural conditions for success in combining paid work with family life vary. Sweden, and to some extent Hungary and the Czech Republic, extensively provide 'family-friendly' policies in order to facilitate the successful combination of work with family responsibilities. The fact that these conditions seem to have been successful in affecting behavior, especially among Swedish women, is illustrated in Table 1.

As the results show, Sweden has the highest employment rate among women. Around 77 per cent of Swedish women between 18 and 64 years of age are engaged in some kind of paid labor, which is 11–23 per cent higher than the female employment rates for the other countries included in the study. Even though a large proportion of Swedish women are employed part-time, Table 1 shows that Sweden also has the highest proportion of full-time employed women—at nearly 47 per cent, which is considerably higher than for the

Netherlands and the UK. When studying the number of working hours among part-time employed, the results show that also part-time working women in Sweden are strongly involved in paid labor, at least in relation to the part-time employed in the other non-transition country for which working-hour data are available, namely the Netherlands. In Sweden, women employed part-time work on average almost eight hours more than their counterparts do in the Netherlands. Hungary and the Czech Republic, the two other countries providing 'family-friendly' policies, also appear to have greater gender equality on the labor market, as compared to the Netherlands and the UK. The proportion of women in employment is low in both these countries, but this is the result of the high overall proportion standing outside the labor market. As part-time employment is extremely uncommon in these countries, the employment pattern for men and women is very similar, with full-time employment the norm on the labor market for both sexes.

**Table 1. Proportion of the population aged 18-64 involved in different kinds of paid labor with mean hours worked, by gender.**

		None		Full-time	Self-employed		Part-time		Casual/fixed	
		%	%	Hours	%	Hours	%	Hours	%	Hours
Men	Sweden (n=650)	16.0	67.8	42.7	9.5	45.2	4.2	27.4	2.5	15.8
	Netherlands (n=459)	13.3	71.0	40.7	9.2	49.0	6.5	29.5	0.0	0.0
	UK (n=384)	26.8	56.5	–	12.0	–	3.6	–	1.0	–
	Czech Republic (n=768)	31.0	53.8	43.6	13.0	50.7	0.9	24.3	1.3	45.7
	Hungary (n=544)	37.7	47.8	47.0	10.1	39.6	2.2	39.2	2.2	19.5
Women	Sweden (n=637)	23.1	46.6	40.7	3.1	41.7	24.5	29.0	2.7	16.2
	Netherlands (n=548)	34.3	19.5	39.0	7.3	28.6	38.9	21.3	0.0	0.0
	UK (n=563)	39.3	30.9	–	3.9	–	24.0	–	2.0	–
	Czech Republic (n=785)	44.5	45.0	41.7	6.6	46.0	2.8	26.5	1.1	39.9
	Hungary (n=622)	46.3	44.9	42.6	4.5	43.5	3.2	32.0	1.1	20.3

Source: HWF Survey 2001 – Unified international data collection

It thus appears as if 'family-friendly' policies affect female labor-market participation in particular in a positive way. This could indicate that it is indeed easier to combine paid employment with family life in this kind of social policy context. To see if this is actually the case, Table 2 shows the experience of work-family conflict among employed women and men living in different national and institutional contexts. The extent to

which work conflicts with family life is measured by the two statements and the index, described in the section 'data and variables.' The percentages show the proportion of the respondents in paid labor answering 'Sometimes,' 'Often' or 'Always' on each of the two statements, with the mean values for each country on the role conflict index also shown.

**Table 2. Work- housework, work-family conflict, and role conflict index by country among respondents in paid labor.**

Country	Work-housework (%)			Work-family (%)			Role conflict index (Mean)		
	All ***	Women ***	Men ***	All ***	Women ***	Men	All ***	Women ***	Men *
Sweden	47	51	44	40	44	37	2.6	2.7	2.4
Netherlands	48	48	49	32	34	31	2.3	2.2	2.3
UK	46	43	50	32	31	33	2.2	2.1	2.3
Czech Republic	38	37	39	32	29	33	2.2	2.1	2.2
Hungary	36	40	32	27	26	28	2.0	2.0	1.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>2.3</b>
N							3,978	1,923	2,055

Note: Levels of significance: \*\*\*=0.001-level \*\*=0.01-level \*=0.05-level

Source: HWF Survey 2001 – Unified international data collection

**Table 3. OLS-regression. Work-family conflict index by country and variables connected to family and working conditions (unstandardized b-coefficients).**

		Women					Men		
		Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
<b>Constant</b>		2.743	2.197	1.239	0.269	2.401	1.661	1.278	0.454
<b>Country</b>	Sweden ref.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Netherlands	-0.555***	-0.654***	-0.233	-0.051	-0.091	-0.193	-0.222	-0.156
	UK	-0.627***	-0.664***	-0.208	-----	-0.123	-0.127	0.110	-----
	Czech Republic	-0.674***	-0.747***	-0.685***	-0.762***	-0.158	-0.179	-0.037	-0.066
	Hungary	-0.734***	-0.763***	-0.740***	-0.793***	-0.487**	-0.516***	-0.562**	-0.528**
<b>Family conditions</b>	Single (ref.)		0	0	0		0	0	0
	Partner not working		-0.059	0.039	0.166		0.297	-0.050	0.008
	Partner working		0.089	0.033	0.139		0.306*	-0.040	0.007
	Children		0.193	0.329**	0.299*		0.583***	0.660***	0.614***
<b>Age</b>	Age 51–65 (ref.)		0	0	0		0	0	0
	Age 26–50		0.605***	0.418**	0.413**		0.464***	0.300*	0.267
	Age 18–25		0.455*	0.431*	0.422*		0.251	0.141	0.223
<b>Income</b>			0.136*	0.076			0.135*	0.104	
<b>Education</b>				0.180***	0.133**			0.066	0.100*
<b>Occupational position</b>				-0.042	-0.039			0.069**	-0.050
<b>Working conditions</b>	Full-time work (ref.)			0	0			0	0
	Self-employed			0.238	0.424			0.044	-0.061
	Part-time work			-0.513***	-0.229			-0.451	-0.266
	Casual work			-1.332***	-0.968*			0.020	-0.109
	Working overtime			0.845***	0.682***			0.728***	0.654***
	Extra job			0.335*	0.017			0.224	0.020
	Working hours				0.032***				0.018***
<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>		0.019	0.035	0.146	0.161	0.006	0.048	0.112	0.118
<b>Note:</b>	Levels of significance: ***=0.001-level **=0.01-level *=0.05-level								
<b>Source:</b>	HWF Survey 2001 – Unified international data collection								

The somewhat surprising finding in Table 3, when studying total proportions in each country reporting role conflicts, is that Swedes seem to experience work conflicts with their family life more often than the other nationalities. The differences between work conflicting with housework are not so clear, but are clearly significant for work conflicting with family relations, and in the mean values on the role conflict index. For instance, 40 per cent of employed Swedes report work-family conflicts, compared to around 30 per cent for the other countries. The mean value for Swedes on the role conflict index is 0.3 points higher than the average score. Hungary, on the other hand, appears to have the lowest level of work-family conflict.

Looking at gender across the countries, it is interesting to note that there appear to be no significant gender differences, indicating that it is more problematic for women to balance work and family demands. Slightly more than 40 per cent report work-household work conflicts and slightly more than 30 per cent report work-family conflicts among both men and women. However, when looking at gender differences within each country, an interesting pattern appears. The results show that most of the differences between Sweden and the other countries are explained by the fact that Swedish women experience work-family conflicts to a higher degree than any other category in all five countries. This is especially clear concerning the statement about work-family

conflict, where the difference between Swedish women and other groups, of men or women, is 10 per cent or more. This high degree of role conflicts among Swedish women is also correspondingly shown by the mean values on the role conflict index. Women living in Sweden have an average score of 2.7, which is 0.4 points higher than the average score. On the other hand, the difference between men living in Sweden and those in other countries is considerably smaller, especially in relation to the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the Czech Republic.

That Swedish women stand out as having the highest level of work-family conflict could of course be a spurious effect. The next step is thus to control if national and gender differences concerning role conflicts can be explained by factors related to family and working conditions. This is done in Table 3, which analyses the relationships between the work-family conflict index, and the countries and the control variables. The analysis is made in four steps and for men and women respectively. In the first step (models 1 and 5), only the countries are entered into the regression, and the result in this step confirms the results presented in Table 2. The unstandardized b-coefficients indicate that women living in the Netherlands, the UK, the Czech Republic, and Hungary experience less role conflicts than Swedish women do. Among men, the only significant result is the difference between Sweden and Hungary, showing that Hungarian men experience a lower level of conflict between work and family life than Swedish men do.

In step two (models 2 and 6), where civil status, partners' labor-market situation, children, and age are controlled for, the relationship between countries and role conflicts is almost unchanged. This means that the experienced higher level of conflict between work and family life among Swedish women cannot be explained by differences related to family conditions. In this step we can see that a number of other relationships to work-family conflict appear. For men, being middle-aged, living with a partner who is

employed, and having children increase role conflicts as compared with being old, single, and without children. The effects of having a partner in employment and of having children are clearly related to higher pressure and demands from family life, resulting in an increased work-family conflict. The found effect of being middle-aged is also probably related to the higher pressure faced by this age group. Being middle-aged could here be thought to function as a proxy for the high demands faced during this life phase, both from the professional career and from the household. That this is the case is supported when looking at the women. Age is the only variable in the model for which there is a significant relationship with work-family conflict, and the effect of being middle-aged is actually stronger among women than among men.

In the last two steps of the analysis (models 3, 4, 7, and 8), we control for factors connected to working conditions. What we can see in models 3 and 7 is that the differences between the countries are barely affected for the men, but substantially affected for the women. The differences between Swedish women and women living in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom become insignificant when controlling for measures indicating qualifications and workload in the main job. This indicates that national differences in working conditions of women account for most of the differences regarding work-family conflicts between women in Sweden, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. Swedish women experience more work-family conflicts because they more often hold qualified jobs and work longer hours compared to women in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. This conclusion is strengthened further by the results in model 4. When expanding the analysis of the importance of working conditions, by introducing the number of working hours, the coefficient for Dutch women comes close to zero (number of working hours was not available for the United Kingdom). However, the lower levels of work-family conflict among Czech and Hungarian women do not disappear.

What this actually means is that work interferes with family life to the same extent for women in Sweden, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. The reason for the differences between women in these three countries can be accounted for by the fact that Swedish women are more integrated on the labor market and are thus in a position where work interferes more with family life. This also means that it is probable that in each of these three countries, work interferes with family life to a larger extent for women than for men, despite not being evident at first glance. That this is evident only in Sweden is the result of male and female work patterns being more similar in this country. In Hungary and in the Czech Republic, however, women genuinely appear to experience less work-family conflicts than in the three West European countries.

Looking at the effects of other variables when including working conditions in the regression,

we can see that children become significant among women and that a partner's labor-market status becomes insignificant among men. The effect of age is somewhat decreased for women and disappears as a significant effect for men. This indicates that being middle-aged was probably a proxy for higher work pressure faced among middle-aged men, while for women it was most likely a proxy for both higher work and family pressure faced during this life phase. The working conditions and variables meant to measure them, such as high income, occupational status, education, overtime, and having an extra job, increase the level of experienced work-family conflict, especially for women. The fact that the significance of these variables is substantially reduced when controlling for the number of working hours, which is done in models 4 and 8, suggests that the relationships between these variables and work-family conflict are affected by time pressure.

## 5. DISCUSSION

The aim of this study has been to explore the experience of role conflicts between work and family among women and men living in countries characterized by different types of social policy systems. Based on previous findings in national studies of work-family conflict, two somewhat contradictory hypotheses were suggested in this paper. The first hypothesis (A) suggested that women and men who are living in countries with a social policy context that tries to facilitate for both sexes a combination of employment and family life, in this study represented by Sweden and to some extent the Czech Republic and Hungary, experience a *lower* degree of role conflicts. In the second hypothesis (B), which focuses on women in particular, it was contradictorily suggested that women in these countries experience a *higher* degree of role conflicts.

The results are not altogether clear-cut in relation to the two hypotheses, but appear to contradict both. The finding that Swedish women experience a higher degree of work-family conflict

than do men and Dutch and British women would appear to support hypothesis B. The results do, however, show a different picture for women living in the Czech Republic and Hungary than for women in Sweden, countries that were previously characterized as having relatively extensive 'family-friendly' policies. The Czech and Hungarian women do not experience the same high degree of role conflict as the Swedish women. The initial difference between Sweden on the one hand, and the United Kingdom and the Netherlands on the other, conforming with hypothesis B, also disappears when controlling for the higher qualified jobs that Swedish women hold and, most importantly, the longer hours that they work. The significant differences between Swedish women and Czech and Hungarian women cannot be explained by factors related to family conditions, or by factors connected to working conditions. The differences do thus not appear to conform according to the hypothesized differences in social policy context. Instead, it ap-

pears as if the experienced interference of work with family life is lower for women (and for men in Hungary) in the two transition countries than for women in the three West European countries.

Since the explanations to these differences cannot be found in the extent of 'family-friendly' policies, they must therefore be sought elsewhere. The similarities in 'family-friendly' policies prompted us to believe that the Czech Republic and Hungary had a pattern of work-family conflict similar to that of Sweden. As was described above, especially Sweden, but also the Czech Republic and Hungary, have invested in an extensive family-related policy in order to facilitate the successful combination of work with family responsibilities. This investment has to a large extent gone hand in hand with expressed wishes of creating increased gender equality in Sweden, and in Hungary and the Czech Republic with claims during communism of already having achieved it. What is possible, however, is that these wishes or claims of an egalitarian gender ideology protruded by the state are not similarly reflected on a micro level in the three countries. Official state policy does not necessarily have to correspond to the citizens' norms and attitudes, something that might be especially true under conditions of non-democratic governance as experienced in Hungary and the Czech Republic. In the first two columns of Table 4, we look at micro-level gender ideology among women and men in the different countries. The first two columns show the medium score on a gender ideology index, based on data from the International Social Survey Program 1994 (see Nordenmark [2001] for a closer description of the data and the gender ideology index). The index is based on seven statements indicating gender-role attitudes. A higher score denotes a more egalitarian gender ideology.

What we can see by looking at these two columns in Table 4 is that men and especially women living in Sweden have the most gender-liberal attitudes of the countries included in this study. In the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, the scores are a little bit lower than in Sweden, both

for men and women, but the differences between these three West European countries are relatively small. However, the two transition countries stand out. Both men and women in the Czech Republic and particularly in Hungary have much more traditional gender-role attitudes than men and women in the three West European countries. This means that there appears to be a relatively clear separation between gender ideology as expressed through policies around female participation in the workforce and what the population actually views as the role of men and women on the labor market and in the household. The only country where the two appear to correspond is in Sweden. In both the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, men and women agree on a quite liberal and egalitarian gender ideology, while the social policy context does not support the realization of such an ideology. In Hungary and the Czech Republic, the opposite is true.

The relatively similar and non-traditional gender attitudes among the populations in the three Western European countries, together with the very traditional gender attitudes in the transition countries, suggests a possible explanation to the findings on work-family conflict in this paper. If the extent of 'family-friendly' policies does not affect the level of experienced work-family conflict among women, as suggested by the lack of differences between Sweden, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom, it is possible that we can instead find the explanation to the pattern in the interplay between men's and women's attitudes and the actual outcome in terms of household division of labor. In the columns following the ISSP gender ideology index in Table 4, the number of household tasks for which the HWF respondents are responsible is shown, split by family type and employment situation. What we can see here is that the differences between men and women overall are much larger than any differences between the countries. In cohabitational relationships, women seem to have clearly more responsibility for the housework. And this seems to be the case in all of the countries.

**Table 4. Mean on gender ideology index (ISSP 1994<sup>a</sup>) and mean number of housework tasks that the respondent is responsible for among different employment categories, split by household type and gender.**

	Gender ideology (ISSP 1994)		Mean number of housework tasks					
	Men	Women	Single		Cohabiting		Cohabiting with children	
			Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
<b>Sweden</b>	16.2	17.5						
Full-time			3.59	3.89	0.54	1.89	0.38	2.05
Part-time			2.23	2.94	----	2.72	----	2.84
Not working			2.78	3.54	0.59	2.24	----	2.33
<b>Netherlands</b>	15.4	16.7						
Full-time			2.72	3.07	0.21	2.00	0.39	2.11
Part-time			----	3.06	----	2.41	----	2.57
Not working			2.85	3.06	0.49	2.69	----	2.97
<b>UK</b>	15.5	16.5						
Full-time			2.33	3.06	0.40	2.41	0.47	2.98
Part-time			----	3.03	----	3.09	----	3.17
Not working			2.57	3.39	0.81	2.97	----	3.13
<b>Czech Republic</b>	12.1	12.8						
Full-time			0.48	2.36	0.33	3.32	0.17	3.48
Part-time			----	----	----	----	----	----
Not working			0.42	2.03	0.44	3.56	0.47	3.60
<b>Hungary</b>	9.3	9.3						
Full-time			2.02	3.40	0.42	3.65	0.29	3.62
Part-time			----	----	----	----	----	----
Not working			2.04	3.24	0.69	3.74	0.24	3.58

Note: Full-time employed also includes self-employed. Part-time employed also includes the casual laborers. N lower than 15 in cell means tasks missing. Singles could be living with parents.  
<sup>a</sup> See Nordenmark (2001) for a thorough description of the gender ideology index.

Source: HWF Survey 2001 – Unified international data collection

Although Swedish, Dutch, and British women are responsible for somewhat fewer household tasks than women in the Czech Republic and Hungary, they do a large part of the unpaid household labor, independent of their labor-market status. This can be interpreted as a gap between the *values* of women and men in the Western European countries and the *actual distribution* of labor. Women in paid labor in these countries, who hold relatively liberal gender attitudes, might perceive the uneven distribution of labor as unfair, unequal, and problematic. This gap can, however, not be found in the Czech and Hungarian case. The unequal division of house-

hold labor among Czechs and Hungarians is more in line with the gender ideology of the individuals (including the women). It is possible that the less accentuated gap between attitudes and the division of labor explains why women in these countries do not experience a higher degree of role conflicts. The reason for this is that a traditional gender ideology is consistent with an unequal division of household labor, but a non-traditional gender ideology is not.

If this is the case, an interesting conclusion can be made from the results in this paper. As was indicated in the paper, and also shown in other studies, the Nordic countries, which have been



characterized by the development of 'family-friendly' policies, have been very successful at increasing female employment. This development has been robust and there has been growth not only in the female employment rate on the labor market, but also in the continuity of the work they are doing and in the number of hours they work (see, e.g., Ellingsaeter 2000). However, this success story of female employment has not coincided with a successful reduction in work-family conflict that women in paid labor experience. This indicates that although the 'family-friendly' policies might create the possibilities and the impetus toward full labor-market participation among women, policies providing labor-market rights or caring services while parents work will not create gender equality. The road toward gender equality

regarding experienced work-family conflict is thus probably to be sought in the practices of the household rather than on the labor market. This would mean that the relatively egalitarian gender ideology among both men and women in the Western European countries must be matched by a fairer distribution of household responsibilities. An alternative route toward decreasing work-family conflict for women might be revealed by the findings on the Czech Republic and Hungary in this study. This would involve a reversal of the last 30 years of development of more egalitarian attitudes toward gender roles and responsibilities. Besides the fact that most people (both men and women) would consider such an approach to be utterly unfair and wrong, it would of course also be completely impossible.

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