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Work-life Balance/Imbalance

Individual, Organizational and Social Experiences

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Work-life Balance and the Gender Regime after the
Economic Transition[1]

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Work-life balance (WLB) is a key issue in our societies in which there is increasing pressure to be permanently available on demand and to work more intensively, and when due to technological change the borders between work and private life appear to be dissolving. However, the social, institutional and normative frames of a region have a huge impact on how people experience work and private life, where the borders between these spheres lie and how much control individuals have in managing these borders. Based on these arguments, this editorial to the special issue *Work-life balance/imbalance: individual, organisational and social experiences* in *Intersections. EEJSP* draws attention to the social institutions, frameworks and norms which have an effect on experience, practices and expectations about work-life balance. Concerning the time horizon, this editorial focuses on the change of regime as a reference point since socialist and post-socialist eras differ significantly, although there is still some continuity between them. The authors of this introduction offer an overview of the situation in CEE (Central and Eastern Europe) based mainly on examples of Visegrad countries.

The following section starts with a short overview of the economic and social consequences of the transformation in general. Next, we focus our attention on its effects on the labour market. This is followed by a discussion of gender, which is unavoidable when considering the issue of work-life balance. Subsequently, we connect these issues together by discussing how the socialist legacy appears in gender relations in the CEE region. We then briefly touch upon the initiatives of the European Union that are designed to influence gender equality models and work-life balance. After elaborating upon these social and economic frameworks for work-life balance practices in CEE countries, we briefly introduce the main topics that are addressed in the papers included in this special issue.

Peculiarities of CEE countries in connection with the transformation

One of the most important characteristics of the CEE region is that their forms of capitalism were not built up from the inside in a step-by-step process through social and institutional reforms, but emerged as a result of a sudden change in political systems – even if there were some antecedents in most of the countries affected. Countries coped with the difficulties that arose from this process in a diverse manner,

determined by their internal and external peculiarities (King and Szelényi, 2005)[2] and the different choices of their political elites (for further details, see Bohle and Greskovits, 2012; Bartha, 2015).

As for the CEE countries, King and Szelényi created the expression 'capitalism from without' to characterise their regional development (King and Szelényi, 2005: 206).[3] This conception refers to the special process of transformation whereby former state bureaucracy lost its power to enlightened technocrats (from within the communist party) and critical intellectuals (King, 2007: 322). In Poland this was accompanied by the power of the working class; however, in other countries this additional source of power was lacking (King, 2007). Nonetheless, these new elites were limited both in number and in power. Accordingly, multinational companies became the dominant 'class-formation power' (King and Szelényi, 2005: 213), serving to underpin the dominance of foreign capital and its power to determine new forms of economic cooperation. This process was further strengthened by early and rapid modernisation, in parallel with significant amounts of privatisation and support for industrial policy (Bohle and Greskovits, 2012).

After the political transformation, it became essential to establish the basic components of a capitalist economy; namely, free market competition and private ownership. This process involved an influx of varying amounts of foreign investment to CEE countries (Bohle and Greskovits, 2012). This significant exposure to foreign influence became a fundamental and common characteristic of the post-socialist economies, particularly those of the Visegrad group. This phenomenon can be traced not only through recognising the role of foreign capital as the primary source of investment, but also as the second most important source of credit. In addition, foreign capital (channelled through multinational companies) gained an important role in other segments of the economy. Multinationals became not just the biggest investors, but the leading companies in terms of employment and financial performance (Géring, 2015). However, the total share of employment of foreign-owned companies was highly variable (35 per cent in Hungary, 14 per cent in Poland and 15-20 per cent in Slovakia as of 2006), although it is clear that multinational companies substantially increased the employment rates of all post-socialist countries of the time (Eurofond, 2009: 4). The moderately well-qualified labour force of the countries, in combination with their reasonably highly developed technological status and level of modernisation (promoted by foreign company headquarters) created a comparative advantage for these economies.

However, we should not forget the role of the state. Although its size remained moderate, the state played a vital role in providing public goods, and even now

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[2] These include, for example, their geographical situation (e.g. proximity to the EU) and historical and cultural heritage (such as the rate of economic development, and the existence of private property in a planned economy) (King and Szelényi, 2005).

[3] In contrast to two other forms of capitalism classified as 'capitalism from above' (characterising Russian developments) and the Chinese model of 'capitalism from below' (King and Szelényi, 2005).

remains a significant employer through major state enterprises.[4] It should also be emphasised that the state plays a crucial role in supporting caring functions.

It is important to mention here that progress in these societies was only achieved alongside a major increase in social tension since it had strongly asymmetrical impacts: in comparatively advantaged industries the present wages, working conditions and job opportunities now significantly exceed the average which can be obtained in other areas. This is one of the major problems regarding the labour situation in the region: the considerable variability creates high level of tension (Greskovits and Bohle, 2007: 26-27).

The economic trajectory of transition countries has been uneven and strongly influenced by the economic crisis and the austerity experienced in the post-2008 years across Europe. Countries have been hit by the economic downturn in different ways, although we may note that it is particularly countries in the semi-periphery that suffered most from the recession (Fodor and Nagy, 2014). Both the recession and the period of austerity have had a gendered character. At the beginning of the crisis women enjoyed relatively protected status because of the gender segregation of the labour market, yet over time, and during periods of austerity, they lost this relative protection.

These phenomena signify the importance of the concept of gender regimes, which 'are seen as the key policy logics of welfare states in relation to gender' (Pascall and Lewis, 2004: 373). The idea of gender regimes sheds light on how policies for gender equality concerning employment, care work, income, time and voice – which are strongly interrelated – are framed and shaped by the state (Pascall and Lewis, 2004).

Labour markets in CEE countries

The above-described process of transformation following regime change has had ambiguous impacts on the labour market. Whereas the changes in the economic and political system brought in a basic freedom for members of society and shored up fundamental rights in terms of employment opportunities, access to full-time employment and job security dissolved rapidly. This restructured both employees' access to work and bargaining power in relation to employers, and at the same time increased the vulnerability of employees and their defencelessness against work regimes. Because of the shock of the transformation that was experienced in the early 1990s across the region, the level of employment of the working age population declined dramatically in all post-socialist countries.

After the full employment of the socialist regime, countries suffered from a deeply depressed labour market situation: the employment rate of the eight post-

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[4] These dual forms of dependency are connected in the conception of 'double dependency', especially in Hungary. The concept of 'double dependence' (Lengyel and Bank, 2014; Lengyel, 2016) draws attention to the fact that the two most influential actors in the economic sector are the state and foreign capital.

In describing this situation utilising the concepts of Greskovits and Bohle (2007), it can be argued that in these Central Eastern European countries the protection of both economy and society have been ensured, and there is a constant balancing act between the two spheres. Because of this dual form of protectionism, the authors call these democracies 'dual democracies'.

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socialist new member states (NMS) which accessed the European Union in 2004 remained below the average of the old member states (the employment rate for women aged 15-64 years in NMS was 52.6 per cent vs. 52.9 per cent for old member states, and for men 65.6 per cent vs. 72.0 per cent. By 2003 the figures were 50.2 per cent vs. 56.0 per cent in the case of women, and 61.6 per cent vs. 72.5 per cent for men.)[5] This means that the employment gap increased over the period investigated (European Commission, 2004: 10).

The households of post-socialist countries show considerable polarisation and may be categorised into two primary groups: households in which members work intensely, which may be termed 'work rich' households, and households whose members have been excluded from accessing legal and protected employment, or 'work poor' households (Bukodi, 2006). As the aforementioned author concluded 'a wife with an employed husband is more likely to be an active participant in the labour market than a woman whose husband is unemployed or otherwise inactive. This relationship is also valid vice versa, i.e. from the husband's point of view.' (Bukodi, 2006: 39-40).

The above-described processes occurred in parallel with the world-wide spread of a post-Fordist employment system (Rubery, 2011). This system attaches high value to those employees who are constantly available, flexible in terms of working hours, workplace and type of employment contract, and who are generally willing to work long hours. However, post-socialist workplaces typically remained inflexible, particularly disadvantaging employees with caring responsibilities (Medgyesi, 2001), especially those expected to engage in family-related care work (looking after children, the elderly or the sick).

Moreover, this new situation significantly reduced the ability of such employees to enforce their interests with reference to these responsibilities (Hobson and Fahlén, 2009). Even in those countries where flexible employment opportunities (for example, telecommuting) were relatively widely available, they played only a marginal role in the reconciliation of paid work and private life (Plomien, 2009). Consequently, working arrangements developed according to which a significant proportion of the workforce, particularly those with a low level of education, were marginalised and completely excluded from the formal labour market. At the same time, even those who managed to retain their place in the labour market experienced long, unsocial working hours and became less well protected than under the previous regime, very often taking on more than one job.

This trend is well documented by statistics which indicate that employees work many hours per week (typically full-time, and even overtime) and show the lack of availability of part-time employment in all the CEE countries, even for female employees, resulting in low fertility rates across the region. As discussed by researchers, the conditions are particularly striking when compared to those of Western European countries (Oláh and Fahlén, 2013). Despite the fact that there has been a generational turnover since the system change, labour market statistics continue to indicate that the segment of the population with only a basic level of education is being reproduced in post-socialist countries on an ongoing basis, and

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[5] In the latter comparison, data from Cyprus is also included.

both the opportunities for social mobility and their bargaining power of this group remain limited (Scharle, 2012). In the midst of the above-described economic and social environment, and considering the importance of reconciling work and private life, investigation of the interaction between these two spheres over the last few decades – and particularly the preservation of the private sphere – becomes more important than ever.

The relevance of gender

The changes delineated above have generally affected men and women differently. As far as transformative processes are concerned, developments in Western Europe demonstrate widespread change, and from the 1960s onwards an unmistakeable revolution in terms of gender (Goldscheider et al., 2015; England, 2010; Esping-Andersen, 2009). This gender revolution not only increased female labour market participation (and the acceptance of such), but also affected men's participation in the family. Despite these changes, it is important to note that the household division of labour in general, and caring responsibilities in particular, remain gendered. The phenomenon of an ageing society will further increase the importance of this issue and significantly explain gender-specific variability in work-life balance in the future (Bartha et al., 2014).

These considerations are also reflected in the focus of WLB research itself. McDonald and Jeanes (2012) highlight that, before the 1990s, WLB academic literature mainly focused on the concerns of employed women. However, the authors emphasise that balance for women cannot be achieved without taking into account the position of men and fathers (McDonald and Jeanes, 2012: 1) since the decisions men make about their involvement in paid and care work are the unspoken flipside of women's choices (Stephenson, 2010: 237). In a similar fashion, numerous scholars emphasise that the gender revolution will only be successful if it also includes men (England, 2010). As Esping-Andersen (2009) puts it, a new equilibrium can only be achieved with the feminisation of male life-courses and with the widespread acceptance of a model of caring fatherhood. However, this new equilibrium involves raising the importance of the issue of equality and should also allow for the higher-level integration of work and life, which in turn will increase fertility rates and the stability of families (Goldscheider et al., 2015).[6]

It should also be mentioned that the tendency for men to have less stable relationships with their children is strengthening, since they are increasingly less likely,

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[6] It should be mentioned that new models of fatherhood are also crucial as far as children's well-being and development are concerned. In their review, Rohner and Veniziano (2001) argue that psychology and child development studies initially focused on mothers because their relationship with children seemed more important than the fathers'. Nevertheless, evidence shows that when fathers are both supportive partners and caring fathers, mothers are also better parents. Consequently, children benefit greatly if they have not only one but two parents with whom they have a loving relationship (Rohner and Veniziano, 2001).

as biological fathers, to live in the same household as their children.[7] Nevertheless, it is also important to highlight that the strength of the relationship between fathers and their children is greatly affected by the nature and existence of the institutions in a given country. These not only affect the financial background of a family and its access to child-care facilities (Oláh et al., 2002), but also legitimise some fatherhood practices, ideologies and identities, while marginalising others (Hobson and Morgan, 2002: 14).

Even the Western European models demonstrate considerable diversity in terms of which type of family model can be used to characterise them. While there is a wide range of different typologies and classifications, the most important difference is captured in the dichotomy of the *male-breadwinner* and *worker carer* models coined by Oláh and colleagues (2002). The male breadwinner model reinforces gender inequality through public polices which incentivise women to stay home and provide them with little job security when they attempt to return to work. In contrast, worker carer models support gender equality since the custodial parent is at the centre of family support systems and parental leave is coupled with job guarantees (Oláh et al., 2002: 26).

Apart from the effect of public policy incentives, the transformation of social norms is also an important driver of changes. Changes in traditional gender roles mean that female participation in the labour market is now not only a possibility, but increasingly appears to be a societal expectation (Goldscheider et al., 2015). Nevertheless, other voices highlight that even if the male breadwinner model was never widespread – but instead tied to specific historical eras and even then to specific socio-economic statuses – it is by no means dead. While it has been weakened considerably, directly or indirectly, it still affects thinking about the family and gender relations (Hobson and Morgan, 2002: 15).

The processes delineated above increasingly often touch upon issues such as how different family policies and the given welfare state/regime shape the way family caring tasks are accomplished in general, and what specific ideal types exist in terms of family care systems in particular (i.e. varieties of familialism) (Leitner, 2003). In relation to familialism, Leitner raises the question (in connection with Esping-Andersen's work) to what extent public policies treat families as units that accomplish caring tasks. The author criticises Esping-Andersen's concepts of familialistic and de-familializing welfare regimes and instead of these concepts defines 'policies which explicitly support the family in its caring function as an indicator for familialism' (Leitner, 2003: 354). Concerning defamilialism, the question raised by the author is to what extent access to public or private services in welfare regimes can relieve families of the burden of caring tasks and thereby weaken dependency on family ties.[8] (It

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[7] As Oláh and colleagues put it, 'parenthood has become a much less central and stable element in men's lives, not only compared with the past, but particularly as compared with its role in the lives of women' (Oláh et al., 2002: 25).

[8] The matrix of familialism/defamilialism demarcates four ideal types: explicit familialism (strong familialism or weak defamilialism); optional familialism (strong familialist care policies, weak defamiliasm: only for those who have access to child-care facilities); implicit familialism (neither familialism nor defamilialism is strong, yet since there are no alternatives to family care, tasks are ultimately carried out by the family); and lastly, defamilialism (with a strong tendency towards defamilialism and a weak tendency towards familialism) (Leitner, 2003: 358).

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should here be mentioned that Leitner only examined Western European societies utilising these ideal types, and the experiences of CEE counties with de/familialism were developed a little later, as shortly described below.)

Familialistic policies have a strong gendered character, as it is mainly women who are responsible for carrying out caring duties. These policies may directly strengthen traditional attitudes towards gender, although in certain cases they can also 'ensure that care provision is shared on equal terms among male and female family members' (Leitner, 2003: 367), thus they can be de-gendered. The empirical analysis referred to explored both gendered (e.g. France, Germany, Italy) and de-gendered (Denmark, Sweden) variants of familialism in Western countries.

Re-familisation in CEE countries

The regime change created a somewhat different scenario for post-socialist countries in terms of gender equality which was fraught with ambiguity (LaFont, 2001; Křížková et al., 2010). The socialist emancipatory project's main characteristics were the high female employment rate, relatively easy access to childcare facilities maintained by the state or employers and the system of 'support' services aimed at females (Pascall and Kwak, 2005). The need for social policies to support employed women, especially mothers, arose from this lopsided emancipatory project. In the socialist era full female employment was the social norm, supplemented by the fact that household chores were almost totally carried out by women (LaFont, 2001; Pascall and Kwak, 2005). This means that emancipation occurred in way in which the participation of men in household tasks was not even considered. This dual burden became a permanent feature of everyday life, since women were required to meet both obligations: 'traditional motherhood and maternal responsibility were simultaneously idealised and sustained' (Pascall and Kwak, 2005: 17).

While in Western European societies gender relations developed according to the gender revolution discussed briefly above, in the post-socialist countries a conservative turn (a so-called backlash) occurred in response to the prescriptive form of emancipation that characterised the socialist era. Socialist emancipatory politics in general delegitimised the issue of equality later in time (LaFont, 2001). This backlash was expressed both in the dramatic drop in female employment rates discussed above and in the reinforcement of traditional social expectations (Křížková et al., 2010; Klenner and Hašková, 2010). Moreover, the situation can also be characterised by a decrease in state support for care in the CEE context.

This does not mean that this unequal situation automatically favoured men in general, and fathers in particular. For example, Hobson and colleagues (2011), when comparing Swedish and Hungarian fathers, emphasise that this conservative normative context provides little guidance or support for men who would like to engage with a different form of masculinity and fatherhood. The result is a situation of limited agency and a lack of feeling of entitlement of Hungarian working fathers, even if the legal and policy background for better supporting them does exist and may be utilised to exert pressure on employers (Hobson et al., 2011).

Regime change was accompanied by the partial disappearance of job opportunities and limitations on access to child-care facilities, especially for children

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under three. Data demonstrate that access to formal childcare for children under 3 is limited (i.e., below 20 per cent) in many post-socialist countries (Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Romania, Hungary and Bulgaria). None of the CEE countries except Slovenia reached the Barcelona target of providing at least 33 per cent of all children of up to three years of age with childcare by 2010 (European Commission, 2014: 6).

Moreover, social expectations were reinforced, emphasising different social roles for men and women. These processes gradually turned re-familisation into an accepted and crystallised norm in these countries (Saxonberg and Sirovátka, 2006). (This can be contrasted with the de-familisation process which occurred in Scandinavian countries accompanied by greater access for females to paid labour, better general access to welfare services and the more active role of fathers in child care.)

In a paradoxical fashion, this process of re-familisation reinforced the male breadwinner model and, in turn, strengthened the legitimacy of the notion that undervalued, household-related labour is carried out by women. Accordingly, for women, reconciling work and private life became an even more complicated task (Plomien, 2009). This is especially true of women with small children (Pascall and Kwak, 2005), who face the effect of a 'penalty for motherhood' in the labour market (Glass and Fodor, 2011) alongside their requirement to juggle work and private life obligations. This motherhood penalty is increased through the institution of the long period of parental leave which is typically taken by mothers (Fodor and Kispéter, 2014).

Numerous authors have argued that the culprit is not the social policies that affect women, but the competitive market which puts females at a disadvantage. Among other reasons, this is because they have caring responsibilities. Pascall and Kwak, following an analysis of countries which underwent regime change, expressed this situation as follows: 'At work, women's position has been weakened, but more through the new competitive context than through changes in social policy affecting them as women.' (Pascall and Kwak, 2005: 66).

At the same time, the institution of parental leave might be thought to have a balancing effect on the reconciliation of work and private life. However, since fathers are rarely able to (or actually do) take advantage of this leave, their ability to participate in family life remains limited (Plomien, 2009). Nevertheless, the role of fatherhood has become ambiguous and often contradictory in the CEE context.[9]

If parental leave is too short, it hinders parents from spending enough time with their children. If longer, parents may risk losing their jobs. At worst, faced with a lack of opportunities to reconcile work and private life, parents with small children may completely exit the labour market. The other side of the coin is when parental leave is too long and is only taken by mothers – as in the Czech Republic with its four, and in Hungary three years of maternity benefit – which often makes returning to the world of paid labour impossible. This is how inflexible, maternal responsibility-oriented

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[9] While having a loving and warm relationship with children is considered one of the most important tasks of fathers, providing material security for children is still highly ranked, showing the strength of the traditional, main breadwinner type of fatherhood identity (Spéder, 2011). This ambiguity might partly explain fathers' resistance to taking parental leave.

family policies implicitly hold back women from working and having children in CEE countries (Krizková et al., 2010; Plomien, 2009). The situation is exacerbated by the limited access to child-care facilities (Scharle, 2007).

According to several studies (Saxonberg and Sirovátka, 2006; Szikra and Szelewa, 2010; Klenner and Hasková, 2010; Křížková et al., 2010; Plomien, 2009) in all post-socialist countries except Slovenia familialism is dominant and can be identified in the poor availability and insufficient quality of childcare and care for the elderly. Long parental leave schemes, as mentioned previously, might also serve as a double-edge sword when it comes to the return of mothers to the labour market. These factors all contribute to the low fertility rates of the region. According to Szikra and Szelewa, the low level of willingness to have children can be explained by the dominance of familialism both in Hungary and in Poland (Szikra and Szelewa, 2010). It can thus be seen that, after the regime change, different forms of gender regimes became established although all countries seem to be strongly predisposed towards familialism, the policy support for which has significantly contributed to women's marginalisation in the labour market (Fodor and Kispéter, 2014).

However, in recent decades some changes have been witnessed, with considerable variation across the countries under investigation. The historical legacy in the Czech Republic and Slovakia supported traditional work-care regimes with long parental (maternal) leave, as opposed to the situation in East Germany, where public childcare remained a more important part of the welfare regime. These distinct models (interrupted vs. continuous dual-earner model) have been supported by attitudes towards gender roles as well (Klenner and Hašková, 2010). Hungary followed the model prevalent in the Czech Republic and Slovakia (Křížková et al., 2010). Moreover, changes in the micro sphere can also be identified: the younger generation of men seem to be more equality-oriented regarding their participation in household activities (European Commission, 2015b: 23).

The role of the European Union

As outlined above, a welfare regime based on post-Fordist principles tends to disadvantage employees who are responsible for bringing up children and for taking care of dependent family members. As Hobson and Fahlén (2009), among other scholars, have emphasised, two competing scenarios can be identified in the labour market. On the one hand, there are 'disembodied' workers who are unencumbered by care-related responsibilities, while on the other there are embodied workers who have to reconcile having and caring for children with employment. This is the reason for another type of movement which seeks to reconcile this situation in the countries of the EU: to establish a sustainable national framework for maintaining both private and working life, the EU is attempting to support the process with various initiatives, guidelines and policies.

As Walby stated, developed countries follow a path which leads to the emergence of a public gender regime. According to her typology, countries may be differentiated by the model they follow to create this public gender regime; either through a social democratic public service route (Nordic countries), a market-led public service route (US) or a regulatory route (EU countries) (Walby, 2004: 11).

Approaching the topic from either the direction of employment, population or gender equality policies, the basic dilemma remains the same: namely, how to meet simultaneously the targets of increasing the birth-rate and employment. The European Commission is attempting to facilitate these changes through the application of various strategies and guidelines.

These initiatives aim at the removal of discriminatory practices and the regulation of working time in order to facilitate the management of care-related responsibilities and facilitate social inclusion (Walby, 2004: 11). Especially in employment-related issues, the EU-policy initiatives typically go beyond simply regulation and refer to the importance of gender equality, thus contributing to the effective building of gender regimes across member states (Walby, 2004). We may argue that the emerging gender regimes become catalysts for an increase in employment, and later (more indirectly), address employment-related issues such as gender-based violence or care duties. EU directives about gender equality focused more intensely on the reconciliation of work and private life and caring responsibilities from the 1980s onward (Walby, 2004). Although there is a considerable theory-related framework for both gender equality and work-life balance, the applied concept of WLB relies mostly on a pragmatic approach whereby affordable quality childcare, paid leave for both parents and flexible working arrangements play a crucial role in releasing working people from their family-related burdens (EC, 2015a: 9).

Despite these initiatives, one can still recognize the tensions that manifest within individual families: the new rights for parents have emerged from an era of insecure and unstable employment conditions (Hobson and Fahlen, 2009: 215). Moreover, contradictory expectations concerning parenting and paid work characterize the situation of embodied workers. The above-mentioned European guidelines can be regarded as clearly innovative in terms of work-life balance and gender equality in post-socialist countries as such reconciliative policies are extended to women and men alike. However, as described in earlier publications, EU accession first involved the de jure harmonisation of legal legislation with EU directives (before accession), while later on the integration of policy initiatives (such as reconciliation policies) became dominant (Krizsán and Zentai, 2006; Křížková et al., 2010). In the field of gender equality these policy initiatives were typically designed to decrease the gender segregation of the labour market, to promote reconciliation between work and family spheres, and at the same time address the increasing prevalence of familialism, as discussed above in detail.[10] Experiences with the implementation of gender equality policies indicates the importance of national gender machinery and political will. CEE countries have not made an obvious effort to develop a permanent gender equality framework (Krizsán and Zentai, 2006).

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[10] The EU accession of transition countries explicitly contributed to the establishment of gender equality machinery and a policy framework to some extent as this process intensified the spread of policy approaches, if in some cases only temporarily, declaring and demonstrating the importance of gender equality in all areas of society and economy. Consequently, it maintained the very central issue of gender equality on the policy agenda (Křížková et al., 2010).

Work-life balance/imbalance: the topical issue for IEEJSP

Taking everything into account, these are the main economic and social forces and factors by which different organisational and individual work-life balance practices are framed in the CEE region. The articles in this special issue bring forward topical WLB issues that are deeply embedded in this environment.

In line with this, in the very first article Dóra Bari and Péter Róbert compare eight of the region's countries (Czech Republic, East Germany, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and Ukraine) in terms of perceived tensions in work-life balance and satisfaction with life. One of their assumptions – which proves to be verified by their data – is that satisfaction with work-life balance increases overall satisfaction with life. Furthermore, the authors pay special attention to examining the gender perspective and differences in satisfaction with life among the countries examined.

One instructive example of the application of the gender perspective is Iva Šmídová's analysis about the pervasive effect of gender regimes in Czech Maternity Hospitals. As the author points out, individual work-life balance choices are tightly constrained by the heavily gendered organisational operations of the hospitals. Furthermore, by defining the structural mechanisms which reproduce these regimes she touches upon the broader social mechanisms which have a role in this process of reproduction, such as professional and seniority issues.

Another component of the effects of organisational structure on individual WLB strategies is presented by Henriett Primecz and her colleagues who examine how Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) affect employees' work-life balance opportunities and experiences. The authors target so-called 'Employee Friendly Workplaces' in order to relate the characteristics of organisational employee-friendliness to work-life balance issues. Their analysis pays special attention to the transformative effect of ICT and provides a detailed account of individual coping strategies as they correspond to the opportunities and difficulties inherent in the flexibility of working time and space.

The issue of flexible working space is the main focus of the article by Jacek Gądecki and his colleagues who illustrate how the boundaries of work and home became blurred by the (technological) opportunity to work from home. The authors turn their attention to understanding the choices of individuals who are by definition most exposed to these difficulties (namely, teleworkers) by analysing what individual coping strategies can be identified among teleworkers in Poland and what differences can be traced back to diverse factors such as gender or caring responsibilities at home, etc.

As delineated above, the entire work-life balance theme is highly gender-influenced. Some of the before-mentioned gender factors appear in an article by Mária Neményi and Judit Takács, and in another by Nikolett Geszler. These papers may be seen as two sides of the same coin because they deal with the gender aspects of WLB in relation to the main breadwinner but take a different focus: Neményi and Takács analyse the WLB-related strategies of women who are the main breadwinners in their families, while Geszler pays attention to examining the conflicts manager fathers experience between their roles as ideal managers and as involved fathers.

When Mária Neményi and Judit Takács take into consideration the roles women play, a further gender layer is added to the issue; namely, the modern notion of women as the main breadwinners in the traditional gender context of CEE countries. The authors elaborate four models of family relationships in connection with work-life balance issues in those families in which the female partner is the primary breadwinner. The models are based on two dimensions: role expectations regarding family-related tasks, and the voluntary or forced nature of the reversal of the role model.

As described earlier, fatherhood has undergone a significant change involving a move from a focus on the role of father as breadwinner towards father as carer. Nonetheless, in the CEE region this change is a lopsided one, although – as Geszler demonstrates – it is palpable. The male breadwinner model has not disappeared, leading to conflict between these role patterns. Geszler's analysis examines the different forms of this conflict and highlights the fact that the issue plays a smaller part in the struggle between work and family obligations than time- and strain-based problems do.

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DÓRA BARI AND PÉTER RÓBERT *
Who Benefits More from a Balanced life?
Gender Differences in Work-life Balance and Satisfaction with Life in Eight Post-communist Countries

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Abstract

The purpose of the research described in this paper is to investigate the gender differences in the relationship between perceived tension with work-life balance and satisfaction with life in eight post-communist regions (the Czech Republic, East Germany, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and Ukraine). The research investigates 1) how having a balanced life contributes to the subjective well-being of individuals (measured according to level of satisfaction with life), and 2) the variability which exists on a country level with satisfaction with life and satisfaction with work-life balance, and the relationship between these two attitudes. Data from the fifth round of the European Social Survey is used in the analysis, to which only respondents active in the labor force were included (N=6410). The paper presents descriptive statistics about country differences in the level of satisfaction with life and work-life balance. Following this, OLS regression models are used to predict satisfaction with life. Results reveal that the perceived balance between work and other elements of life has a significant impact on satisfaction with life, and no gender difference is detectable in this regard. Nevertheless, more highly educated individuals have greater subjective well-being, and the impact is stronger for women than men. Between-country differences are also moderate.

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1. Introduction

This paper brings together two research issues, work-life balance and satisfaction with life, and investigates how they interrelate in post-communist countries and how this link varies for men and women. Working life is an important part of individual living circumstances – at least during a large part of a normal life after completion of education and before retirement. Consequently, how people feel about their working life matters a lot, and satisfaction with work-life balance is an important component of general satisfaction with life (Greenhaus et al., 2003; Dulk et al., 2011; Szücs et al., 2001).

Nevertheless, work is just one component of life, though its importance varies a lot for individuals in different situations. Work plays a different role in the lives of single people and others with family obligations. The meaning of work also differs between people who have young children to take care of, and adults whose offspring have already grown up (Lippe et al., 2006). The differences in these circumstances bring about the variability in the amount of balance an individual has in their life, and, as such, make balance an important predictor of satisfaction with life.

The research places significant emphasis on gender differences. Both work-life balance and its role in satisfaction with life are hypothesized to be gendered, and thus different for men and women. The topic of this paper is completed through an investigation of these factors in the post-communist era. This approach may add most value to the analysis, since work-life balance and its correlates are as yet much more poorly analyzed in CEE countries than in Western societies. The paper deals with the following research question and tests the following assumption: How does a balanced life contribute to individual subjective well-being (defined and measured here as satisfaction with life)?

Based on ESS data we obtained information about work-life balance and satisfaction with life in eight formerly socialist regions (the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia, Ukraine plus East Germany) and tested how balance in life predicts overall satisfaction with life for men and women. In the analysis we control for features related to work (education, job characteristics, financial situation) and family situation (family status, household composition).

The paper is structured as follows: a review of the literature opens the description of the research, moving from broader research issues to narrower ones. The variables incorporated in the analysis are then described, and some hypotheses about the expected statistical relationships are constructed. As regards findings, we display descriptive results first, followed by conclusions from the multivariate analysis. The paper ends with a discussion of results.

2. Work-life balance – main theories and approaches

Work-life balance has always been a central theme in social science research, partly from the perspective of its relationship with and effect on the quality of working life, or broader quality of life (Guest, 2002). There appears to be consensus among theorists that finding balance between work and life domains is important for individual psychological well-being, job satisfaction and satisfaction with life; however,

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there exists no consensus about how work-life balance should be defined (Rantanen et al., 2011).

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature about the main approaches to work-life balance. According to Rantanen et al. (2011), based on the academic literature about the concept of work-life balance, three main approaches can be distinguished: (1) role theories, (2) an overall appraisal and components approach, and (3) theories about outcomes of work-life balance. The following sections of this chapter describe these three main approaches.

2.1 Role theories

Early studies of role theory were based on the assumption that women play multiple roles which can result in work-life conflict, or, if work and family roles are successfully coordinated, create work-life balance (Rantanen et al., 2011). One major drawback of this approach is that, according to Marks and MacDermid (1996), role balance should not only be regarded as an outcome: these authors suggest that work-life balance may be defined as a tendency which represents the individual's equal commitment to fulfilling every role within their total role system, without bringing one to the fore.

Numerous researchers have defined work-life balance in a similar way to Marks and MacDermid's (1996) definition of positive role balance, and these definitions share common elements. Firstly, these definitions highlight the equality between experiences that occur to individuals in their work role and experiences in their family role. Secondly, these definitions include two components of equality: inputs and outcomes (Greenhaus et al., 2003).

2.2 The overall appraisal approach and the component approach

The overall appraisal approach is based on how individuals evaluate their life situation in its entirety (Rantanen et al., 2011). For example, Clark (2000) defines work-life balance as satisfaction or good functioning both at work and home, with a minimum level of conflict across roles.

The component approach highlights the multiple facets of work-life balance (Rantanen et al., 2011). One prominent example is Greenhaus et al.'s (2003) definition of work-life balance. These authors hold the view that work-life balance is an 'interrole' phenomenon which refers to an individual's orientation across different roles in life. Based on this definition, a balance between work and life domains occurs when an individual is equally engaged in and satisfied with both work and family roles.

2.3 Theories about the outcomes of work-life balance

Several scholars have criticized the previous approaches, highlighting what they see as their main weakness: that they tend to overemphasize work-life balance as a psychological construct (e.g. Grzywacz and Carlson, 2007; Carlson et al., 2009). Carlson et al. (2009) construct a measure of work-life balance and suggest that balance should be distinguished from work-family conflict and enrichment. In their study, work–family balance included additional variability in several key work and family

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outcomes, above and beyond those explained by work–family conflict and work–family enrichment. Since the empirical analysis in this paper deals with satisfaction with life as the main social outcome related to the success or failure of a balanced life, the literature review in the following chapters focuses on this relationship.

3. Satisfaction with life, and its relation to work-life balance

Having defined what is meant by work-life balance in the academic literature, we now move on to discuss the relationship between work-life balance and satisfaction with life. However, it is now inevitable that the key problem with this investigation should be stressed: that the literature includes few studies about the relationship between these phenomena. What we know about the relationship between these concepts is largely based upon empirical studies that investigated the link between the concept of work-life balance and quality of life. Thus, the relationship between individual quality of life and work-life balance is at the heart of our understanding of the relationship between life satisfaction and work-life balance.

Greenhaus et al. (2003) completed one key study which investigated the relationship between work-life balance and quality of life. These authors found that a balanced work-life situation can increase quality of life for two main reasons. These are: (1) that involvement in multiple roles can protect individuals from the impacts of negative experiences in any single role; and (2) that balanced involvement in work and family roles may reduce work–family conflict.

In another major study, den Dulk et al. (2011) created a conceptual framework for measuring the relationship between individual quality of life and quality of work. The basis of this framework relates to how increases in demands and resources connected to both work and life domains impact individual quality of work and quality of life. The model propounds the existence of a direct relationship between resources and demands and quality of life, and an indirect relationship via outcomes such as stress, work-life interface, enrichment and work-life balance. More specifically, personal quality of work and quality of life is affected by job and household characteristics, the conception of workplace and the national context.

Szücs et al. (2011) developed den Dulk et al.'s (2011) theoretical framework in order to analyze empirically the relationship between satisfaction with work-life balance and satisfaction with life. The authors distinguish between the terms 'work-life balance' and 'satisfaction with work-life balance': satisfaction with work-life balance is an *'affective reaction to an unspecified level of balance, rather than the level of balance itself'* (Szücs et al., 2011: 98). In their empirical study the authors use satisfaction with work-life balance and satisfaction with life (an indicator of quality of life) as a dependent variable and analyze the impact of job and household demands and resources on them. The research found that satisfaction with work-life balance is significantly determined by job demands and resources, while household demands – such as the number of hours spent on household chores and childcare – does not decrease the level of satisfaction with work-life balance. Satisfaction with work–life balance and overall satisfaction with life are also related: the higher the level of satisfaction with work-life balance, the higher the level of life satisfaction (Szücs et al., 2011).

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Hypothesis 1 thus states that the better the perceived balance between work and other aspects of life, the stronger the satisfaction with life; the finding should hold for respondents from post-Soviet CEE countries as well.

4. Gender differences in work-life balance and satisfaction with life – Why are post-communist CEE countries different?

The following is an outline of the main gender differences in work-life balance and satisfaction with life. According to van der Lippe et al. (2006), these differences should be examined at both the individual and the contextual level. The authors hold the view that work-life balance not only depends on household characteristics and/or work-related factors, but also on the country in which the individuals live. Based on this argument, the following sections of this chapter deal with both the individual and contextual level. The first section of this chapter introduces the main gender differences in the labor market and their relationship with the balance between work and life, while the second section focuses on differences between Western European and post-communist CEE countries. Finally, the third section describes satisfaction with life in the post-communist CEE countries.

4.1 Gender, the labor market and work-life balance

In the past few decades, the dual-earner family model has become increasingly prevalent in developed societies. In addition, the engagement of high numbers of women in paid labor has caused several changes in how work and family life are reconciled (Edwards and Wajcman, 2005).

According to Lippe et al. (2006), in Western European countries men and women are currently increasingly experiencing time pressure. The more time men and women spend engaged with the labor market, the less time they have for caring for their families and doing household work. It is a widely held view that time spent working is less of a determining factor for men; however, some evidence suggests that the situation with work-life imbalance and/or work-life conflict is becoming increasingly similar for mothers and fathers. The authors highlight the fact that several factors impact how men and women are able to balance work and life which can be affected by gender: for example, the division of household tasks and the age of the children who must be cared for. The younger the children, the more time needed to care for them, and it is generally women who put in the extra time needed for such child-care-related and household tasks. The unequal division of household tasks and childcare can cause stress for women and greater work-life imbalance; however, a more equal division of such work between partners affects to a higher extent the level of balance between work and family life generally (Lippe et al., 2006).

Hypothesis 2 thus claims that women are more satisfied with life, and that maintaining work-life balance matters more for them. We test for gender-related differences in the other predictors of subjective well-being without making any further, detailed assumptions, for the purpose of control.

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4.2 Gender, the labor market and work-life balance in post-communist CEE countries

As mentioned previously, work-life balance and the impact of gender on this significantly depends on the countries in which individuals live. Because of this argument, a description of the social and economic effects of the transition from state socialism to capitalism in CEE countries becomes necessary.

The transition to a new regime has greatly affected three elements of the national context: it has brought about: (1) a decrease in provisions at the level of the state (Abendroth and den Dulk, 2011; den Dulk et al., 2010), (2) an increase in economic development (Trefalt et al., 2013), and (3) an expansion in economic freedom (Trefalt et al., 2013).

The main difference between Western and the Central and Eastern European countries is that CEE countries did not witness the sudden entry of women into the labor market (Miheli, 2014). Under state socialism, the high participation of women in the labor market was common because of the ideology of gender equality and state support for women's participation in work and childcare (Miheli, 2014; Pollert, 2005). Several researchers have suggested that women have become the 'victims', or the 'losers' of the transition (Fodor, 2005; Lippe and Fodor, 1988) because one of the main changes brought in by the transition in the post-communist CEE countries was a significant increase in unemployment which has affected women's labor market position. However, Lippe and Fodor (1998) draw attention to the weaknesses of this argument. During the time of state socialism, almost everyone had a full-time job and unemployment did not (officially) exist. After the transition, it was mainly men who lost their jobs due to the radical decline in industrial production. Because of the higher share of women in the service sector, they were better protected than men from becoming unemployed (Lippe and Fodor, 1998). However, the activity rates of women decreased more than they did for men, and women have also been more deeply affected by labor market segmentation and wage inequality (Auth, 2010).

During the communist era, a high level of social security was guaranteed by the state (free education, health and cultural services and generous state-funded family provisions), while the process of transformation brought about changes in this regard. There is also some evidence to suggest that after the transition attitudes towards gender roles became more conservative, which is part of the reason that women lost some of the rights that they had had during the Soviet era. The emergence of a more conservative ideology and traditional gender norms has created intensive discussion about the obligatory choice between family and career. Childcare policies have also had an impact on working mothers. The accessibility of long parental leave, especially in the case of the Czech Republic and Hungary, does not support the combining of work and private life and reinforces traditional gender roles (Křížková et al., 2010).

4.3 Satisfaction with life in post-communist CEE countries

In the academic literature there is not much research into life satisfaction in post-communist countries. Still, studies that deal with different components of satisfaction may be identified. Authors of a special issue of the *International Journal of Sociology*

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investigated material well-being and satisfaction with living standards in four post-communist countries: Hungary, Poland, Ukraine and Georgia, each representing a different degree of success with the process of transformation. The authors claimed that Hungary and Poland had much higher levels of life satisfaction than Georgia and Ukraine, and that intercultural differences contributed to this situation (Zagorski, 2011). 'Over-aspirations', or the feeling of being under-rewarded, as well as reference group theory, play an additional role in determining satisfaction with life under post-communism. In this regard, Sági (2011) concludes that the change in respondents' reference points from former Soviet bloc times negatively and strongly affects satisfaction with current material conditions and living standards. In general, Selezneva highlights the fact that the populations of transitional countries *'paid with their happiness for the transition from communism to capitalism'* (Selezneva, 2010: 1).

After 2004, some of the post-communist Central and Eastern European countries became part of the European Union, which also affected people's subjective well-being. In a study by Bălţătescu (2007), the author focuses on life satisfaction in the new EU member states and finds that levels of subjective well-being are almost the lowest among this group. The results show that the level of satisfaction with life in these countries between 1989 and 2005 follows a U-shaped trend, bottoming out at around 1996-1997. In addition, there are significant differences between these countries – even if the overall level of subjective well-being is generally quite low in new EU member states. Of these societies, only Slovenia's well-being comes close to the level of life satisfaction of countries with the highest levels. Moreover, the level of satisfaction with life also increased most impressively in Slovenia. Based on data collected between 2001 and 2005, the countries/regions which were able to catch-up in terms of life satisfaction (Czech Republic, Poland and East Germany) have a more optimistic perspective than Greece or Portugal.

A closer look at the *World Happiness Report 2015* indicates that post-communist CEE countries are less happy than Western European countries. However, there are large differences between these countries: people in the Czech Republic, Slovenia and Slovakia are happier than in Hungary and the Ukraine (Helliwell et al., 2011).

What is the country variability in satisfaction with life and satisfaction with work-life balance and in the relationship between these two attitudes? In terms of wellbeing, Hypothesis 3 states that satisfaction with life will be lower in Hungary and Ukraine compared to the other countries under investigation.

5. Data and variables

5.1 Sample and procedure

The data used in the research come from the European Social Survey (ESS), an academically driven cross-national and cross-sectional survey that has been conducted across Europe every two years since 2001. For this study, datasets from the fifth (2010) round were analyzed. The unit of the sample is based on individuals aged 15 and over who are resident in private households, regardless of their nationality, citizenship, language or legal status, in the participating countries. The ESS surveys involve strict

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random probability sampling, a minimum target response rate of 70% and rigorous translation protocols. The ESS dataset is weighted; this weighting is included in the current analysis. [1]

In our analysis we use data only from eight post-communist CEE countries: the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia, Ukraine and East Germany. For the purpose of our research, one obvious further restriction should be applied. The analysis contains only those respondents who reported that their 'main activity last week' was paid work. The file does not contain information on work-life balance for other respondents because the question would be redundant for those not in work. After this selection step, the size of the sample was 6410 in the weighted sample, including 3469 males and 2937 females (information about gender is missing in 4 cases).

5.2 Measures

The purpose of this study is to explore how work-life balance predicts satisfaction with life for men and women in eight post-soviet countries. Consequently, o*verall level of satisfaction with life* is the dependent variable in the analysis. To examine this issue, participants were asked to answer the following question: '*All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole nowadays?*' A 0-10-point answer scale was used, where 0 means extremely dissatisfied and 10 means extremely satisfied. *Overall level of satisfaction with work-life balance* was measured by asking '*And how satisfied are you with the balance between the time you spend on your paid work and the time you spend on other aspects of your life?*'. A 0-10-point response scale was used where 0 means extremely dissatisfied and 10 means extremely satisfied. The analysis also contained demographic control, as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Description of the independent control variables.

Demographic indicator	Description of the variable
Gender	female = 1 vs. Male = 0
Age	from 18 to 65
Place of residence	urban = 1 vs. rural = 0
Subjective income	living comfortably on their income or at least coping on it = 1 vs. difficult or very difficult situation as regards income = 0
Sector of work	State / public sector = 1 vs. private sector = 0
Working hours	total hours normally worked per week in main job including overtime

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[1] For more details see www.europeansocialsurvey.org

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Family situation	respondent lives without partner and has no children (dummy)
	respondent lives without partner and has children (dummy)
	respondent lives with partner and has no children (dummy)
	respondent lives with partner and has children (dummy - reference in the statistical model
Age of children	younger than 5 years old (dummy); between 6 and 14 years old (dummy); between 15 and 18 years old (dummy); older than 19 years (dummy); Only children who live with the respondent in shared household were taken into account.

Table 3 in the Appendix contains information about all the variables in the analysis.

6. Findings

6.1 Descriptive Results

As shown in Figure 1, the level of satisfaction with life is highest in Poland and Slovenia, followed by the former East Germany, while the lowest is found in Ukraine in 2010. Hungary is in second-to-lowest position. The level of satisfaction with work-life balance is highest in Slovenia too. In this respect, however, Czech Republic reports the lowest level and East Germany the second-from-last. Poland and Hungary take the middle positions in satisfaction with work-life balance.

Figure 1. Overall level of satisfaction with life and work-life balance in post-communist CEE countries (means). Source: European Social Survey – Round 5, author's calculation

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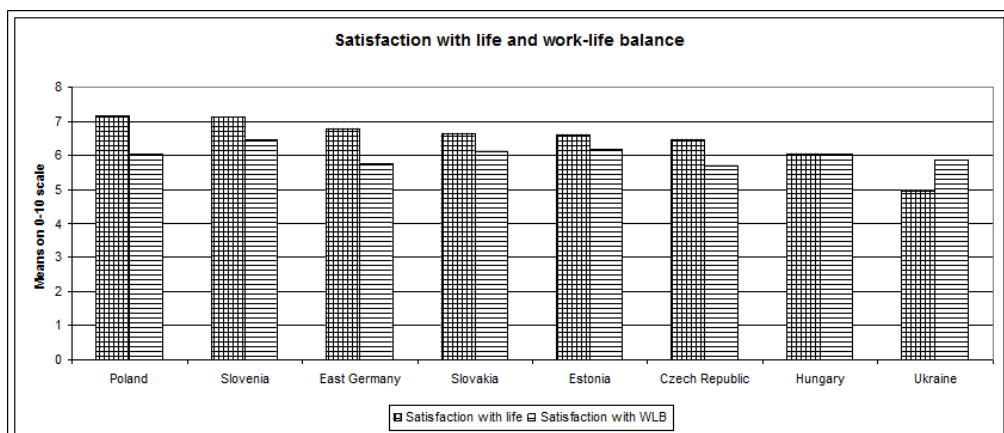
Both satisfaction scales have been investigated from a gender perspective as well. As regards satisfaction with life, men are more satisfied than women in Hungary and Ukraine (the two countries in which satisfaction is lowest in general). However, the difference is not significant according to the variance of analysis (Anova). Women are more satisfied with life than men in Poland, Slovenia, East Germany and Slovakia. According to the variance of analysis, the difference is significant only in Poland. For satisfaction with work-life balance, men value their situation more highly than women in Slovenia and Slovakia; the difference is significant in the latter. In all other countries women are more satisfied with their work-life balance than men, but the difference is significant only for Hungary (5.86 for men vs. 6.27 for women).

Since the means are sometimes misleading, standard deviations may also be interesting. Figure 2 provides further information about satisfaction with life and work-life balance from a different perspective of measurement. Here, three levels of satisfaction are distinguished; a low level means 0-3 points, a middle level means 4-7 points, and a high level of satisfaction means 8-10 points, using the original scale. The rank order of the countries does not change significantly for satisfaction with life. However, in respect of satisfaction with work-life balance, Hungary occupies a higher place in the ranking of countries for 'high level of satisfaction'. However, the proportion of those reporting 'low level of satisfaction' is also pretty high for Hungary; in fact it is the highest of all countries, together with East Germany. The explanation for this is that the standard deviation around the mean is also the highest for Hungary (2.5) from the eight countries. Accordingly, opinions about work-life balance are least clear-cut in Hungary.

Figure 2. Overall level of satisfaction with work-life balance in post-communist CEE countries (%). Source: European Social Survey – Round 5, author's calculation
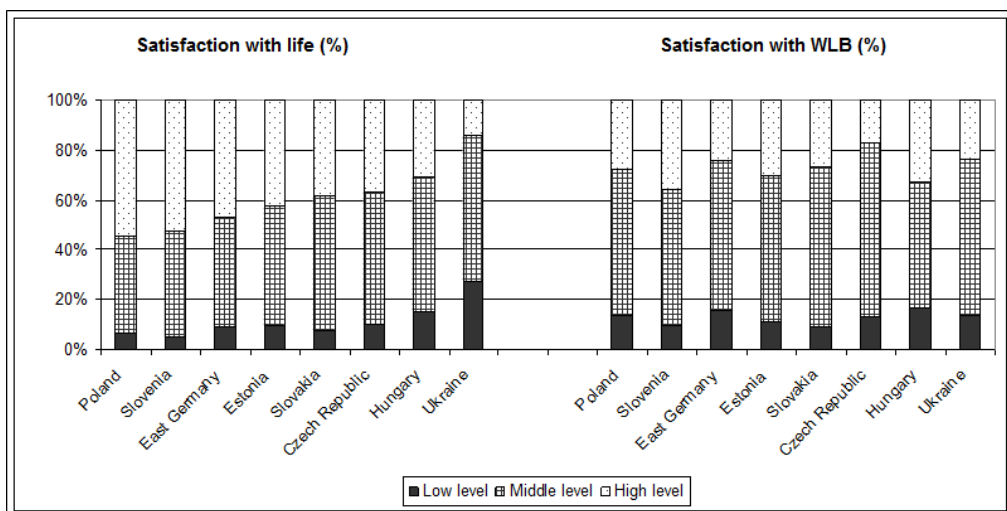
This analysis places particular emphasis on the relationship between satisfaction with life and satisfaction with work-life balance. Consequently, the correlation between these two indicators is important information at a descriptive level. On the whole, Spearman's r is 0.276 between these two indicators. On the one hand, variability

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according to gender is important but minor (0.287 for men and 0.264 for women). Later, in the section which describes the multivariate analysis, more detail about the level of significance for gender differences is provided. On the other hand, country differences in terms of the correlation between level of satisfaction with life and level of satisfaction with work-life balance are displayed in Figure 3. What is interesting in these results is the relatively similar level of correlation across the societies under investigation. There is hardly any difference in Spearman's r between the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Ukraine and Estonia. A weaker correlation appears with Slovenia, while the highest levels both for satisfaction with life and satisfaction with work-life balance are also found in this country. The weakest correlation appears in East Germany and Slovakia (just above 0.2).

Figure 3. Correlations* between satisfaction with life and satisfaction with work-life balance.
Source: European Social Survey – Round 5, author's calculation
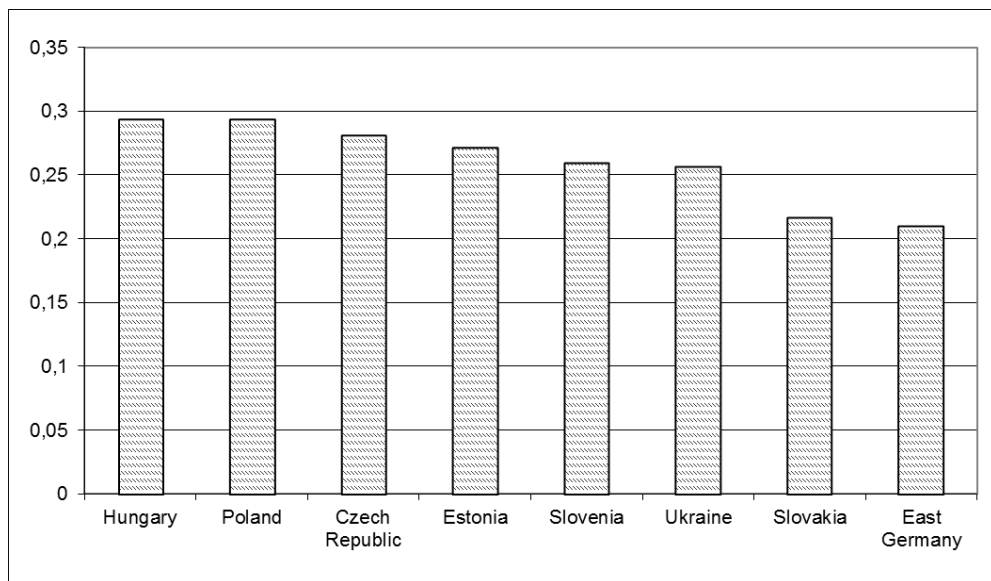
*Spearman r

The two parameters (gender differences and country differences) are combined in Figure 4. Countries are ordered using the Spearman r coefficients for females. The strongest correlations exist for Hungary and Ukraine, followed by the Czech Republic and Slovenia. In Hungary, Ukraine and Slovenia correlation between satisfaction with life and satisfaction with work-life balance is stronger for women than men. In contrast, in Poland and Estonia, and in particular in East Germany and Slovakia, the same correlation is stronger for men than women. Correlations are statistically significant (except in East Germany for women) and – at least for women – there is a stronger correlation for Hungary and Ukraine where the general level of satisfaction with life is the lowest.

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Figure 4. Correlations* between satisfaction with life and satisfaction with work-life balance by gender and country. Source: European Social Survey – Round 5, author's calculation
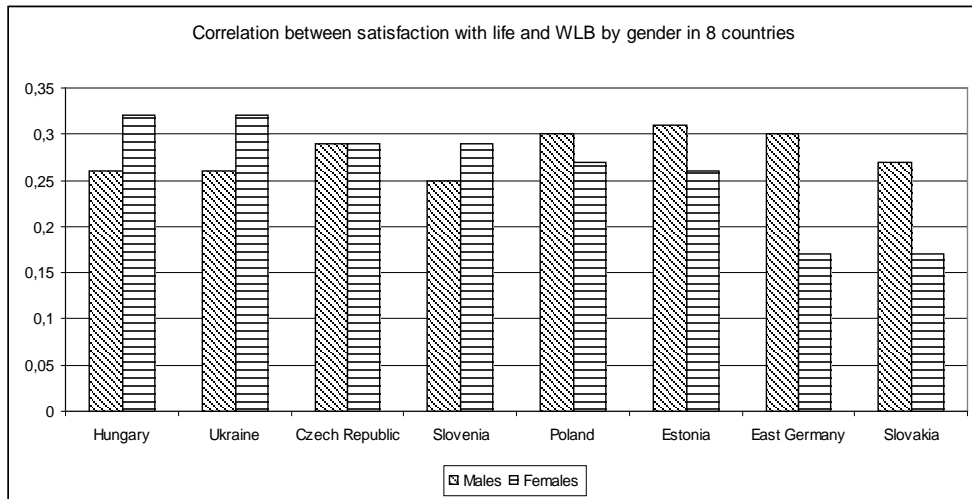
*Spearman r

6.2 Results of multivariate models

The multivariate analysis is based on the use of OLS regression models. This method was applied because the dependent variable, satisfaction with life, was measured on a scale of 0-10. Independent variables were added to the equation in several steps. Consequently, as we proceeded with the models and included more and more independent variables which served to control for the direct effect of perceived work-life balance on satisfaction with life, the correlation between these predictor variables also influenced the results. Regression analysis was performed using Stata, and the 'nestreg'[2] procedure was applied. The findings are presented step by step; the estimates, the robust standard errors and the related levels of significance appear in the relevant columns of Table 2.

Model 1 in the regression model includes overall level of satisfaction with work-life balance as the only independent variable. In accordance with the descriptive results presented about the correlation between these two variables in Table 2, the perception of having a balanced life significantly increases satisfaction with life in this model, when no control variables are applied. The coefficient of satisfaction with work-life balance is 0.282, which indicates a relatively strong relationship with the overall level of satisfaction with life. So, for every unit increase in the level in perceived work-life balance, an increase in the level of satisfaction with life of 0.282 units is predicted by the model.

Model 2 in the regression analysis adds the main demographic control variables to the model: female (the reference category is male), age, and years of education.

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[2] 'Nestreg' is a regression method included in the Stata program which can be used to test the significance of blocks of predictors by building the regression model by adding one block at a time.

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According to this model the direct impact of a balanced life remains significant; however, its coefficient decreases. This may be caused by the correlation between work-life balance and education: the connection is not strong, but more educated respondents are slightly more satisfied with their work-life balance.[3] In this model, years of education have the highest coefficient (0.109); years of schooling is thus a strong determinant of subjective well-being. We also tested whether the effect of education is linear because the quadratic term for schooling was insignificant. However, what is even more important in this model is that gender is not a significant predictor, there being no difference between men and women in terms of satisfaction with life. This result was found at a descriptive level too; the results of multivariate analysis seem to agree. Age has a negative impact: the model predicts a -0.019 unit decrease in the level of satisfaction with life for every increase in age of a year. Age also appears to be a linear predictor because its quadratic term is not significant.

Model 3 of the regression analysis firstly includes indicators related to the working status of respondents. The most obvious of these, the nature of the job, was omitted because we included education in the model and these two variables are interrelated. Thus, this model adds two other variables to the equation: work for a state-owned organization (the reference category is working for a private organization) and working hours per week. The level of satisfaction with life for those who work for a state-owned organization is higher than for those who work for a private company, although the finding is not statistically significant. Working hours, however, have a statistically significant impact on satisfaction with life. This effect is positive, which means that longer working hours increase life satisfaction.

Secondly, in Model 3 the urban dummy variable (reference category rural) and the dummy variable corresponding to the feeling that the income of the household is enough for living comfortably is also included in the analysis. The urban variable has a negative impact, and its coefficient is statistically significant. This negative effect implies that respondents in rural areas are more satisfied with their lives. The perceived adequacy of household income has a strong impact: those who reported that their household income is enough for them to live comfortably had a level of satisfaction with life more than one and half points higher than those who believed they were in a difficult or very difficult situation as regards their income. In this model, the impact of working in the state or public sector, as opposed to the private sector, is strengthened.

In Model 4 we turn to family circumstances and introduce the dummy variables that represent the variety of familial arrangements of the respondent: single, living without a partner but with children, and living with a partner but without children. Living with a partner and having children is the reference category. As can be seen from this model, the first two situations lead to a lower level of satisfaction with life (negative estimates): being single or living in a one-parent family with children significantly reduces satisfaction compared to being one of a couple with children, while living with a partner with no children does not lead to significant differences in

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[3] In fact, analysis of variance reveals that the relationship is curvilinear because less-educated respondents are also satisfied with their work-life balance. There is no significant correlation between age and the perception of having a balanced life.

satisfaction compared to being one of a couple with children. It is important to note that controlling for the family situation makes work-life balance a stronger and more significant predictor of subjective well-being. Model 4 extends the analysis further as regards family conditions by adding the four dummy variables based on the potential age of children: 0-5, 6-14, 15-18 and 19+. The estimates are positive in the case of the first three variables but significant only in the case of children aged 0-5. Living with children who are older than 19 has a negative impact on satisfaction with life. The interaction between the dummy variables based on a child's age and family situation were also tested but there is no significant relationship between them.

Finally, in the last step of the regression analysis (Model 5) the dummy variables for countries are included, using Ukraine as the reference. Estimates show that satisfaction with life is significantly higher in every other country. At the descriptive level, respondents from Ukraine, Hungary, Estonia and the Czech Republic comprised the group least satisfied with life, while Poland, Slovenia, East-Germany and Slovakia were the 'more satisfied' half (see Figure 1). Multivariate analysis indicates that this finding definitely holds for Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia, and the magnitude of the estimates is similarly high for East Germany as well (above 1).

Table 2. Multivariate analysis of determinants of satisfaction with life. (Unstandardized regression estimates, robust standard errors in brackets). Source: European Social Survey – Round 5, author's calculation

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Satisfaction with work-life balance	0.282***	0.277***	0.216***	0.218***	0.221***
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Socio-demographic variables					
Female (reference category: male)		-0.046	0.086	0.117	0.102
		(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.06)
Age		-0.019***	-0.018***	-0.018***	-0.020***
		(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Years of education		0.109***	0.066***	0.062***	0.065***
		(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Working in public sector (ref. category: working in private sector)			0.047	0.054	0.091
			(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)
Working hours per week			0.007*	0.008*	0.005
			(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Urban residence (ref. category: rural)			-0.140*	-0.123	0.001
			(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)
High household income (ref. category: low household income)			1.640***	1.612***	1.325***
			(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.08)
Family composition					
Lives without partner and has no children				-0.318*	-0.405**
				(0.13)	(0.13)
Lives without partner and has children				-0.353**	-0.370**
				(0.12)	(0.12)
Lives with partner and has no children (ref. category: lives with partner and has child)				0.056	-0.022
				(0.13)	(0.13)

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	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Ages of Children					
Has children, between 0 and 5 years old				0.335**	0.241*
				(0.12)	(0.12)
Has children, between 6 and 14 years old				0.012	-0.037
				(0.10)	(0.10)
Has children, between 15 and 18 years old				0.022	-0.012
				(0.10)	(0.10)
Has children, older than 19 years old				-0.068	-0.105
				(0.12)	(0.11)
Countries					
Czech Republic					0.999***
					(0.14)
East Germany					1.057***
					(0.16)
Estonia					0.980***
Hungary					0.603***
					(0.15)
Poland					1.335***
					(0.15)
Slovenia					1.147***
					(0.15)
Slovakia (ref. category: Ukraine)					1.124***
					(0.15)
Constant	4.771***	4.148***	3.601***	3.710***	3.114***
N	5372	5372	5372	5372	5372
Model improvement (Change in R-square)		0.0302	0.1131	0.0094	0.0246
R-square	0.072	0.102	0.212	0.222	0.246

7. Conclusion and discussion

The research this paper described was designed to investigate the relationship between work and family life, on the one hand, and individuals' subjective well-being on the other. One further research objective was to study the gender differences in this regard. Thirdly, analysis was undertaken of societies from Eastern Europe with a communist past which had gone through transformation to a market economy. European Social Survey data, collected in 2010, were used in the analysis to investigate the three research questions and test three related hypotheses.

The starting point and the first assumption of the analysis was that work-life balance has a substantial influence on satisfaction with life. Given that working life is an important part of an individuals' life in general, in particular in Eastern European societies where the low level of post-communist salaries force people to have multiple jobs and spend more time working, the perception of work-life balance and its influence on the general opinions of well-being may have a more substantial impact on various mechanisms in society. Individuals' economic performance, as well as choices and decisions in their private lives related to family formation, getting married or childbearing, are the outcomes of successfully finding and maintaining the balance

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between different spheres of life. Empirically speaking, the analysis described in this paper does not go so far: neither economic activity nor family behavior is investigated as a dependent variable. The focus is instead on subjective well-being, about which *statistical analysis proves that satisfaction with work-life balance has a significant and direct impact on satisfaction with life*, confirming our first hypothesis. Accordingly, the results of the analysis are in line with previous studies which also found that work-life balance influences satisfaction with life (Szücs et al. 2011, Greenhaus 2003).

Moreover, the link between these variables is studied in more detail by including various control variables, representing both working conditions and family situation, into the statistical model. In terms of labor-market-related indicators, human capital investments appear to be playing an important role. Level of education turns out to be a strong predictor of subjective well-being; *more educated respondents are more satisfied with their lives.* This result is also in agreement with the general literature on subjective well-being. Furthermore, the number of hours worked is a significant predictor in the multivariate analysis. We interpret it to mean that having a full-time job is an important predictor of satisfaction with life. This may be a feature specific to the Eastern European situation where having a full-time job is necessary for supporting a better quality of life. This is not necessarily the case in Western societies where a part-time job may improve both work-life balance and subjective well-being, in particular in the case of women (e.g. Hill et al., 2001).

Turning to family circumstances, the analysis investigated the role of various family arrangements, as well as the impact of having children of differing ages. Interestingly, the connection between family situation and subjective well-being is not as strong as one might imagine. In terms of the various types of family composition, the main result is far from surprising: *living without a partner or being a single parent and living with children is difficult and significantly decreases satisfaction with life.* In addition, satisfaction with work-life balance is also lower in such families. However, the perception of having a balanced life is no more positive in families in which a couple live together with children. Moreover, examination of the impact of children on subjective well-being indicates that *there is no significant difference in satisfaction with life between families composed of a couple living with, or without children.* To some extent, it holds true that living alone without a partner and children leads to a lower level of satisfaction with life, but this association is much less persistent.

Two further control variables in the model were age and the urban vs. rural character of the place of residence. Age is significant predictor of subjective well-being, with a negative sign. This means that *younger individuals are more satisfied with life.* In terms of domicile, living in a rural settlement appears to increase satisfaction with life, but this effect is not significant when family circumstances and age of children are controlled for. Several previous studies about subjective well-being found the age effect to be in the form of a U-shape: younger and older individuals are generally more satisfied with life (e.g. Mercy et al., 2015). This may hold true for Western societies, but given the material circumstances and the health of the older population in Eastern Europe, it is plausible that age has a linear effect in our analysis of post-communist societies. Last but not least, and unsurprisingly, perhaps the strongest determinant of subjective well-being is the perception of the family's financial situation. *Respondents who think they can live comfortably on their incomes, or at*

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least cope on them, are much more satisfied with life than those who feel that it is difficult or very difficult to do so.

The second research question in the analysis referred to gender differences. For this variable, we expected to find some variation. Women were assumed to be more satisfied with life and it was hypothesized that perceived work-life balance would play a larger role in affecting their subjective well-being. This assumption was based on a previous study of 'female optimism' (Arrosa and Gandelman, 2016). This hypothesis could not be confirmed: the analysis reveals very few gender-based dissimilarities. Firstly, *there is no significant difference between men and women as regards satisfaction with life.* Both descriptive analysis and multivariate statistical models led to this same conclusion. Secondly, examination of the interaction terms between gender and perceived work-life balance proves their insignificance as predictors of satisfaction with life*. Having a balanced life matters for subjective well-being, but gender does not alter the strength of this effect* in a multivariate context. This finding is in line with the results of the empirical study of Szücs et al. (2011). At a descriptive level when zero-order correlations are displayed between satisfaction with life and with work-life balance without any other control variables (in Figure 4), some variability according to gender appears to be present. There may be a stronger association between these two variables for women in Hungary and Ukraine, where the general level of subjective well-being is lowest. However, when the various controls are added to the model in the statistical analysis, the difference disappears. Other interaction terms seem to be similarly statistically insignificant. There is only one exception to this, which concerns the role of education. *Higher levels of investment in human capital result in greater increases in satisfaction with life for women than men.*[4]

The third component of the analysis was country variation. A major part of the descriptive analysis was devoted to revealing the differences among the eight countries under investigation. It is well-known that Hungarians score low on all measures of subjective well-being in a comparative perspective; the country is characterized by a kind of 'culture of complaining'. Indeed, only Ukraine appears to have an even lower level of satisfaction with life, while Hungary takes second place (see Figure 1 or 2). Multivariate analysis confirmed the ranking of the countries: i.e., the higher level of satisfaction of Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia and East-Germany. *Hypothesis 3 concerning the ranking of the countries in terms of subjective well-being is thereby confirmed.* In terms of satisfaction with work-life balance, the ranking of the countries is different – in particular, when the correlation between the two forms of satisfaction is revealed for the eight countries (Figure 4).

In sum, this paper fills a gap in the literature concerning the relationship between work-life balance and satisfaction with life in the context of post-communist countries. Nevertheless, the research described in this paper leaves several issues open to further research. Changes over time were not investigated: our findings offer a cross-sectional picture of the issue. The European Social Survey data would allow the inclusion of other subjective opinion questions in the modeling, but we believe that further research should start by investigating the influence of structural mechanisms.

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[4] The interaction terms are not presented in Table 2, because none of them were significant, except for education. Details are available from the authors upon request.

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Using an even broader analytical framework, the former communist countries ought to be compared to Western societies as well.

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Appendix

Table 3. Description of the variables. Source: European Social Survey – Round 5, author's calculation

Variable	Observation	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Satisfaction with life	6262	6.472054	2.233767	0	10
Satisfaction with work-life balance	6180	6.005502	2.148396	0	10
Female	6283	0.4897342	0.4999344	0	1
Age	6198	41.82204	11.19449	18	65
Years of education	6132	13.39905	2.753995	0	20
Working in public sector	6029	0.3265882	0.4690041	0	1
Working hours per week	5946	43.30558	11.056	0	80
Urban residence	6269	0.6584782	0.4742579	0	1
High household income	6246	0.6930836	0.4612513	0	1
Lives without partner and has no children	6267	0.235503	0.4350779	0	1
Lives without partner and has children	6267	0.0816978	0.2739256	0	1
Lives with partner and has no children	6267	0.1969044	0.3976912	0	1
Has children between 0 and 5 years old	6286	0.131085	0.3375201	0	1
Has children between 6 and 14 years old	6286	0.2125358	0.4091344	0	1
Has children between 15 and 18 years old	6286	0.1301304	0.3364737	0	1
Has children older than 19 years old	6286	0.2286032	0.4199665	0	1

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No Room for Balancing: Mothers and Professors
in Czech Maternity Hospitals

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Abstract

The paper analyses the complex issue of work-life balance in the medical setting of Czech maternity hospitals. The issue of work-life balance has not been dealt with adequately; the organisation of professional careers in medicine is understood in terms of making sacrifices for the profession. However, analysis of the everyday lives of members of the profession provides insight into the practices and strategies that are adopted for coping with demanding work and gender prejudices, and the striving to create a satisfactory personal life. The article targets the structural mechanisms that reproduce Czech hospital gender regimes and their effects on work-life balance according to the individual coping strategies of the actors involved. These are conceptually framed using the symbolic system of the gender universe (Harding, 1987) and the theory of gendered organisations (Acker, 1990). The empirical data used in the analysis comes from qualitative research (2011-2014) into Czech reproductive medicine, specifically obstetrics. It is primarily based on in-depth interviews with senior physicians, although other data sources were also utilised. Physicians' own reflections of the current status quo in Czech hospitals are critically assessed and framed in a structural context with reference to the broader social mechanisms that re/produce gender in/equality in the labour market.

Keywords: medical profession; gendered organization; gender universe; work-life balance; qualitative research; sociology.

Introduction

In this paper we peek into the microcosm of the everyday lives and attitudes of actors on a hospital ward. The driving idea is to explain and make sense of the existing gender regimes that are reproduced in Czech hospitals and to identify the structural mechanisms that underlie them. By doing so, we may better understand what factors affect work-life balance in the medical profession, or rather, what lies behind the lack of policies for promoting harmony between work and life in this long-standing and prestigious profession. The sociological analysis presented herein conceptually draws on feminist theories of gendered organisations (Acker, 1990) and conceptualisations of the gender system of gender differences, or the 'gender universe', as introduced by Sandra Harding (Harding, 1987) and developed in the Czech context by Gerlinda Šmausová (Šmausová, 2002). According to this conceptual framework, work-life (im)balance is understood as a gendered and culturally (structurally as well as symbolically) conditioned category with diverging normative expectations towards professional women and men with respect to their commitments in private life and implications for their professional careers.

The empirical data described herein are based predominantly on a series of in-depth interviews with senior physicians (in terms of the hospital hierarchy this status is obtained after experience is gained after a second or European board certification), obstetricians and gynaecologists who have worked long years in maternity hospitals. In the Czech Republic these organisations are state-owned and belong to the very widespread national health care system that undertakes cutting-edge care in biomedical terms; i.e. those that practice Western, technologically-advanced medicine.

The article is divided into five thematic sections, each targeting a specific feature of work-life balance relevant to the hospital setting of Czech maternity wards. Each of these sections comprise an introduction and description of methodology and are followed by conclusions. The five sections include an examination of: 1) hierarchies within the medical profession that influence power imbalances and the gender-stereotypical modes of decision making processes, 2) dual perspectives about the practice of balancing work-life, 3) compromise strategies of physicians who attempt to harmonise work with private life, and their interpretations of the status quo, 4) the relationship between the private and organizational approach to work-life balance, and 5) conditions for promoting work-life balance, or rather their absence, in the cutting-edge scientific environment of university clinics. Throughout these sections, understanding the role of gender is the key target as well as the analytical lens.

Methodology

Some information about the Czech context, sampling methods and research participants is provided here before the text moves on to describe the analytical thematic areas. The interview subjects were senior physicians; this generally meant physicians with at least 10 years' experience in the profession (many had more), who were at least 40 years old at the time of interview. The Czech Republic has the highest number of gynaecologists and obstetricians per capita among all OECD countries, and

this trend has persisted over time. There were approximately 50 specialists per 100 000 women in 2011 (OECD, 2013; the same figure is 23,2 in Hungary and 14,5 in New Zealand). In 2013, there were a total of 2499 gynaecologists and obstetricians in the Czech Republic (1358 men and 1141 women – the percentage of women is thus 46 per cent; ÚZIS, 2014), making this specialisation the fourth most common (7,7per cent of all male medical doctors work as gynaecologists and obstetricians and 5,5per cent of all professional women; ÚZIS, 2014). The generational trend among men and women in the profession involves an increase in the numbers of junior women doctors, and thus a higher concentration of men in the older, thus professionally senior, generation (the percentage of women drops from 77 per cent in the youngest age category (-29) to less than 35 per cent in the 50+ group, and only increases a little to 37 per cent in the 70+ group, according to ÚZIS, 2014 data).

The analysed transcripts (research sample and data) are derived from in-depth research interviews with fifteen (15) senior Czech obstetricians and gynaecologists (six men and nine women), collected from multiple locations across the Czech Republic using a snowball sampling method initiated by addressing three physicians at a medical conference. Some of the interviews involved repeated meetings and thus multiple interviews with the same interviewees, all of which were transcribed verbatim creating more than 550 transcribed pages, excluding field notes. Other methods of data collection used in the analysis include additional interviews with other actors and stakeholders (i.e. midwives, doulas, lawyers, recipients of care and activists), field notes from thematic events and relevant situations during a four-year research project and from transcribed recordings made at several public or semi-public events, and the public speeches of medical doctors (mostly men). All the interviews were collected in person (between 2012 and 2013). Other data were collected from presentations and documents which were provided with consent for use in the study. Some data were also made publicly available by event organisers on their web pages, such as audio recordings of a thematic seminar in the Czech Parliament and a thematic university panel discussion. Qualitative textual thematic analysis, inspired by discourse analysis and David Silverman's approach to using interpretive research methods for analysing textual data (Silverman, 2001) was conducted, selecting the topics to be analysed based on the specific project research questions. The explorative research goal was to describe, explain and shed light on practices in Czech reproductive medicine, particularly childbirth routines, in relation to the reproduction of inequalities and gender relations in Czech health care organisations.

1. Gendered Hierarchies: Seniority, Generations, or 'Society is Set up so that a Guy is a Guy'

The conditions for gender relations at hospitals as workplaces, including work-life balance, depend significantly on the existence of a sense of justice or equality, and the sensitivity to gender issues of individual personalities such as the heads of hospital departments. Explicit, overt instances of discrimination can occur, as elaborated elsewhere (Šmídová, 2015a; Šmídová, 2015b), as well as more covert instances in a form of 'non-events' (Husu, 2005) which occur when women in the profession lack the support (in the form of inclusion and career advancement) that is awarded their

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male colleagues. Overall, cultural expectations that reproduce established gender roles often originate in superiors in the hospital hierarchy.

Generational seniority may also give rise to resentment concerning the conditions for work-life balance. Some older female doctors criticize the younger generation of mothers (parents), as occurred in one public debate on Czech practices in maternity wards. In this case, a doctor highlighted the fact that when she had small children the need to harmonise work-life balance was not even an issue for public debate: it was generally understood at the time that it was up to individuals to sort out their private lives and not to bother anybody with motherhood-related concerns. Accordingly, this approach is what she expects from the following generation(s) of women in the profession.

Despite many critical voices from within the profession and attempts to reflect upon such experiences, the attitude towards this issue generally still emphasises the need for individuals to strive to deal with this structural problem by themselves. Such rigidity leaves many of the actors who are affected in doubt and resigned to accepting the status quo; they describe themselves as helpless cogs in the machinery. One of the unintended consequences of such attitudes is that many women in the profession find themselves childless and/or single. However, this experience is framed by some of them as a legitimate sacrifice for their professional career, since entering the medical profession is still understood to involve a choice between being a professional or having a family. Yet this affects the organizational context for performance in the profession, not only for women but also for men – for whom there exists an additional challenge relating to seniority or generation. This is grounded in the fact that male doctors receive relatively little financial reward for engaging in this demanding professional work in the state sector, despite having gone through a long period of education and training. The pay they receive does not reach the level which would be expected according to pre-existing gendered expectations related to the symbolic system of gender differences, as described by Sandra Harding (Harding, 1987: 16-17); i.e. the duality of women as primary caregivers and men as breadwinners that we tend to interpret and channel our experiences into.

Harding outlines a multi-layered feminist theory that 'touches especially raw nerves' as a feminist critique of the social order (Harding 1987: 17), believing that such a feminist approach benefits from incorporating insights from multiple movements, being especially critical of the concept of the division of labour according to gender which is commonly understood as 'natural' and 'social'. This approach challenges our core sense of personal identity in terms of the expression of gender in individual 'social practices, which for most men and women [provide] deeply satisfying parts of self-identity' (Harding, 1987: 17). At a third level, in terms of the institutionalised division of labour and individual identities, Harding formulates criticism of the symbolic system based on gender differences. She describes it as 'the most ancient, most universal, and most powerful origin of many morally valued conceptualisations of everything else in the world around us. Cultures assign a gender to nonhuman entities', continues Harding, who wraps up in a concluding thesis that: 'we have organized our social and natural worlds in terms of gender meanings within which other historically specific institutions and meanings have been constructed' (Harding, 1987: 17). Šmausová has further elaborated these three levels of gendered

social structure, pointing out how rather plural and flexible individual social identities are channelled through the institutionalized division of labour into the dual, hierarchically fixed symbolic system of gender difference – the 'gender universe'. This system is characterized by a dominating, public masculinity represented by a professional career, and a subordinated, private femininity represented by care and motherhood (Šmausová, 2002).

Thus, the experience of young men doctors may not correspond with what would be expected from the gender universe; the symbolic system is unreflective of gender as a system of organizing our world. When young men doctors finish their training and start their careers they are at the age when many desire to start families, but providing financially for their families is challenging.[1] They can either leave for the private sphere or commence a dual job career, thus minimizing their already limited potential for involvement in participatory child care. However, such doctors may be pampered by hospital bosses and made aware that they are most welcome to come back to the state system in the position of substitutes or senior colleagues. The appeal of such encouragement is strengthened by doctors' potential membership in the imaginary men's club and their expectations of being able to leave off caregiving duties in the private sphere. One woman doctor working at a major Czech clinic described this situation in a research interview as follows:

> 'When I came in as a graduate,... men really made it into the operating room, while we stood in the corner.... The head of the clinic and several men doctors always decide what to do....And it was...hard, and I think that men really, really were privileged, that they really started to put us women to work more in the out-patient department...Well, it's a little bit..., that "these girls" – most of the women doctors – are whooshed out to the out-patient rooms because they are more meticulous, hardworking, they can withstand the routine of seeing one patient after another and typing it up...The guys don't have much patience, and they just try harder to get into surgery. Well,...I think they have an easier time of it.' (Doctor Daisy)

Another woman doctor who left a state clinic for the private sector describes a similar situation:

> 'He [the head doctor] selects a man, he does not go for a woman because if he does, it may be that they will have something together, or he is not interested in her and so he opts for a buddy, a bloke, right, who will not go off on maternity leave and they – I do not know – understand each other, and think that they are overall better off with them.' (Doctor Pearl)

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[1] This situation has been documented in a representative survey into attitudes to current problems in Czech medicine as significant career obstacles, as perceived by young men in the profession, and of the potential factors behind early career burnout (Slepičková and Šmídová, 2014; Šmídová and Slepičková, 2013).

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Joining the top club is very prestigious in terms of building a professional career. In the private sphere, professional women are judged for and have internalized these gendered criteria themselves. Another physician who left a clinic and started her own specialised private practice recalls:

> 'Guys won't let you in; really exceptional women make it to surgery, and they, in my opinion, do so at the expense of their private lives.' (Doctor Ice)

Besides documenting the gender universe in such accounts, the recollected experiences are significant in terms of gendered organizations, as Joan Acker (Acker, 1990) describes them. Hospitals are seemingly neutral, formal (bureaucratic) organizations, where occupational performance and skill promote career advancement on the basis of democratic principles. Issues such as sexuality, embodied femininity or masculinity, emotions and private life are understood as 'extra-functional', or rather, should be regarded as such. An ideal employer should be approached and carry out their function in a gender-neutral way. In practice, informal curricula or rules follow a gendered pattern, as Harding (Harding, 1987) claims.

Seen from the perspective of the senior doctor in a leading position in the maternity ward of a county hospital, 'this is how society is set up':

> 'In terms of out-patient service, I think these women have a number of advantages and privileges; on the other hand, in the wider field of hospitals and surgery, I think it's more complicated for them to get ahead.... There is also the limitation placed on them by their family, that's clear, because a guy can just say: "I'm on duty, I'm going". And the woman takes care of the kids and it's just that way. I think in the Czech Republic it couldn't happen that a guy would be as involved in family life as a woman. The woman is always saddled with that. I know what I'm talking about – my mother was a doctor, my wife is a doctor, my sister is a doctor, my daughter is a doctor – so I know how it is for every generation. We have gone through a lot, and it's always the guy who says first: "I'm going". When there are two doctors, it's the woman who has to spend more time with the family. If you ask me, maybe it will change now, but I don't believe many guys would say: "Hey, sorry, I can't take the shift because my wife already has something on"....Yep, it's harder for them to get ahead. With regard to knowledge, skill, attention to detail, women may have a lot of advantages. But society is set up so that a guy is a guy. It's the way it still is.' (Doctor Chalk)

Hospitals as working organisations are imbued with a complex network of positions and relations. Men in positions of power are 'assisted' in the re/production of gender regimes by the other professions which are involved. Cooperation and rivalry among these actors also help shape the atmosphere of professional performance and work-life balance in the working setting. A woman doctor who has now left the state hospital and started her own private practice pointed this out:

> 'In health care professions especially, it goes this way: a woman doctor is judged by how she is looked at by her boss, her male colleagues, even by her female colleagues, and three times more intensively by the mid-level health personnel. They actually hate young women doctors. Especially the nurses/midwives. Whereas the same nurses go crazy about men doctors.' (Doctor Swan)

Thus 'the way society is set up' is significantly reinforced by the institutionalised division of labour in these organizations, and as a result of the intense socialisation that occurs in respective professions, gender becomes internalized. It becomes naturalized, as Pierre Bourdieu would label the process, when cultural processes become understood to be natural ones (Bourdieu, 2001).

2. Work-Life Balance in Practice: 'The Sacrifice and the Problem of Women'

So far, this analysis has presented examples of stereotypes and gendered practice, indicating that the working organization of a hospital is a setting for reproducing gender inequality. With work-life balance as our particular focus, the contours of the gender universe become sharpener. A woman obstetrician reflects upon her experience looking for a job at the same time as looking after a baby:

> 'I was unable to find a job as a mother of a small child with little experience,...and finally, I was mercifully accepted to a clinic to do a part-time job. I worked full-time but got paid part-time...And the various senior consultants there, and those who negotiate with you, they let you know in so many ways, sneering at you and asking, how can you – a mother, educated though – be of any use to such a renowned clinic? I have literally heard this said by a senior consultant who checked whether I was capable of communicating in a foreign language or if my husband was rich enough and similar stuff, this really made me sick....And in later years they add, so where is your Ph.D. and where are your publications?' (Doctor Pearl)

For women, work-life balance in maternity wards is still framed in the symbolic language of sacrifice and compromises. Personal and family life has to surrender to professional life, to the formal curricula of the hospital, which is informally engaged in reproducing a gendered organisational regime and the gender universe, and in creating symbolic harm (Acker, 1990; Bourdieu, 2001; Harding, 1987). Striving to have both a perfect career and a family was described by female respondents from the research study as being hazardous to one's health, and the resulting arrangement was usually described as being 'good enough'. Doctor Pearl continues describing the compromises she made trying to balance work and family:

> 'You should be moderate in your ambitions, and be satisfied that you have a job that is valued socially because it is good, you enjoy it and you do it well and properly, you fulfil your own desires. This means being reliable, working autonomously, you help other people and do no harm. Well, I must say that's

it, if you want to have both [have a family and work in medical profession].' (Doctor Pearl)

The following citation represents the opinion of many of the women who were interviewed in terms of how it reflects on the hardships of their own experience, and provides a generalised perception of the roles of professional women in medicine:

> 'As a woman, as a mother, I always say that a female physician cannot perform all of her three functions [mother, wife and doctor] equally well. You always cheat one to manage the other two. And, as a woman, you have loads of other headaches in comparison to the men there, which is logical....So the female physician is worse off precisely because she cannot devote so much time to her specialisation because she is spreading herself too thinly for the family and the profession...women have to go through these two ordeals by fire....So the guys have an advantage in this. It is easier for them professionally because they have fewer burdens. When they want to, when they arrange it well, they can have their professions. A woman will never be in such a position, or she has to give up her family, which involves terrible harm. That's how things are.' (Doctor Ice)

These women usually live in dual career marriages/partnerships, so besides being required to deal with negotiations and time management in the profession itself, organisation must also be coordinated between children and spouse so as to harmonize time schedules. This includes husbands' business trips and other obligations, or the fact that spouses may not even be living in the same household (as is sometimes the case with dual medical career families when one of the adults works abroad). The women in the profession frame their experiences as sacrifices. Doctor Down, a mother of two children now employed in a private practice, says about this issue:

> 'To stay in the OB-GYN clinic full time means sacrificing your own life. In my opinion.' (Doctor Down)

Men colleagues may also interpret the working environment, conditions and context using a very dichotomous gendered perspective, representing the gender differences embodied in the symbolic system described by Harding. The compromises that women describe as sacrifices, men colleagues may see differently in a way that approves of and partly legitimises the status quo. One male doctor frames this as 'the problem of women':

> 'The evergreen problem with the women here is that they leave the profession to go on maternity leave at such a delicate time – you can see how many young female doctors have to make a choice between the profession and having a family – and often when they return after these six or seven years of parental leave, the prime years for making the greatest professional efforts and striving for a career are gone, you know....So, after some two to three years of practice

there comes a time when you start operating and doing the really hard stuff, and actually learning the skills, and this is precisely the time when the girls have a tendency to go on maternity leave. So, this is always the price of making a compromise.' (Doctor Sheep)

This doctor, who works in a county hospital, reflects on the professional careers of women from the perspective of his practice and an experience of uninterrupted career advancement. He assumes that professional mothers go on long parental leave with each of their children (the assumption is that there will be two), which is statistically not the case, especially for women in the medical profession (Kuchařová et al., 2006). Thus, this man doctor is interpreting the world using a dualistic symbolic gender perspective by assigning the drive for a career to the early stages of professional experience, and by interpreting the parental involvement of women as an exclusive, extended period of separation from work. He uses this perspective as an argument for legitimizing the status quo: the dissociation between having a professional career and being a mother in a hospital environment. He follows this by describing the context using the rhetoric that women 'lose their personal ambition' to advance with their careers, their reluctance to take 'senior positions in hospital shifts', their unwillingness to work overtime or take on weekend shifts, and their reluctance to engage in surgery and preference for working with out-patient services in order to align their working hours with the opening times of childcare facilities. He acknowledges the hardships mothers have with combining family and professional life, and understands their retreat from the profession. He also mentions that the only possible way to remain working in surgery is to have relatives (esp. grandmothers) who can help out to a significant extent, and having a husband/partner who can cope with the demands placed on a medical professional as well. However, he interprets the situation overall as being the responsibility of the individual, not a structural or even gendered phenomenon.

Doctor Plaster, a head doctor in a county maternity hospital, reflects on the changing patterns of family and care arrangements. However, as a boss, his analysis of the situation is simple and similar to the formerly described:

'There is no difference in the quality of the work of a lady or a gentleman, you know. Absolutely none. But with the ladies, there is the terrible thing called pregnancy....When they come back, and they do this when their child is a year or a year-and-a-half old..., they return and get straight to it, they even take shifts or share shifts with someone else. After all it is more difficult to leave a small kid to go to work on a night shift, isn't it?' (Doctor Plaster)

The message is clear: the caring world of women should be isolated from the working regime of the profession. Motherhood (pregnancy) is presented as being something isolated and disconnected from the integral world of hospital life, the mother is framed as being the sole caregiver and/or a professional who is very likely to undertake only a limited spectrum of tasks that fit into the routine of the hospital. There is no room for balance within the institution, or more generally within the Czech health care system.

3. Compromises: 'Women Buying their Rights to their Jobs'

The opportunities and challenges of maintaining a work-life balance are not solely related to the working environment but depend on arrangements in the private sphere. The analysis has so far already touched upon how dual careers are accommodated into the regimes of the medical profession in the context of the gender universe which symbolically differentiates between motherly care and a manly career. The balancing act can become more complicated in the case of single mothers or distant families but the assumption of the existence of a normative pattern of heterosexual marriages still prevails. And here, despite plural and multiple individual arrangements and shared practices, the symbolic framing and language used to describe the lives of medical professionals strongly reproduces the pattern of gender differences.

Topical research into the least conventional family arrangement – fathers playing a nurturing role on parental leave with young children – revealed the strong inclination to interpret such choices in gender terms, complying with dualistic stereotypical expectations (Šmídová, 2008b). The symbolic gender order betrays this arrangement, despite individual everyday practices and the unconventional division of labour institutionalized by the father on parental leave (Harding, 1987). The symbolically powerful association of women with caring motherhood and men as breadwinners results in silence about women's careers in these families, and acts to preserve certain areas of motherhood as symbolically dominant over everyday men's care. Thus women with spouses on parental leave did not talk publicly about their family arrangements in relation to their own role as the primary breadwinners. However, they often had the final say about childcare-related decisions (for example, the choice of appropriate clothing, or healthcare emergencies (Šmídová, 2008b).

Bonnie Fox (Fox, 2009), Caroline Gatrell (Gatrell, 2005), Arlie Hochschild (Hochschild, 1989), Katheryne Backett-Milburn (Backett-Milburn, 1982) and others have highlighted various other difficulties that are encountered when attempting to harmonize professional work with family and personal lives at the level of private sphere arrangements from a feminist social science position. The general outcome of such empirical inquiries indicates that men are valued for both their conventional and nonconventional approaches to family arrangements, whereas women in dual career families are looked at with caution (and are expected to fail in terms of their mothering involvements), or their enormous workloads over those two shifts is observed with silence and taken for granted. These conclusions are valid in the hospital context and in terms of work-life balance in the medical profession. A doctor in a senior hospital position characterises these attitudes in an interview in these terms:

> 'A woman hurtling back home after a night shift, getting there tired to death, makes sure that she does the shopping, cooks, and cleans up the flat to make everything ready for her husband to get home. So domestic harmony is being created, and this is a means for the woman to buy her right to do her own job and live in her chosen environment. When her performance is excellent in this respect, nobody can blame her, right? Isn't this terrible?' (Doctor Pearl)

Male physicians with small children refer to different arrangements for maintaining work-life balance. They may take regular absences from family life. Some of them described the arrangements they made to collect overtime to allow them to take long holidays with their families within a fixed time period. One doctor stated that he sees role as being like that of a sailor spending periods of time at sea, and then sailing home to his haven. Others added that they savour the status of being 'precious items' for their kids when they go home, and receiving the full service provided by their wives. In this respect, their attitudes do not differ much from those identified with other early-stage families documented in similar research efforts in the Czech context (Šmídová, 2008a; Šmídová, 2011b).

The organization of hospital life, a formal working organisation, is considerably less flexible than the arrangements in place in the private sphere. Long shifts followed by night shifts, emergencies that need to be dealt with at the end of scheduled working hours and a lack of flexibility as concerns individual cases, the entrenched hierarchy in decision-making processes, protocols and competencies, etc. all influence the demands on performance in the profession. The situation is complicated by the gender regime which exists at the hospitals. Despite the feminisation of this area of work, it seems, based on the research interviews that were conducted, that it is not well understood that women in healthcare frequently work in 'assistant' positions (and professions) for 'the professionals' (professors), and their role as caregivers is interpreted as natural and primary.

On the one hand, the gender-stereotypical understanding of women in the medical profession primarily as caregivers is imprinted in the framework that bosses (senior consultants, head doctors) use in anticipating their future successors. It is even reflected in the level of willingness these professional women are expected to have to make sacrifices in terms of the work-life divide. Thus women encounter a lack of understanding from bosses, all men, who follow the conventional approach to careers in the medical profession: the sacrifice of a personal life. The insurmountable problems include requests to be allowed to finish on time in order to get to kindergartens before closing time, or arrangements for temporary absences from weekend shift lists, or even requests for part-time jobs. On the other hand, some women in the profession go along with this pattern due to their long years of work in such an atmosphere and the existence of gendered expectations, in combination with typically conventional and less flexible private arrangements.

4. Private Arrangements and Organizational Momentum Combined in 'Doing Both Tasks Well Enough'

Disregarding particular family arrangements or phases of the family life cycle, some women expect special treatment or some relief from work due to their status as mothers. Others actively struggle to meet demands and refer to compromises they make to maintain a standard of 'good-enough' in the spheres of work and life, as mentioned earlier. The gender universe in the heads of the decision makers channels them all into one group.

Then, at a certain stage in their life, women turn out to be a desirable group of employees, as Doctor Pearl agrees. Their careers as mothers and their striving for a

better work-life balance places them in a very specific situation in the job market; this applies at least to those who have remained in a hospital working environment.

> 'Your plans with reproduction are finished, and first of all you are more willing to work for less pay. It goes without saying that a woman always asks for less, behaves more politely, and is more considerate and less confident in her relationships with her employer. She is always loyal, and does not threaten her boss, either professionally or financially. She has 'other troubles' after all, such as taking care of the family, and is usually not in the position of being the main breadwinner. I have first-hand experience of this, and have heard it many times from my female colleagues.' (Doctor Pearl)

Some physicians, however, in harmonizing work and life chose a different path. Their solution to a stressful work-life (im)balance is exit. They leave hospitals to work in private practices, as their regime enables them to better manage their time as primary caregivers, benefitting from a less demanding workload. Doctor Down reflects upon the reasons for her exit in combination with resentment and regret, although she claims to miss the adrenaline and the way she was appreciated in the hospital setting as a 'life-saver'. She also refers to her own naivety when originally planning to return to a full-time hospital job after maternity leave:

> 'I regretted losing touch with the delivery room, the surgery, so when I called them back, I only asked for an adjustment to be made, until my children grow up a bit, meaning that I would be able to work part time, which turned out to be a major problem. A critical problem. Unsurmountable by hospital management. It was 'either or': work full-time, meaning 6 or 7 overnight shifts a month, which I felt was too much, or nothing. And the financial reward was (low), when I look back at it, for all the stress at the surgery. I cannot imagine taking the same steps now, arriving there, saying, so here I am.... As I see it, the girls – physicians – after getting pregnant, they never return.' (Doctor Down)

Doctor Ice, owner of a private practice and a mother of a disabled daughter, recalls her experience as follows:

> 'No one has ever shown any consideration of this, although I had not expected it; what I did mind, though, was the situation of never knowing till the very last moment whether I would be able to leave to arrive in time for her medical check-ups, which were planned long ahead of time. Now I am my own boss, which is the biggest bonus. I can organize work for myself and need not beg anybody. There was such an atmosphere there... I was not sure at the clinic till the very last hour, if they would let... if I would manage to leave or not, because the organisation of time was kind of... at that time in the clinic, not as it should have been. So I took it as an injustice because you could always..., there was no will to help, I would say. So there came the moment when I decided to be my own boss, organize my work in a better way and have less stress, you know.' (Doctor Ice)

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Doctor Down then developed the notion – as clarified in the interview – of an informal hospital curricula that helps team members to combine work and family. However, even this arrangement may be gendered in a very particular way. Childless young women are more willing, in her opinion, to step in to do extra work in case of need, whereas their male peers tend to disappear in the same situations. This gender pattern becomes somewhat fixed, despite the fact that work-life issues that emerge at later stages of life affect women more than men. The expectations that professionals should 'be available' in unexpected situations are unequally placed on mothers.

The fact that being employed in a hospital involves long working hours and overnight shifts was mentioned by men and women physicians alike as an obstacle to the creation of a harmonious family life. Some of the burden, then, also falls on the shoulders of (male) physicians in senior positions. The head doctor of a county maternity hospital outlines the situation as follows:

> 'Especially when you take into consideration certain time slots, when in fact you work from 7 a.m. till 2 p.m. or 3 p.m., sometimes 8 p.m., and then from 8 p.m. in order to earn some money at the hospital you do overnight shifts, this is the everlasting hospital rule. Well, and the overnight shift, no matter whether it is a hard or an easy one... you can get careworn simply by sitting here, you know.... And the fact you are still here is usually not enjoyed by spouses.' (Doctor Plaster)

This doctor then goes on to explain how emergencies and the absences of colleagues influence the 24/7 rhythm of a hospital ward and the negative effect they have on private life, in his case meaning that his own partner is unable to rely on him participating in any shared activities. From the perspective of the working organization, this indicates that the lenses of gender universe are well embedded. The following excerpt from a citation precedes and also follows the earlier one which referred to 'women getting pregnant':

> 'Men are in a terribly short supply in medicine. ... Men usually take the shift work. So seen from the operational perspective, a guy is more valuable, you know. Than a woman. The single reason for this is that they do not get pregnant.' (Doctor Plaster)

Despite the symbolic dual gender framing, which legitimizes men as those who 'take the shifts', Doctor Plaster is now training his third male successor in a row. Both preceding doctors have left for jobs in the private sector. Thus, Doctor Plaster must deal with professional staff leaving his ward in two opposing directions along the gender axis: his young male colleagues that he selects for training for entry into executive positions (ideally those with the most gifted and skilled hands) tend to leave create their own private businesses. Working at private gynaecological practices or clinics means that they can financially provide for their families and often benefit from more flexible working time arrangements. These physicians often maintain a part-time job at a hospital to keep them up-to-date with their specialisation. They may even

bring private clients to the hospital if surgery is required, but they are not willing to take on executive positions, no matter how readily they would be awarded them by a boss. From their experience they know how much professional responsibility and even legal responsibility would be placed on their shoulders in a county hospital setting. Accordingly, it is often a boss (a head doctor), who steps in to serve in the case of the unexpected absence of colleagues.

Women, on the other hand, 'tend to get pregnant', and when they return are too bound-up with their private lives to sacrifice them for 24/7 hospital life. And while they may individually struggle to maintain a reasonable work-life balance in the inflexible setting of hospital work, they sometimes leave for the private sphere and start their own private practices, obtain employment in existing ones, or at private clinics (often) for assisted reproduction. Those who stay typically avoid taking on senior, advanced positions which involve full responsibility for a hospital ward, or must sacrifice their family lives for this purpose. They do so in a situation when they are not taken into account for executive positions in any way. I have previously described the factors involved in the systematic exclusion of professional women from the most prestigious types of work on a gender basis in a different context (a subchapter entitled *Bosses and mothers: reproducing the status quo* (Šmídová, 2014: 134-135).

Individual experiences of powerlessness in the organizational setting are thus not exclusive to team members. Bosses may also struggle with adapting to the personal life strategies of their colleagues too. The resulting feeling of being left on their own to sort things out only adds to the general perception of their situation as cogs in the machine, as stated earlier. The traits of organizational gender order and the effects of a gendered organization are more powerful than individual strategies, and the least flexible issue of all is again the stereotypically little-reflected-on category of gender which structures power relations and sets up opportunities or barriers to the creation of different work-life balance arrangements.

5. The Gender Universe of the Clinic

Clinics are a spectacular arena for examining the combination of strong organizational momentum regarding the symbolic system of the gender universe. I dwell on them in the final analytical section of this article. At clinics, there the same framing of women professionals occurs as in other environments, drawing on the research interview analysis. The customary limitation of (potential) motherhood is further complicated by the need for competition in scientific performance, and perceived injustices may be even more intense (this was touched upon earlier when citing doctor Pearl, who was asked: 'So, where is your Ph.D. and where are your publications?') Doctor Zinc herself left a university hospital for a smaller county hospital after working at the former for more than ten years; at the time of the research interview she was on a maternity leave. Her recollection of the competitive professional and scientific environment characteristic of larger clinics is rather harsh:

'So, you know, interpersonal relationships were related to this, there were people who pretty blatantly and bluntly ...it was evident what they were up to,

only striving to further their own careers at any cost. Stopping at nothing - bulldozing others, or going to bed, and the like. I can put it like that.' (Doctor Zinc)

Disclosure of the fact that clinical practice is far from ideal for those in need was a factor repeated in the descriptions of disillusionment with the profession. This context is again important when analysing the choices that men and women can make in this profession. Motherhood is still understood as a socially legitimate exit, and a desirable one, despite its professional effects on individual women or the organization of hospital wards for professors and head doctors. Doctor Snowdrop, a childless single professional, adds a gender perspective to her description of career-related competition based on her own experience, which explicitly excluded women (disregarding their status as mothers). Part of the explanation for such practices is precisely the stereotypical gendered expectations that generalize about female professional 'qualities' that extend beyond motherhood, but which become institutionalised in the gatekeeping process and the competition for hospital positions. These have already been alluded to when documenting the general, overall experience of women, but in the clinical setting, the impact may be augmented.

> 'It was only at the job interview (at a university hospital) when I understood that it was all fake. They had already made their choice of a colleague (a man) but they needed to go through an official process, so I arrived there as a meek lamb, as a scapegoat, it was all so ridiculous. ... The boss of the clinic is still there nowadays (I admired him for his professionalism then) but what he did at the interview (humiliating me)!...so I learned they saw me as a freak, and all of the members of the scientific board came to the show. ... This was totally discouraging and disconcerting and I concluded that in fact I was happy in my former job (at a county hospital), and my reasons for leaving that job were ridiculous ..., so I was glad, suddenly, that I had a job to return to, and I did.' (Doctor Snowdrop)

Doctor Snowdrop frames her experience as a gendered one. At the time of our research interview she was working at a university clinic in a different city, holding a semi-executive position in an area of specialisation. When asked about her private or family life, she responded that she had none. I also interviewed some of her colleagues, two of whom (women) indicated that she had been overlooked in the career advancement process at the clinic, although she had undoubtedly deserved promotion based on her professional performance. The head doctor positions for two of the relevant and specialised posts were awarded to younger, male colleagues.

Conclusion

The experiences described in the previous sections indicate the existence of a deep structure embedded in the organizational decision-making processes that reaches beyond need to harmonize work and life. In this example, the objective obstacle to caregiving in the private sphere did not apply, and Doctor Snowdrop's ambitions of

being a senior doctor corresponded to her professional performance. The symbolic universe, the gender universe, and the institutionalised division of labour between bosses (professors) and mothers, even in a highly prestigious profession, follows a gendered pattern, as Sandra Harding reveals (Harding, 1987; Šmausová, 2002), with significant impact, especially at the symbolic level.

It is important to note that embedded into the system of hospital care is the legacy of the strong paternalistic system present in the Czech context before 1989, and of the distorted approach to professional performance from the time of the Soviet bloc and the rapid transformation of the post-socialist period (Heitlinger, 1987; Speier et al., 2014; Šmídová et al., 2015). It is also clear, however, that the existence of such gender regimes requires urgent organizational rather than individual corrective measures. Despite the statistical feminisation of the medical profession, the institutionalised structures in hospital regimes remain resistant to change (Oakley, 1993; OECD, 2013 and 2015; Riska and Novelskaite, 2008; Riska and Wegar, 1993; Riska, 2012; Zetka, 2008; O'Brien, 1983; Kilminster et al., 2007; Laqueur, 2002; Becker et al., 1977) and the visibility of women in medicine both as patients and as professionals is highly distorted (Treichler et al., 1998; Šmídová, 2015a; Šmídová, 2011a).

The scientific and professional prestige of career advancement is reserved for men, while women are seen through the lens of motherhood. Hospitals and clinics are gendered organizations (Acker, 1990) with very strong formal as well as informal regimes that act to reproduce the duality of mothers and professors. This symbolic duality of professors and mothers is reproduced in the gender universe, the symbol system of gender difference (Harding, 1987) that is not taken into account by the key actors in the hospital hierarchy. So far, evidence that refutes or has effectively been used to subvert the status quo remains exceptional. Individual cases remain framed as exceptions, confirming the rule of the status quo of the gender universe. In such a discoursive setting, any policies directed towards improving work-life balance have only a very limited reach, affecting the top ranking positions in the medical hierarchy.

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HENRIETT PRIMECZ, ANDREA TOARNICZKY, CSABA KISS, SÁRA CSILLAG, ROLAND SZILAS, ANDA MILASSIN AND KATALIN BÁCSI *
Information and Communications Technology's Impact on Work–life Interference: Cases of 'Employee-friendly Organizations'[1]

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Abstract

In our paper we examine the theoretical and practical impacts of information technology on work and work–life interference. Our paper is based on the results of the 'Employee Friendly Workplace' research project conducted in Hungary between 2007 and 2012, in which we explored the practices of ten family-friendly or best workplace prize-winning companies using qualitative research methods (individual interviews and focus groups). The main foci of our study are to explore the different perceptions, expectations and interpretations regarding employees' work–life balance, how these are related to companies' employee friendliness, how the employee-friendly practices are transformed by Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

Based on our research, the role of ICT is controversial: 24-hour online availability and the opportunity to work over the Internet with computers and mobile phones from anywhere can evidently support a healthy work-life balance (WLB) and provide the possibility of a more flexible work schedule. At the same time, though, these can disturb the balance and invade private lives, creating a kind of 'modern slavery'. In some cases employees become addicted, and the border between their work and their private life becomes blurred: they are willing to sacrifice their family time or hobby to work day and night, and in some cases this can become an expectation towards employees as well. We reach the final conclusion that technology solves several problems connected with work–family balance and obviously helps employees to find self-fulfilment in their work and family at the same time, while it creates new problems: overwork, obsession with work (and technology itself), mental and physical exhaustion and burnout. At the same time, work social support, independently from ICT, provides the greatest help for employees in need.

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1. Introduction

We are witnessing a radical change in workplaces that might affect people's lives to a similar extent as the separation of home and workplace did during the Industrial Revolution. In the nineteenth century, work and life became clearly separate (Golden and Geisler, 2007), and this revolutionized gender roles, created a public–private dichotomy between the two separate spheres and consequently caused work–life balance issues to emerge. The forces of capitalism (Kaufman-Scarborough, 2006) and post-Fordist time regimes – which even refer to greedy organizations (Geszler, 2016) – occupied an increasing amount of space in people's private sphere. It seems that information and communication technologies (ICT) also have an enormous impact on people's working and private life.

In this paper we disseminate the results of a research project concerning the impact of information and communication technology on work–life interference. The aim of our 'Employee Friendly Workplaces' project was to uncover the actual organizational and individual practices shaping employees' perception and interpretation of their work–life balance in contemporary Hungarian organizations. We wanted to highlight good and bad practices, so we approached organizations that have a reputation for being employee friendly. We defined employee-friendly organizations as those that are rewarded as the best workplaces, family-friendly workplaces or most desired workplaces or those that emphasize their inclusive and supportive work practices in their employer branding. Employee-friendly work practices include work-life balance supporting organizational practices, and we focus on these in this paper. Within organizations we did not want to concentrate only on young mothers or young parents, who are probably the most often investigated group of employees when the research question concerns work–life boundaries, but we wanted to obtain a fuller picture by including employees with caring responsibilities for people other than children (e.g. ageing parents or other relatives), employees with special hobbies (time-demanding or specific sources demanding activities outside work) and any other employees who want to live a full life and whose life is not fully occupied with their work, which we hoped was true for the majority of working adults. This is why we defined our research as employee-friendly organizational research, which might include family-friendly practices or any form of employee-supportive initiatives. Although the initial idea was to concentrate on work–life boundaries, one theme that emerged during the empirical study was ICT. After understanding the role of information technology in practice, we realized that these changes are so fundamental that they lie at the very heart of the actual practices of contemporary work, so we placed information communication technology at the centre of our investigation.

The structure of the paper is the following. In the theoretical part, we investigate both the work–life boundary literature and the impact of ICT on the lives of employees', with special emphasis on work–life boundaries. In the second part of the paper, we introduce the research project and the research methods applied, present our empirical findings and explore the employee-friendly practices used in the investigated Hungarian organizations, because we realize that these practices shape the

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employees' expectations and perception of work–life boundaries. Therefore, we do not investigate the direct impact of ICT on work–life boundaries; rather, we explore how employee-friendly practices are changed by ICT and how this reframes their relationship with the perception and interpretation of work–life boundaries. Work-family balance literature (Michel et al., 2009) indicate that there are four factors which clearly influence work-family boundaries: (1) work social support, (2) job involvement, (3) work role conflict and work role overload, and (4) work role ambiguity, and these factors also emerged in our empirical investigations, so we organized our findings accordingly. Finally, in the conclusion we evaluate the changes in contemporary workplaces in the light of the theories presented and the empirical findings uncovered.

2. Work–life boundaries and ICT: Theoretical background

The available time of an adult person can be divided into different spheres: production and consumption or production and reproduction, paid time, obliged time and discretionary time, work and life and so on. Kaufman-Scarborough (2006) compiled a comprehensive summary of the literature in this sense, and we apply Arndt et al.'s (1981, in: Kaufman-Scarborough, 2006) division to capture the main domains of adults' life: *career-oriented activities*, *home-oriented activities* and *leisure-oriented activities*. While we are fully aware of the fact that family is only a small part of home-oriented activities and leisure-oriented activities, work–family interference investigations can be found most frequently in the literature, which is why we highlight concepts that only concentrate on the work–family issues, because we believe that they are applicable to our wider empirical investigations as well with or without minor changes. Geurts and Demerouti (2003) summarized the development of the theoretical concepts into three groups: (1) classic theories, (2) role-related theories and (3) current theories. We concentrate on the role-related theories and the current theories in our paper.

2.1 Role-related theories

Individuals may fulfil several roles at the same time. Research focusing on the consequences of this phenomenon has come up with two variants: the theory of scarcity and the theory of enhancement. The fundamental thesis of the theory of scarce resources is that people have limited time, energy and attention resources. Consequently, multiple roles require the sharing of these limited resources, thus, scheduling and allocation will have key importance. The more roles the individual undertakes, the more probable it is that fulfilling one role will hamper another, which leads to the exhaustion of resources and, ultimately, role strain appears (Goode, 1960). In contrast to the theory of compensation, the reasons for resource sharing are not dealt with here. Instead, the theory of scarce resources focuses only on the individual's inner, personal resources (Haar and Bardoel, 2008). Much of work-life boundary research explicitly or implicitly builds on this assumption. Critiques (Sieber, 1974; Marks, 1977) argue that fulfilling multiple roles does not necessarily lead to

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negative consequences in each case. Subsequently, this gave impetus to the enhancement approach.

The main theoretical starting point of the enhancement approach is that taking up multiple roles may even result in positive consequences. Sieber (1974) suggested that in the case of individuals simultaneously fulfilling multiple roles, advantageous influences may outweigh strain caused by role accumulation. Four positive consequences of role accumulation are given: role privileges, status security, getting access to resources that support status enhancement and role performance, personal enrichment.

As an alternative to the theory of scarcity, Marks (1977) came up with the so-called expansion theory. Although this theory seems to respond to the contemporary challenges of individuals, it is again an under-researched issue in everyday practice. According to this, time and energy are not to be considered as inherently scarce resources which set up limitations in individuals' lives, but rather, they make sense as factors determined by a certain 'contract' made by the individual concerning a given role(s). This theory presupposes that physical and mental energy is abundant and continually renewable at the hands of the individual. The feeling of exhaustion in a given role is not due to the exhausting nature of the role itself but to the person's commitment to a given role(s). Supposing the individual has more and less important roles to fulfil at the same time, the feeling of scarcity will be felt in the less important roles, i.e. when they wish they could use time better elsewhere.

As most theories concentrate on the problematic side of the issue, these are the most quoted approaches. The work-family conflict concept applies the theory of scarce resources to the work-family interface. The two life domains are in competition for the same resources (time, attention, energy), although the individual has only a limited supply of them. Consequently, the individuals have to share their resources between the two domains since satisfying one role expectation makes it difficult or even impossible to satisfy the other, so the individual is faced with a role conflict when he tries to fulfil work and family roles (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985).

Work-family conflict is a fundamental source of strain and has a strong influence on the individual's well-being (Frone et al., 1994). According to Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), work-family conflict may be related to three main principles: time, strain and behaviour.

Time-based conflict means that time dedicated to fulfilling the expectations of one domain is used up by fulfilling expectations of the other domain.

Strain-based conflict in essence, means that strain (dissatisfaction, anxiety, exhaustion etc.) caused by one domain makes it difficult to meet the challenges of the other domain.

Behaviour-based conflict refers to the phenomenon when behaviour forms that work well in one domain are not efficient in the other – yet the individual is unable to change them.

In all the three types of conflict a distinction may be made between the influence of work on family (WIF) and the influence of family on work (FIW). In the former case, the domain of work has a negative influence on family life; in the latter case, it is vice versa (Gutek et al., 1991; Frone et al., 1997).

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The above conflict types are shown in the table below (Carlson et al., 2000).

Table 1 – WIF and FIW

		Direction of work-family conflict	
		Work interference with family	*Family interference with work*
Type of work-family conflict	*Time*	Time-Based WIF	Time-Based FIW
	Strain	Strain-Based WIF	Strain-Based FIW
	Behavioural	Behaviour-Based WIF	Behavioural-Based FIW

In both WIF and FIW, several antecedents can be shown in the two domains. However, as Frone, Russell and Cooper (1992) underlined, there is evidence suggesting that work happens to interfere with family life (WIF) more frequently than family life interferes with work (FIW). Recent studies have shown that WIF and FIW have different antecedents: work-related antecedents have a stronger impact on WIF, while problems stemming from the family domain have a bigger influence on FIW (Fu and Shaffer, 2001). Therefore, in this paper we concentrate on the work-related antecedents of WIF. In most of the theoretical models dealing with work-family conflict the most frequently identified antecedents related to the domains of work and their descriptions are summarized in Table 2 (Michel et al., 2009). Not only theoretical articles, but also empirical findings support the relationship between these variables and WIF. Thomas and Ganster (1995) reported that work-related social support may alleviate work-family interference. The data obtained by Frone et al. (1997) gave support to these findings. Numerous research studies underpin the existing positive relationship between an individual's job involvement and perceived WIF (Frone and Rice, 1987; Frone et al., 1992). Work role conflict too appeared to be positively related to WIF (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985; Fu and Shaffer, 2001). There is some evidence suggesting that work role overload inflates WIF (Beigi et al., 2012; Byron, 2005), and the same can be said regarding role ambiguity (Aryee, 1992).

Table 2 – The most frequently identified antecedents of WIF and FIW

Theoretical concept	Definition	Source
Work Social Support	'Social support is an interpersonal transaction that involves emotional concern, instrumental aid, information, or appraisal.'	*House, 1981, p. 39 in: Carlson and Perrewé, 1999, p. 514*
Job Involvement	'Cognitive or belief state of psychological identification.'	*Kanungo, 1982, p. 342*
Work Role Conflict	'Simultaneous occurrence of two (or more) sets of pressures such that compliance with one would make more difficult compliance with the other.'	*Kahn et al., 1964, p. 19*

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Work Role Overload	'An individual's level of perceived role overload in the work domain.'	*Carlson and Kacmar, 2000, p. 1039*
Work Role Ambiguity	'The lack of clear, consistent information that is associated with a person's position.'	*Kahn et al., 1964*

2.2 Current theories of WLB

The concept of work–life balance (**WLB**) is broadly used in both everyday life and scientific terminology. Work-family balance (**WFB**) is less often mentioned in everyday contexts, yet scientific research places much more focus on this than on work-life balance. The most probable reason for this is that WFB can be operationalized better than WLB; that is, the two domains that WFB refers to can be more specifically addressed.

Initially, the concept was given a negative definition, being identified as the absence of conflict between work and family: 'Satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home with a minimum of role conflict' (Clark, 2001: 349). (In the terminology of the above models, WFB was high when the influence of the work domain on the family domain (**WIF**), and vice versa (**FIW**), was of low frequency and low intensity.)

After the turn of the millennium, Greenhaus et al. (2003: 513) gave a preliminary definition of WFB: 'the extent to which an individual is equally engaged in – and equally satisfied with – his or her work role and family role'. Voydanoff argued that work–family balance may be derived from the person–environment fit, as WFB is a 'global assessment that work resources meet family demands, and family resources meet work demands such that participation is effective in both domains' (Voydanoff, 2007: 138).

Greenhaus and Allen captured the essence of WFB by defining it as 'the extent to which an individual's effectiveness and satisfaction in work and family roles are compatible with the individual's life priorities' (Their definition was cited by Butler et al., 2009: 10.). Concerning the above definitions, Grzywacz and Carlson (2007) formed three points of criticism:

They are distant from everyday reality; that is, it is improbable that an equal measure of involvement would be necessary in the work and family life domains for the realization of WFB (see Greenhaus et al., 2003).

Voydanoff's (2007) above definition is too abstract and alien to life; that is, it is rather unlikely that ordinary people would try to reach a 'balance' by thinking about how to satisfy their family demands with the help of resources at work (and vice versa).

The concept of 'individual satisfaction' does not include the relationship with other people; that is, it 'isolates individuals in their work and family-related activities from the organizations and families in which these activities are performed' (Grzywacz and Carlson, 2007: 457). Thus, WFB is reduced to an issue of individual perception. Furthermore, the concept allows for the realization of WFB even if – as the case may be – it is harmful to others, which, as the critics have argued, is contrary to the fundamental sense of WFB. If we regard WFB as

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completely dependent on individual perception, three further problems must be faced. First, the phenomenon is difficult to study, as it takes place in individuals' minds. Second, it is almost impossible to form organizational strategies at the system level to improve WFB, because the life conditions of organizational members and their individual perception of them can be very different. Third, since the definition is given at the individual level, in the event of failed WFB, full responsibility is placed on the individual, although the potential roles of organizational and social factors are not negligible either.

On the basis of the above comments, Grzywacz and Carlson (2007) proposed their own definition, which is able to eliminate the above-mentioned problematic aspects and at the same time integrate the strong points of earlier theories. This definition sees work-family balance as an 'accomplishment of role-related expectations that are negotiated and shared between an individual and his or her role-related partners in the work and family domains' (Grzywacz and Carlson, 2007: 458). What makes this approach interesting is that it does not interpret work–family balance from the point of view of individuals but considers individuals in relation to other persons. Moreover, it does not limit individuals in their fulfilment of role expectations; that is, WFB may be realized even with a certain degree of work–family conflict. Furthermore, WFB in this context requires neither efficiency nor satisfaction in any of the life domains. The point is efficient performance in fulfilling roles with positive consequences in the two life domains. Contrary to work–family conflict or work–family enrichment, the concept of WFB does not deal with mutual role influences between the two domains. The main focus in this case is placed on the individuals' ability to take up and respond to the responsibilities arising in the domains of work and family. Obviously, conflict and enrichment between the two domains have their respective influence – and so have a number of other factors, for example how the individual is able to take part in the negotiation process concerning responsibilities in the two life domains (Carlson et al., 2009).

This leads us to the question of who might have an effect on somebody's work–family balance. It is quite obvious that everybody has a responsibility for the decisions in their own life; however, our definition emphasizes the fact that the concept of work–family balance seeks the mutual benefit of the individual, the company and the whole society. Thus, work–life balance features two other protagonists, the company and the state, which – as beneficiaries – have responsibilities as well, because they have numerous tools in their hands to support people in achieving work–family balance.

2.3 ICT's impact on WLB

Greedy organizations (Coser, 1974, cited by Geszler, 2016) expect individuals to engage in work for as long as possible, since the pressure from organizations is endless. Nowadays organizations provide their employees with information technology (laptops, mobile phones, etc.) to guarantee access to their working material (most often information), and connectivity has become an organizational norm (Richardson

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and Benbunan-Fich, 2001). Organizations do not mind whether their employees complete their work tasks at a distance, and they believe that nomadic computing facilitates collaboration and increases the productivity of employees (Richardson and Benbunan-Fich, 2001).

Dén-Nagy (2014), in her literature review, emphasizes that the interpretations of the relationship between the two life domains are diverse and depend on the applied theoretical frameworks. She suggests that two theories dominate the empirical literature on the work–life interface – spillover theory and border theory – and that the impact of ICT could be different in the different frameworks. For example, in the framework of spillover theory (e.g. Király et al., 2015), with ICT tools work can have positive and negative impacts on the other domains and vice versa, so four different groups of impacts can be identified. In the case of border theory, the relationship is more complex: 'border theory argues that the primary connection between work and family systems is not emotional, but human. People are border-crossers and make daily transitions between the two worlds; they shape their environments and they are also shaped by them. Border-crossers, who make frequent transitions between work and family domains, negotiate and cross boundaries and construct the demarcation line. There are also border-keepers, who are especially influential in defining both domains and the border, and other domain members can also play a role in creating the WLB.' (Dén-Nagy, 2014: 197). In border theory the corporate context and culture (as well as the norms of the family) have an important role in accepting or not accepting the decisions of the individual, for example regarding the use of ICT tools. In the state of blending, in which the transitions are so frequent that there are no longer any borders, ICT tools could be of huge importance: they could cause tension and stress (e.g. a working mother feeding her baby while working on the laptop and feeling ashamed about not performing in any role), but they could help to find a balance and an effective way of performing different tasks and feeling proud about it.

While organizations argue that ICT makes better work–life balance practice possible, since working time is more flexible and employees can fulfil their private life duties and desires without many time constraints, the constant connectivity is criticized by family members as 'absent presence' (Middleton, 2008), which means that connected individuals might be present in the family or another private life situation but their mind is absent, since their full focus is on their work.

Although most literature criticizes connectivity as a form of colonization of private life by the organization, since individuals might not stop working in non-work time (Wajcman et al., 2008; Gold and Mustafa, 2013; Hislop et al., 2013), because ICT can create a sense of 'anytime, anywhere' contestability, the work-life boundary becomes blurred and permeable. Wajcman et al. (2008) investigated whether work influences non-work time or vice versa, and their representative survey research proved that contacting family and friends during work hours is actually more present than working in non-work time with the help of ICT devices, in this case with mobile phones.

Work–family enrichment is the least discussed in the literature. Maertz and Boyar (2011) convincingly showed that there are 'episodes' on the boundary when enrichment takes place thanks to information technology, while it is also true that work–family conflict is often present on the boundary as well. We also have to note

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that Kreiner et al.'s (2009) research insightfully revealed that people suffer from the intrusion of work on family – defined as 'boundary violation' – when it is actually against their work–family preferences. To translate it into everyday words, people might not feel it to be problematic to work in non-work time if they prefer to deal with the work issue in this situation, but they might equally be upset if they want to concentrate on private life in the given time. The same can apply in the opposite situation: people might find it problematic to receive a phone call from a family member if they want to concentrate on work, while they might not find it to be a problem at all if they would prefer to have a break from the work at the given moment anyway. The major question – stemming from the previous discussion – is 'who manages the work–life boundary?' The individual or the organization? This question is present in the literature (e.g. Golden and Geisler, 2007), but it is also a central question of our empirical research.

3. Research framework and methodology

The empirical data stem from the 'Employee Friendly Workplaces' research project exploring the organizational practices perceived as employee-friendly and their relationship with employees' expectations and interpretations regarding work–family balance in organizations awarded prizes like 'best workplace', 'family-friendly workplace' or 'most desired workplace'. Qualitative data were gathered to gain access to the complex and varied ways in which organizational members understand, construct and experience employee friendliness and its possible relationship with the work–life interface while uncovering its unexpected, hidden aspects too.

The main research question was: 'How are employee-friendly practices influencing the perception and interpretations of work–family balance?' In our paper we concentrate on the question: 'How are employee friendly practices transformed by ICT?' We approached the field with an exploratory attitude, aiming to discover a wide range of organizational-level (culture, structure, exposed values of founders and owners, etc.), group-level (such as group dynamics and roles) and individual-level (e.g. motivation) practices perceived by organizational members as employee friendly. Following the data analysis, we realized that ICT has a huge impact on our investigated phenomenon; this led us to investigate how the employee-friendly practices are transformed by ICT and how ICT influenced WLB (or WFB).

The empirical research project was launched in 2006, and the data collection took place between 2007 and 2011. The aim was to contact all the prize winners or nominees in the years of data collection. This ambitious plan was only partly fulfilled, because not all the organizations responded to our call. In this paper we focus on six organizations – all winners of one of the above-mentioned prizes – which provide good cases of ICT's transformative effect on employee-friendly practices; besides the positive influences, evidence of work–family conflicts was found. The sample companies are consulting firms (A, B and C), a publishing company (D), an FMCG (Fast-moving Consumer Goods) company (E) and a bank (F). Detailed data on our sample are presented in Tables 3 and 4.

Table 3 Focus groups

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	Sector	Number of participants	Positions
Focus group1	HR consultant	8	employees
Focus group2	HR consultant	8	middle managers
Focus group3	Media	5	employees
Focus group4	Media	7	middle managers
Focus group5	Management consulting	8	employees
Focus group6	Management consulting	7	middle managers
Focus group7	Management consulting	6	employees
Focus group8	Management consulting	6	middle managers
Focus group9	FMCG	6	employees
Focus group10	FMCG	7	middle managers
Focus group11	bank	6	employees
Focus group12	bank	6	middle managers

Table 4 Interviews

	Gender	Parental status	Age	Education	Area
Interviewee1	female	pregnant	25-35	University	HR
Interviewee2	female	grandmother	55-65	College	accounting
Interviewee3	female	mother	25-35	University	CEO
Interveiwee4	female	mother of twins	25-35	College	HR
Interviewee5	male	non parent	20	Secondary	HR
Interviewee6	female	mother	45-55	college	HR
Interviewee7	male	father	25-35	university	HR
Interviewee8	female	grandmother	55-65	college	CEO
Interviewee9	female	mother	25-35	college	Finance
Interviewee10	male	father	35-45	college	art manger
Interviewee11	female	single mother	35-45	university	PR
Interviewee12	female	non parent	25-35	university	marketing
Interviewee13	male	father	35-45	university	HR
Interviewee14	female	non parent	25-35	university	consultant
Interviewee15	female	non parent	25-35	university	consultant
Interviewee16	female	mother	35-45	university	HR
Interviewee17	female	mother	35-45	university	partner
Interviewee18	male	father	35-45	university	partner
Interviewee19	male	father	35-45	university	partner
Interviewee20	male	non parent	35-45	university	CEO
Interviewee21	male	father	45-55	college	sales
Interviewee22	male	father	45-55	college	training manager
Interviewee23	male	non parent	45-55	university	sales
Interviewee24	female	mother	35-45	university	assistant
Interviewee25	female	mother	35-45	university	trainer
Interviewee26	female	mother	25-35	university	HR
Interviewee27	female	mother	25-35	university	marketing
Interviewee28	female	mother	35-45	university	finance
Interviewee29	male	father	35-45	university	sales
Interviewee30	female	mother	35-45	university	sales
Interviewee31	male	father	35-45	university	IT
Interviewee 32	female	mother	35-45	university	HR
Interviewee 33	female	mother	35-45	university	finance
Interviewee 34	male	father	25-35	university	finance
Interviewee 35	male	father	35-45	university	finance
Interviewee 36	male	father	35-45	university	IT

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	Gender	Parental status	Age	Education	Area
Interviewee 37	female	mother	35-45	university	finance

The contact with the organizations was established through the HR managers, who also contacted the organizational members and asked them to participate in the research. During the data collection, the largest amount of data was generated through interviews (focus groups and individuals). We started with an HR expert interview to gain a deeper understanding of the official HR discourses regarding organizational practices aiming at employee friendliness, the kind of person recruited and promoted and the organizational culture while also asking for help in identifying further useful informants from different organizational levels. Two focus group interviews were organized in each company – one focus group interview for the middle management from different functional areas and one for the employees, each with 6–10 participants. We conducted several individual qualitative interviews in each company (3–4 top management interviews and 3–5 employee interviews). From each organization we collected relevant documents, like organizational charts, orientation books, collective agreements and HR procedure documentation such as mentoring systems, career management systems, cafeteria systems (if there were any), ethical declarations or other important statements. In this paper we concentrate on the findings of the focus groups and personal interviews.

4. Main findings

We answer our research questions by exploring the practices perceived by the employees as being employee friendly, which help them to prevent work–family conflict, and by showing the interconnections with ICT. We discuss these interconnections depending on four commonly identified antecedents of WIF (Michel et al., 2009): (1) work social support, (2) job involvement, (3) work role conflict and work role overload, and (4) work role ambiguity.

4.1 Work social support

The main support in work comes from immediate colleagues. In cases in which the employees cooperate in teams, several examples are to be found about supporting each other. In cases in which everybody performs their own duties, they substitute for each other when necessary (because of their children being ill or other urgent problems). Most of our interviewees told us that the facts that they know each other's work and that there is a sort of *esprit de corps* make it possible to help each other out in the department. This gives flexibility to everybody, which is very useful when unexpected events happen in their private lives that have a very high priority and cannot wait. Here the company only provides the framework for their employee-friendly practice; the employees themselves, the small communities, create the actual practices and give the support.

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> Here, at our company we try to respect that everybody may have some private duties that need their attention as well. These duties may be related to the children, or to old parents, who need nursing. When – for example – somebody's aged mother needs medical help, then the employee must leave the workplace. We always solve this situation, because we have enough employees, and we undertake each other's tasks without complaint. And this favour is reciprocal – next time it'll be returned. (Focus group, employee, Company A)

ICT offers new possibilities for supporting others, as the associated costs and time involved in asking for help and providing help are much lower than those for personal, face-to-face support. In this regard ICT helps to elevate the level of work social support among colleagues. However, this might lead to 'overconsumption' of support, which might have a negative effect on the individuals' WLB.

> It is expected at my company that we should be reachable during vacations. I told them that I am not happy about it, I usually climb during my vacation: I have two daughters around me and I do not want to answer mobile phones in the mountains. (Focus group, manager, Company F)

In this case we found that although connectivity has become an organizational norm (Richardson and Benbunan-Fich, 2001), it is also accompanied by the norm of reciprocal substitution of colleagues, and as a consequence the interviewees reported high levels of work satisfaction and the negative effects of WIF could be reduced. The presence of the norm of reciprocal substitution goes together with silence around ICT, which highlights the transformed nature of connectivity – trusted personal relationships connect, and technology only supports this.

Sometimes the company provides the flexible framework, but it is the close community and the direct manager who create the actual practice:

> The editorial office is designed so that everybody works in pairs. This is a compromise sometimes, but on the other hand it is functioning very well. (...) It is clear who is your partner, so if I don't finish my job, and I leave it for you, the next time you can do the same for me. (Focus group, employee, Company D)

Similarly to our earlier example, we also found evidence here for the significance of reciprocal collegial obligations in making technology work for the benefit of the employees and the organization. These examples also highlight the cultural embeddedness of the above-mentioned relationships, in which group work and results are more important than individual performance and technology becomes supportive.

4.2 Job involvement

When work is hobby, high job involvement is present, and in this case the availability of ICT is perceived as supportive for work-life balance, and consequently as an

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employee friendly practice. Individuals protect themselves from the negative effects of modern technology through high job involvement too. Work as hobby is true mainly in creative jobs (in our research, online media jobs and consultancy). It is strengthened by ICT, which provides the freedom to work (live for your 'hobby') at any place and at any time.

> People work 8 hours a day here, but sometimes more, much more even. But let me mention that most of our colleagues are youngsters, they are fast-paced guys, they are sharp all day and they are thinking 24/7. Whenever they have an idea, even at home, they sit down behind their computer, and start to work it out. (...) They do this because they like to do this, not only for money. And this might lead to overwork. (Interview, top manager, Company D)

Generally unlimited mobile Internet access provides the basis for this kind of individual work obsession, which could create a similar culture.

> My area, the Internet, is not an employee-friendly genre. Virtually I don't have a well-defined working time. In the online genre one has to be alert 24/7. When something happens at 10 p.m., and I don't answer my phone, I have to listen to unpleasant comments. (Focus group, manager, Company D) (editor-in-chief of a popular Internet car website)

In some cases the corporate culture is about competition, which reinforces the 24/7 working style:

> Our company hires racehorses, who just ride towards the finish line wearing blinkers – nothing and nobody counts for them. (...) They are sending the emails one after the other, they are going forward in fifth gear. They call me Saturdays at 10 a.m., or Sundays at 2 p.m. – doesn't matter for them. (Focus group, manager, Company C)

In the above examples, we find evidence of connectivity functioning as an individual and a perceived organizational norm (Richardson and Benbunan-Fich, 2001); however, there are significant differences between individual interpretations of this norm and thus it can lead to organizational conflicts, to forms of boundary violation (Kreiner et al., 2009) and to perceived attempts at the colonization of the private life (Gold and Mustafa, 2013).

These examples describe competitive cultures, in which the individuals are overworking not only because they are fully involved and passionate about their jobs, but also as a way to increase their visibility to their managers and to create pressure on their colleagues in a way that is difficult to counteract, because they can be perceived as positive interactions from the organizational perspective. In these cases technology not only makes it possible to overwork but also supports visibility, thus becoming supportive of individual goals and reinforcing the competitive nature of the organizational culture.

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Job involvement is a double-edged sword. Because it is technically possible to work from home, at any time there is a high risk of ignoring the importance of relaxing (leisure–oriented activities), and above all our informants mentioned that certain areas of their private life were compromised. For the majority it was small children or in some cases ill parents. However, a few respondents also mentioned some of their hobbies, which they pursued even in overtime periods.

> The year before my son was born was very intense. The [financial] crisis was very important, but on the other hand it required an awful lot of time. In this sector [banking] the crisis changed the work tremendously, and I would not have been able to do it with a family. The quality and the quantity of work would not have been possible with a small child. It only happens every 100 years, so it is really exceptional. (Interview, Company F)

In some cases it seemed natural to sacrifice family obligations (i.e. missing Mothers' Day at school) or activities to meet expectations. If family comes first, sometimes there is negative feedback: 'I received feedback during my performance evaluation that I spend too much time with my family: I enjoy myself, and it is a problem. I should work more' (focus group, manager, Company B).

4.3 Work role conflict and work role overload

Organizations, by unconsciously creating work role conflicts and expecting their employees to be overloaded with work, have a huge impact on work's interference with family. In these cases technology is a great help, because it makes work possible at any place and at any time, but it also results in work invading private life: people work in their free time, for example during their summer vacation. Each and every focus group discussion gave examples of these kinds of strain-based work–family conflicts (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985).

> Here are for example the distance work possibilities … sometimes … it exploits people. So the telephone is constantly ringing, e-mails are arriving, I also receive hundreds of SMSs, so it is difficult. It is difficult to make my colleagues understand that I am on vacation. I want to be alone, give me a break …. (Focus group, managers, Company F)

> My phone beeps at 2 a.m. and I hear that I have received an e-mail. I forgot to turn off, and I check the mail because I am not sleeping. (Focus group, managers, Company B)

> … something happened during my vacation: there was an important tender, which we needed to win; I received an SMS, so I returned back home from my vacation in Asia, because the application deadline was during my vacation time. (Interview, manager, Company B)

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The above quotes illustrate situations in which ICT creates an opportunity to invade and colonize the private life of organizational members (Gold and Mustafa, 2013). The seriousness of these cases can be emphasized by highlighting that colleagues are disturbed by work-related issues during their highly limited vacation times and sleeping times, which prevent them from proper recreation and regaining their energy for work (Marks, 1977).

ICT can be a good help in several cases, even to organize certain family issues (e.g. registration, payments, etc.), but it is not always possible. We should note that, although multinational companies here introduced modern technology at the same time as other subsidiaries around the globe, public administration and the everyday usage of the Internet and modern technology in Hungary is 'a bit behind the rest of the Western world'. It is an interesting contradiction that employees of multinational companies find it natural to use the most up-to-date technology and they expect and demand the same level of modernization from outside their workplace, which is very often not the case.

> I have to calculate the time when I arrange certain things in my family time, which is not actually being with my family, but it needs to be done, and I would be happy to do it online or through a phone call, but I cannot, because I have to be personally present to arrange it. (Interviewee, manager, Company F)

> Sometimes, it is not a question that I write a report during the weekend, because my boss needs it on Monday morning; it is OK, because I know it is important, and I know she does not ask it too often. (Interviewee, Company F)

ICT can prevent certain overload in people's lives, although it should be a conscious decision to use the possibilities of technology wisely, for example trying to achieve the segmentation of the separate life domains (Cifre and Salanova, 2008). 'We organize our meetings in Microsoft Outlook. I have scheduled every day 8–9 a.m. that I take the children to the kindergarten. And I have already scheduled two days after 5 p.m. every week – this is my defensive strategy' (focus group, manager, Company D).

This can be perceived as segmentation, but in the same time we have to notice that the individuals' personal life becomes highly visible to the organizations, thus increasing the possibility of their control. Individuals introduce their personal obligations into the official work planning, to gain the right to carry them out during those hours, which are not even official working hours. The personal tasks presented to the organization are those that are widely accepted in broader society, like taking children to school or kindergarten, so they also have to have a socially enforced personal case. This is perceived as defensive by the individuals, so technology is no longer supportive but has two faces – it can be used to control you, and you can use it to control the control that they have over you.

However, overload sometimes is not solved: 'I see it quite often, that somebody has an important family programme, but he/she still has some work, which

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– I think – could easily be done next morning, but the person considers that it should be done during that evening' (focus group, manager, Company D). From the quotes above, we conclude that leaving important work for the next day is highly problematic for a large number of employees. The stressfulness of not having finished the scheduled work tasks is actually a very similar stress factor to having to finish work at home. Both of these can lead to the so-called 'absent presence' (Middleton, 2008), which means that the individual is physically at home but not available to family members because he or she is mentally or physically occupied with work or work-related feelings.

Many new gadgets and applications have been invented and developed recently that help people to perform their job far away from their workplace. As a result, individuals are no longer necessarily tied to the workplace. Most of the tasks that require the office computer can be carried out on any computer that is connected to the Internet. We have seen examples in which the clients know the mobile phone number of the company's responsible employee, so they can be called 24/7. This may contribute to a high quality of service because of the personal relationship and the immediate response, but there is also a huge risk of stress for the employee, as the phone may ring in the middle of the night. Even during a holiday the phone must be there, as nobody can substitute for the employee who is on holiday without harming the good client–company relationship, as it is based on personal contact. 'Blackberry and notebook are a tool of modern slavery. They are an umbilical cord' (focus group, Company D).

A lack of modern technology makes work more complicated, stressful and time consuming. The availability of continuous upgrades to technologies increases expectations towards users and thus the lack of up-to-date technologies and applications can be a huge burden on them. The sales force of Company E did not receive laptops, only desktop computers and mobile phones. The administration of the daily sales could not be undertaken immediately after visiting a customer but could only be carried out during the evening with desktop computers, when all the administration should have been performed manually during the day. This obviously meant that work had to be completed in non-work time and in the sales force's homes, not in the workplace.

4.4 Work role ambiguity

Ambiguity can be perceived as something bad, neutral or even cheerful. Unclear definitions of work roles can lead to unnecessary overwork, although the opposite may also happen: when it is not obvious what is expected in the work, employees may enjoy greater freedom. Most respondents were self-confident regarding their work roles, but we detected a couple of examples of role ambiguity. For example, one respondent wanted to return from maternity leave to her previous job, which is actually guaranteed by law, and the situation became a little uncertain. The uncertainty regarding the work role disturbed the respondent's overall life satisfaction.

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> One of my colleagues told me that somebody was being interviewed for my job. My boss made a joke about it when I visited the company, and I told him that I wanted to return from maternity leave as soon as possible, but at the latest in spring. So it was a kind of misunderstanding, although I told him in advance that I wanted to return in the summer or a bit earlier or a bit later. It was a miscommunication; there was no document that proved that I said in advance that I would be back to work during the spring. (Interview, Company F)

Ambiguity in our case had no connection with ICT; for example, technology did not lead to higher or lower levels of clarity in work roles and the ambiguity could not be solved by any technological device. The only reason to include ambiguity in work roles in our research is that it has an impact on WIF.

> For example, I am at home at the weekend, and I just quickly check my mails, because I do not want to answer 400 e-mails on Monday morning, and I answer a mail, then the colleague who I had answered immediately rings me up because he saw that I had answered his mail. (Focus group, managers, Company F)

In the above example, the use of ICT in personal time is unclear – it has different meanings for the employees. Some of them might use it to make their work life easier, with no desired contact with their colleagues, while for others it serves to contact their colleagues in their free time too. In the quote we can see that different tools – SMS, email and calls – are perceived differently; an unspoken hierarchy exists between them when it comes to their intrusive nature. Writing an email might be not as pressuring as a call. There is ambivalence regarding which tool to use and how to use it in personal time.

5. Conclusion

Our research results show that companies provide ICT tools as employee friendly practices for individuals to balance their work and life, but it is just an opportunity and in itself does not help create and maintain a healthy work life balance, so it is not employee friendly per se. The four antecedents of WIF can explain if and how ICT is transformed into employee friendly practices. Namely, some of the antecedents of WIF through organizations can have positive and negative effects on individuals' lives, but not all of them are affected by information technology. Social support is the only antecedent that has a solely positive effect: in organizations in which employees are ready to help each other in exceptional situations, they suffer least from work–family conflict and they see their life situation as smooth and their problems as solvable. Where social support is present, we can talk about a collaborative organizational culture and complaints concerning ICT are missing, highlighting the transformed nature of connectivity – trusted personal relationships connect, and information technology supports this. Therefore, social support is not fully independent of ICT; it relies on it, but it is not driven by it, rather being used as a tool for respectful

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connections. Thus it can be concluded that during the design and development of corporate ICT systems firms should consider particularly strongly not just technological effectiveness but also the influence this has on social support in the organization.

Job involvement might lead to general work satisfaction or even general life satisfaction, and technology can help employees to organize their lives to fulfil their work and family obligations more smoothly; in other words, people might enjoy work involvement while they are with their families. But, job involvement has a high risk of overwork, and eventually the family might suffer from it. Here ICT's transformative effect is also embedded in the organizational culture: in a competitive culture, it becomes a tool of pressure and control through increased visibility, and often we can observe a process in which a technological possibility becomes an unwanted expectation. The role of individual motivations in the use of ICT was also highlighted and proved again the necessary moderating effect of the organizational culture.

Role overload and role conflict have an even more problematic impact on WIF, and technology clearly plays a role in both. Organizations might provide the necessary technical devices to be able to work anywhere (and at any time), and if there is a culture within the organization that is particularly performance-oriented, there is a high risk of one's family becoming priority number two. Work role ambiguity does not obviously enhance or hinder WIF; at the same time, technology does not seem to play a strong role in it.

To conclude, the role of ICT is controversial: mobile technologies evidently can support a healthy WLB and provide the possibility of a more flexible work schedule, and this why companies are ready to invest in ICT's, and provide them as helping employees' work-life balance, consequently as being employee friendly work practices. At the same time, though, they can invade private lives, creating a kind of 'modern slavery'. In some cases employees become addicted, and the border between their work and their private life becomes blurred: they are willing to sacrifice their family time or hobby to work day and night. This lifestyle could easily lead to mental and physical exhaustion and burnout. In other cases they believe that they have to be online all the time: if they do not read e-mails during holidays or pick up the phone 24/7, it means that they are not carrying out their job properly or that without their contribution the company would collapse. The question is: who created the 24/7 culture? Did employees themselves create the 'myth of availability' or is it a kind of role ambiguity? Alternatively, is it really a natural requirement of customers or certain industries?

We reached the final conclusion that technology solves several problems connected with work–life balance, and it obviously helps employees to find self-fulfilment in their work and family life at the same time, while it creates new problems: overwork, obsession with work (and technology itself), mental and physical exhaustion and burnout. More research is needed to discover the negative consequences of ICT, so that we can learn how to live a healthy life with the new technology.

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Reconstructing the Borders and the Definitions of Home and Work in the Context of Telecommuting in Poland

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Abstract

This paper presents the results of intensive ethnographic research into a group of contemporary Polish teleworkers and their families. Recent media representations of home-located working activities show that the fusion of work and home in the same space may occur in the near future, but telework remains a new and challenging situation for many households. Working at home on the basis of telecommuting may not represent an opportunity but rather a major challenge, causing significant problems for and limitations on both family and work life. The ethnographic research describes newly established practices of everyday living in the different structures – 'the daily puzzles of real people who live their work and households lives' (DeVault, 1999: 52). Through the use of a mix of qualitative methods (in pair interviews, photography and diaries) research methodology is developed to investigate the household as a socio-spatial situation. Accordingly, the article includes: a) a discussion of the theoretical issues related to telecommuting and work-life balance, b) an overview of the relevant literature, c) a description of the methodology of the study, and d) some conclusions about the issue of constructing and overcoming borders and the definitions of home and work in the context of telecommuting in Poland in the context of the establishment of work-life balance.

Keywords: telework, spatial boundaries, household duties, work-life balance.

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Many professionals such as scholars and managers claim that the integration of home and work is the perfect strategy for creating harmony between the fields of professional work and private life. In reality, combining the spheres of private life and paid work in one significantly limited space (home) may create significant challenges. The establishment of a personal strategy of working at home depends on many factors. Generally speaking, one can distinguish between two strategies: a) segregation (involving strict internal divisions between paid work and family life at home) or, b) integration (when these boundaries are weaker) (see: López-Estrada, 2002).

The unfinished return of work to home

The separation of home and work in the course of industrialization has had enormous implications for the construction of both individual and group identities. In the preindustrial and early industrial economy, the home was both a place for social reproduction and production. The industrial revolution brought in the separation of those two spheres and has changed the social construction not only of space but also of gender, age, sexuality, leisure, labor and personality (Allan and Crow, 1989). Nowadays, thanks to the dominance of new services in the economy, more flexible working arrangements and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), work is returning to the home. But this return does not simply involve the re-establishment of the conditions and identifications that come with pre-industrialization, not only because of broader civilizational changes that have since occurred, but also due to the shift in the nature of space itself.

The 'return' (the emphasis is obvious and necessary) to the home workplace involves the ongoing invention of new forms of working and the reestablishment of representations. In an industrial economy, the relationships between the time and space of work and non-work were relatively simple and linear, sequential and chronological. Now, because of changes in the location of work, those boundaries are becoming increasingly blurred. The construction of everyday working practices at home is having significant influence on social and symbolic ideas about 'home' and 'work'. Put differently, the process of 'return' is unfinished, and the very task of making progress with this situation is foisted onto individuals, partly due to the lack of coherent social representations of work at home. According to Toffler, who claims that the home will be/is the factual center of social life, this return to a pre-industrial state will strengthen and improve relations between household and community (Toffler, 1981).

Defining teleworkers

To identify a telecommuter, one need to know how much time they are actually spending on work in the private space of the home. In this context, we draw attention to Gurstein's typology (2001), based on a common-sense division between: 1) those who are employed as telecommuters and who work in a place other than the office of the employer, 2) those who work at home part-time on work-related tasks, and finally, 3) those who 'bring work home after hours'. For our study we were interested in the

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practices of the first group; that is, those teleworkers who permanently work at home on a daily basis. Some of these individuals are self-employed, while others are employed at (mainly international) companies.

The second important criterion used in this paper to define telework is the form and the scope of the work itself. While the traditional concept of 'homeworking' relates to work that is based on the production of goods, telework should rather be understood as 'knowledge-based' work (Hopkinson et al., 2002). Employees included in our research operated in the field of the 'knowledge economy'. The authors were particularly interested in examining this sector of the labor market because of the potential tension in this area between private and working life: such work may not offer the opportunity for integration and may cause more conflict than traditional paid work that is undertaken at home (for knowledge workers it may be impossible to take direct advantage of work-related support from the family). In accordance with this goal, we identified many different professions: interpreters, copywriters, architects and interior designers, an IT specialist, a journalist, managers and other specialists.

Regarding the form of work, some scholars refuse to recognize the self-employed as teleworkers (Pyöriä, 2003), while others argue that this form of employment is typical of a large number of teleworkers. The research presented here assumes the latter point of view. The results of recent studies prove that telework in Poland is widely perceived simply as 'homework', both by employers and employees (Kucharski, 2008) and is often seen as being relatively independent from normal working practice. Moreover, self-employed people should be included in research efforts because this group is strongly represented among teleworkers (many of whom have led, are leading or plan to lead their own small companies in the near future). This characteristic of Polish telecommuting offers the researcher a chance to identify an interesting continuum of different solutions and strategies used by telecommuters for reconciling paid and unpaid work, or sustaining their work-life balance in the context of home.

To draw a line under the aforementioned difficulties with defining contemporary teleworking, we employ the minimal definition of telework and teleworker; namely, *a person who works away from their employer or client, by using computer and the Internet for the purpose of communication* (see Ellison, 1999; Sullivan, 2003). Moreover, in the context of the observed complexity of forms and styles of telecommuters that was captured during our research, it seems better not to refer to 'telework', but rather 'the work carried out at home on the principles of telework', or, – more broadly speaking – the 'worker anchored in the house' (Wilks and Billsberry, 2007).

The adoption of such a broad definition of ways of working, as mirrored in the nature of respondents' professions, is important in the context of examining work-life balance. The sense of control over work and personal life may be internalized to a greater or lesser extent, and is mirrored in the wide range of practices and techniques encountered on a daily basis. On the one hand, it can be assumed that those individuals who work for employers are more strongly embedded in the practice of teleworking due to the existence of forms of external control (personalized in the form of managers or coordinators, or as non-human actors such as pieces of software, etc.). On the other hand, self-employed teleworkers can feel that they are constantly under

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pressure from customers and from other cohabitants/family members. This kind of tension may be more overwhelming for the self-employed teleworker, and its moderation requires far-reaching disciplinary practices.

Challenges of telecommuting

This vision, however, focuses more on the symbolic issues than the practical utility of telecommuting (Jackson and Wielen, 1998: 3). The consequences of telecommuting on family relationships are of a paradoxical nature: on the one hand, for those who work in metropolitan areas[1] working outside the office saves time as it obviates the need for commuting and gives individuals a chance to work according to more flexible rules and schedules. On the other hand, working at home increases the risk that the division between the personal and professional spheres of life will become blurred (Halal, 1996); moreover, there is evidence that such types of work enhance the risk of overwork ('workaholism') (Olson, 1988).

The construction of everyday work practices at home has major implications for social and symbolic ideas about 'home' and 'work'. The notion of the home as a place of freedom from the surveillance and control mechanisms embedded in the workspace has lost its symbolic power. Last but not least, it is also important to examine gender roles in the private environment. For women, telecommuting may take on a different character and have different consequences than it does for men: from exploitation to liberation and empowerment (Beach, 1989).

Numerous authors (e.g. Beach, 1989) have claimed that the integration of home and work is a perfect strategy that builds harmony between the fields of professional work and private life. Others point out that working at home can lead to serious conflicts (Christensen, 1993). Moreover, as shown by Salmi (1996), experiences with telecommuting are rarely dichotomous but rather form a broad continuum of possible situations. The exact combination of the spheres of private life and paid work depends not only on such variables as gender, but also on other elements such as the nature of the work (and how much external control the worker has over it), the level of formal education of the worker and his/her partner, the age of the worker, the number and the age of any offspring, and previous experience with working at home (Estrada, 2002).

We assume, in line with what Estrada has stated, that a teleworker applies one of two main strategies to combine work and private life at home: a) segregation (with strict internal divisions between paid work and family life at home) or, b) integration (where the boundaries are weaker). These integration strategies are affected by the worker's control over the labor process, potential for flexible scheduling, family support and the involvement of other household members in the work performed by the worker. Conflict can arise when the spheres of work and family life overlap, and when working days are long and offspring are present.

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[1] In Polish metropolitan areas the average amount of time spent commuting is approximately eight hours per week according to the CBOS report *Mobilność na co dzień 2012* (*Mobility everyday 2012*).

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As Nippert-Eng (1996) has noted, working at home means continuously dealing with internal borders. This performative aspect of boundary-making is affected by three factors:

1. the extent to which one sphere (e.g. work) overlaps the other sphere (e.g. private life),
2. the extent to which particular objects (including tools, technologies, and scenery) and ambience are similar in both spheres,
3. the extent to which employees' ways of thinking, acting and presenting themselves in both spheres are similar (Nippert-Eng, 1996: 8).

It is crucial to establish different types of borders, including (1) physical boundaries (e.g. a separate and permanent workplace/workspace) in order to enhance behavioral and psychological boundaries and clarify the division between work and leisure. While physical borders are relatively easy to set up and maintain, there are, however, (2) other boundaries (social, psychological and behavioral) that are more difficult to manage. Success in maintaining boundaries depends on the expectations of other family members, including children (Heck et al., 1995). While recognition of a worker's needs is the basis for the negotiation of borders, additional steps may need to be taken to sustain these borders.

Representations of telecommuting

Telecommuting is presented and promoted as a way in which women can successfully combine work and family life. Working at home locates gender roles in the household at the very center of scrutiny (Felstead and Jewson, 2000). Recent media representations (in Polish media) of working activities located at home show that the fusion of work and home in the same space may once again become the norm, and that this situation may become reality for those engaged in postindustrial professions: for example, members of managerial and professional staff are often shown as being located in 'middle-class' domestic settings, surrounded by high-tech equipment, engaged in work via the use of ICT. Telecommuting as a form of home-based work is presented as being supportive of the greater involvement of parents in family life, greater equality with the sharing of domestic work and the partial erosion of traditional gender differences.

But, as research has proved, these advantages may not arise within double income families in which women are still responsible for the majority of unpaid work at home (Mirchandani, 2000). The decision to take up paid work at home means that teleworkers and other family members are forced to articulate and implement principles and beliefs about domestic space and time which are not normally expressed in a clear and direct form (Felstead and Jewson, 2000: 143). Telecommuting has different implications for male and female telecommuters. Studies suggest that a so-called 'integration strategy' is more commonly applied by women than by men (Haddon and Lewis, 1994). This is especially true of women who have small children (Salmi, 1996). On the other hand, in certain circumstances home-based work can be a source of power and control (see: Felstead and Jewson, 2000: 149-150; Estrada, 2002).

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Several studies have highlighted the fact that both men and women evaluate paid homework as positive only when such work does not lead to changes in the performance of unpaid housework, defined traditionally as a female task (Gringeri, 1994: 103). Betty Beach (1989) found that women were more likely to treat the home as a place of work when children accompanied them during working hours. However, the presence of children also had significant impacts on working schedules: research revealed that when children were present women's working days were relatively shorter, often interrupted, since women are increasingly responsible for domestic duties. In the context of more equal societies, Michelson and Lindén's (1997) examination of 22 Swedish teleworkers indicated that gender was less significant in determining teleworkers' strategy than the status of the persons involved in such work (owner/employee/self-employed), working hours (full time/part-time job), and/or the amount of time spent at home.

Methodology

The research described in this paper captures the tension between the daily lives of individuals caused by telework. A qualitative approach was applied since such methodology allows the examination of how the public-private dichotomy is realized on a daily basis in particular households. Thanks to the use of semi-structured interviews, the dynamics and multiplicity of *representations* and *techniques* which define the public and private and create the borders between workplace and home could be examined. Through these interviews with teleworkers and their partners the authors closely examined strategies employed on a daily basis and continuous changes in the sphere of representation.

36 households in three Polish metropolitan areas (Warsaw (1), Krakow (2), Tricity (3) including Gdańsk, Gdynia and Sopot) in which at least one teleworker lived and worked at home were included in the research. The authors chose 3 metropolitan areas because, according to statistics, there exist a greater number of jobs in the new economy in metropolitan areas in Poland[2]. To generate a heterogeneous sample of individuals who met the criteria mentioned above, the researchers organized by themselves informational companies and distributed information through local web pages and teleworker web-based services. Qualitative analysis software (MAXQDA) was used to assist in the latter part of the data analysis (both text and photos). Semi-structured interviews were undertaken directly with 36 teleworkers and their partners. These two types of interviews were supplemented by in-pairs interviews conducted at the last stage of the research. The construction of the research agenda allows examination of the impact of teleworking not only on the individuals directly involved, but also on their families.

Studying the private environment involves significant problems. As Vetere and Gale (1987) have observed, in this context it is difficult to gain access and conduct

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[2] The second reason is the fact that Gdańsk (plus Gdynia and Sopot), Kraków and Warsaw are located at over 300 km distance from another. For historical reasons, the cities have a different history of industrialization, entrepreneurship, work and employee rights, although the goal of the research was not to investigate the impact of these differences.

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studies for a long period of time. Furthermore, when observing domestic practices, researchers may unintentionally infer the existence of specific patterns of practice. This is why several methods were used to find a balance between methodological correctness and full access to the day-to-day practices of households. The elements of observation were reduced to a minimum (limited to three interviews per household, unless the respondents agreed to further participate) and research was supported using other methods such as a detailed online diary (lasting one week per teleworker), and photo-essays which included comments and photos (27 individual shots) created by teleworkers by using disposable cameras.

Flexible timetables and personal needs

Respondents claim that working at home requires the maintenance of a flexible timetable. According to one female respondent (Interviewee 1, a 54 year-old female headhunter living in Warsaw), if you work in an office and have a desk, you also have a strict timetable. Without this spatial delimitation, your timetable is flexible. Another female respondent (Interviewee 3, a 34 year-old female consultant based in Warsaw who writes articles about IT) claimed that having a flexible timetable allows her to adjust to home obligations: '*Thanks to this, I can schedule my working time. For instance, I may prepare dinner, and later, let's say, start working. After this, if my child calls for me, I can go to see her, do what is necessary and come back to work after I have finished with my domestic obligations*'.

Respondents evaluate the strategy of maintaining a flexible timetable positively, highlighting that having such a strategy allows them to adjust their work to their personal needs and the needs of dependent family members such as offspring and the elderly. For those who are not taking care of children, having a flexible timetable allows them to adjust their working hours to their personal needs. One female respondent (Interviewee 2, a 37 year-old female business coach based in Warsaw) claimed that working at home is different every day: '*As for the "pluses", I can schedule my timetable according to my needs. If I need to work two hours per day, I just work two hours. But if I need to work 10 or 12 hours, I can also do this. But it's up to me, not up to an employer who would be dissatisfied if I left the office after eight hours if I had enough work for 12*'. Another female respondent (Interviewee 1) stated that having a flexible timetable mirrored her personality and met her individual needs: '*Yes, I am happy because I am finally coherent [...] this gives me internal coherency, which means I do not do things that are not my strengths; that I am sure that I am an expert in what I do*'. The same attitude was identifiable with another female respondent, a filmmaker, who says that flexibility in terms of time is the very concept of personal freedom (Interviewee 6, 32 year-old female film director living in Warsaw): '*Why do I like to work at home? Because by doing this I express myself, I constantly develop - there are no limits to this development - nobody limits my freedom*'.

But having offspring means that telecommuters may develop alternative strategies: '*In fact, sometimes I get absorbed in my work. I wake up at 7, have lunch at my laptop, and I do not communicate with my family for a whole day, even though they are near to me during this time*' (Interviewee 1). The same female respondent

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has developed another interesting strategy for maintaining separation: she stresses that one cannot work, sleep and eat in the same place: '*One has to get out from time to time, to change their environment*'.

In comparison, other female respondent who works as a copywriter (Interviewee 24, a 33 year-old living in Warsaw) finds that the need to continuously switch between meeting work and family obligations is annoying '*I would love to work in an office and focus only on my work. Working at home forces me to do things in my spare time: prepare dinner, take care of children, do the shopping: the result is that my work is of lower quality [...] Drawbacks to this work? A lack of time for working, sitting down and starting to work no matter what*'.

But flexibility may also result in the blurring of the boundaries between work and life. One female respondent hesitated when she was asked if she knew how to differentiate between work and non-work. She stated that she did not even call her work activities 'work' – instead, she talked about 'identity activities' which generate money (Interviewee 2). The same semantic shift occurs in the answers of a female respondent, a freelance journalist, whom claims that her work is 'a passion' (Interviewee 15, 39 year-old female, writer and journalist based in Warsaw).

In concluding, respondents may see the blurring of borders between home and work offered by telecommuting as a form of flexibility. This is regarded positively, since it provides these individuals with the opportunity to express themselves, to develop and to self-manage. Yet there is a difference between those telecommuters who take care of offspring and those who do not. For the latter, domestic obligations impact their working timetables, in some cases critically. These telecommuters develop different strategies to deal with this problem.

Blurring boundaries between work and home

The boundaries between home and work are weak, elastic and changeable. Sometimes this is useful for teleworkers. An architect who works at his father's architectural office located at his parents' house (in which he also grew up) provided an example of this: '*It's comfortable. Around lunch-time someone shouts: "Mark! Lunch is served!"; this is very convenient. When you are tired you can go to the TV room, sit down for a while and watch some news on TV. [Working hours] are not rigid*' (Interviewee 13, 36 year-old male living in Sopot). A marketing specialist said: '*I am a tennis fan. I can watch the Australian Open in real time while working – I couldn't do this at a regular office*' (Interviewee 23, a 37 year-old female marketer at a publishing house, living in Sopot).

But on the other hand, the overlap between private, public, work and private life is hard to maintain. Respondents admit they apply a 'shut-the-door' policy, having to convince themselves that their working day is over:

'*I have to watch myself. I have to find a moment, the moment I can decide: this is the end. Literally and mentally, I loudly close the laptop lid. ... And then this is the end*' said one respondent (Interviewee 21, a 39 year-old male engineer living in Gdańsk; an IT specialist working three days at the office, two at home for a major airline company).

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The boundaries between the different social roles they play are far more difficult to maintain. In terms of the multiplicity of social roles ascribed to teleworking, one needs to stress not only the problem of establishing such roles but – and this may be even more important – of maintaining such roles. As Michelle Shumate and Janet Fulk state: '*Communication is necessary not only for establishing roles, but also for maintaining boundaries among an individual's multiple roles, such as worker versus parent versus spouse. A role boundary is a set of acceptable or expected activities that are negotiated between people in specified and understood roles. For instance, a homeworker's "work" role behavior might consist of conference calls, e-mail, and creating computerized documents. Taking care of a sick child or doing laundry would be considered outside the boundaries of that role, but within the boundaries of the role of "parent", "spouse", or "family member"* (Shumate and Fulk, 2004). The respondents admit that they multitask and juggle different 'off work' roles during their working day such as the role of mother ('*I feel I have to take care of this because I am at home*'; Interviewee 11); the role of neighbor ('*I am a gatekeeper. Everybody knows now that I am at home so I have to open the gate to refuse collectors, to couriers, to the mailmen. It disturbs my work a lot*'; Interviewee 9, a 36 year-old female project manager for a clinical research organization living in Gdańsk); the role of father ('*the events occurring at the kindergarten – I can always go there and watch. No need to take day off. It is good for the children*'; Interviewee 13, a 36 year-old male architect living in Sopot); the role of housewife ('*there are some domestic duties you have to care of: dealing with the plumber, the electrician, etc. The service people appear and you have to take care of them*'; Interviewee 25, a 42 year-old male, web marketer and company owner living in Gdańsk); and the role of family member ('*often, people think that I am just sitting at home, so they can ask me to do different things for them. They are surprised that I say I have no time. No time to do something for them. [...] And, OK, I am at home, theoretically I could do these things, I don't know, transport something, do something, yes, theoretically I could. But I wouldn't be able to work then*'; Interviewee 16, a 41 year-old female interior designer based in Gdańsk).

Setting space and time boundaries

This kind of inter-role conflict experience may be overcome by the use of the spatial strategies mentioned earlier. For example, by applying a 'closed door policy', or by simply deciding to close a laptop. In the first round of research (in-depth individual interviews) we first examined the boundaries between work and home by asking interviewees and interlocutors about the limits to their spatial, temporal, social and related behaviors.

It is mainly 'office opening and closing' (that is, closing doors to bedrooms or opening a laptop) that determines spatial boundaries, and how working days are described by respondents: '*Yes, this is my office, the kitchen, I really like the kitchen, especially when I close those doors. [Then] I feel so separate and so safe*' (Interviewee 15, a 39 year-old female writer and journalist living in Warsaw). Respondents talk about the strong desire they have to assign meaning to a particular gesture or object. Through doing this, a teleworker can clearly communicate that the working day has started: '*I am surrounded by a screen, I'm not fully closed in but I am slightly "cut off"*

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from the rest of the house' (Interviewee 31, a 43 year-old male information broker based in Krakow). '*Well, I make the bed, basically, I always make my bed, then my bedroom is not like a bedroom, but simply an office*' (Interviewee 35, a 42 year-old female engineer based in Krakow). Spatial borders are also auditory borders. Respondents admit that sometimes it is difficult for them to pretend that they are '*in a real office*' because of a barking dog or crying child: '*It's hard here, in the kitchen, you cannot say to your dog "be quiet!"*' (Interviewee 25). Another female respondent described working at home with children: '*I've learned not to pay attention to the kids. Once, Alice – the nanny – asked if I had heard that Gilly was crying... and I hadn't even heard her...*'

Chronological borders are created quite independently in the case of teleworkers. The opportunity to self-regulate such borders is treated as one of the most important privileges: the ability to control the start and end points of the working day, as well as to insert breaks, appears to be seen as the main advantage. Teleworkers can go out for a walk, a jog or a bike ride during the working day. Often, working hours are similar to a traditional eight-hour work day (8.00 a.m. - 4.00 p.m., or 9.00 a.m. - 5.00 p.m.). Sometimes teleworkers have free time for doing other things than taking casual breaks from the office: '*I go for a walk, every day I go for a walk on the pier, somewhere next to the seaside and for me that is the biggest advantage [of working at home]*' (Interviewee 23, a 37 year-old female marketer at a publishing house who lives in Sopot). Regardless of the form of employment (self-employment or having an employer) respondents have difficulty with time management and sticking to the amount of time they planned to devote to work. Some teleworkers finish work on their own initiative – distracted by domestic duties and family – and others cannot 'concentrate on finishing their work', or 'leave work'. Time limits may also determine the coming and going of other family members of the house. Then the house becomes (or ceases to be) 'mine', 'my own' and becomes a shared space, a place of 'non-work' for others; '*virtually the whole day of work ends at 4 p.m. when we bring back J. from the kindergarten*' (Interviewee 32, a 33 year-old male sales manager living in Krakow).

Conclusions

The borders between work and life in the case of telework are becoming increasingly blurred. Additionally, teleworkers' need for constant and more rigid control is greater than with the borders imposed on work that is executed in a 'classic office'; i.e. outside the home. This more complicated situation strongly influences the work-life balance of teleworkers and their families.

Obstacles to teleworking arise at all levels, as previously described: in-house relations, relations with co-workers and employers, the goals and importance of telework and the technologies which are used to manage the work. For this reason, teleworkers must make significant individual efforts to organize their place of work, to plan the frames of work and leisure and to maintain established divisions, with varying degrees of success.

Broadly speaking, the strategies of coping with work at home that have been depicted may be understood as individualized strategies that are introduced in a

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situation which lacks social, coherent representations of the phenomenon of telework. Moreover, this situation also influences the very notions of home and work and changes their meaning and function. For teleworkers, 'home' and 'work' are blurred concepts and reflect Deleuzian comments about the contemporary status of space, which is, the author claims, in crisis, or – differently expressed – going through a time of change.

Flexible working policies are being established to offer employees a degree of choice in how much, when and where teleworkers work, and to help them achieve a more satisfactory work-life balance. The findings we have presented here based on employees' experiences of working from home show that such policies are only partially successful, and this success depends on whether employees have offspring. For some who telecommute, working life is intensified.

Regarding further research, three issues are of interest. First, an analysis of gender differences along the three dimensions (place of employment, role of technologies used in everyday activities and the role of telework in the time and economy budgets of the household). Secondly, a psychological analysis of work-family and family-work conflict. Does teleworking increase the level of conflict? Does gender matter in this regard? Finally, there is a need for research to be undertaken among employers with a focus on identifying the obstacles and advantages of the uptake of tele-employment.

One recommendation for actors in the public sphere is that they fairly analyze the real rights and duties of teleworker employees. Social programs should not simply encourage people to 'stay at home' but should offer them support in decision-making processes and promote the organization of a home office through provision of tailored architectonic and psychological advice, as well as information about the potential disadvantages of such kinds of employment.

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MÁRIA NEMÉNYI AND JUDIT TAKÁCS *

Main Breadwinner Women in Hungary and Their Work-family Balance Related Coping Strategies[1]

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Abstract

In this study, being the first Hungarian qualitative study devoted to this subject, we focus on the work-life balance situation of Hungarian women acting as main breadwinners within their family. The empirical base of our study consisted of 22 in-depth interviews conducted with Hungarian mothers of dependent children younger than 14, living in (heterosexual) couple households, who bring in at least 60 per cent of the total household earnings. We examined how the main breadwinner role might affect the gender norm expectations acquired during socialisation, the division of domestic labour and child care duties between the partners, as well as the internal power relations of the couple.

According to our findings, various versions of work-life balance management could be identified even within our small-scale qualitative sample on the basis of two main dimensions.

On the one hand, on the basis of our interviewees' accounts we examined whether the partners had similar role expectations in terms of egalitarian sharing of family related tasks or traditionally gendered role specialisation. On the other hand, we have also considered to what extent other contextual factors contributed to women becoming primary breadwinners, and whether these were perceived in terms of external constraints or preferred choices (or both). On the basis of our analyses we have identified four models of family relations in the context of primary female breadwinning: the traditional, the egalitarian, the externally forced role reversal and the consciously implemented role reversal models.

Keywords: primary breadwinner women; Hungary; qualitative research; work-life balance.

1. Introduction

In most European countries the number of women acting as main breadwinners within families is still low (Klesment and Van Bavel, 2015), even though a decline in male breadwinning can be observed since the second half of the 20th century. The increasing level of female education may lead to a higher earning potential in the paid labour market and consequently to an increasing number of women becoming main breadwinners.

One of the first qualitative studies on this subject described 'WASP' (i.e., wives as senior partners) as 'a previously ignored contemporary marriage pattern' in the United States (Atkinson and Boles, 1984: 861). The authors referred to negative evaluations by others as the social cost of this form of deviation: when husbands were described as 'unmasculine losers' and wives were seen as 'unladylike, domineering and manipulative' (Atkinson and Boles, 1984: 864). At the same time they also pointed to the rewards the WASP formations can provide, such as career opportunities and achievements for wives, for husbands relief from the burden of providing financial support for the whole family, and flexible gender-role model possibilities for children (Atkinson and Boles, 1984: 868).

North-American and Australian quantitative studies estimated that in approximately one quarter of dual-earner households the wife out-earns the husband (Winkler et al., 2005; Sussman and Bonnell, 2006; Drago et al., 2005). European quantitative studies using data from the French Labour Force Surveys examined female breadwinner activities as resulting from female emancipation and at the same time as a potentially new manifestation of the feminisation of poverty (Bloemen and Stancanelli, 2007; 2015). An increasing number of studies focus also on families with a stay-at-home father and a breadwinner mother (such as Chesley, 2011; Doucet, 2004 etc.), and on the benefits of sharing the responsibility for breadwinning among the married or cohabiting partners (Raley et al., 2006), including not only a higher level of household income and less financial stress, but also sharing common experiences and having more to talk about (Munsch, 2015).

Despite the changes in the family structures, the traditional gendered division of family labour and consequently the inequalities of household and parenting tasks have survived in many cases (Milkie et al., 2010; Takács, 2008). Child-rearing is still considered an inherently motherly duty as women are supposed to be more natural caregivers than men, even in those societies where the majority of women take part in paid work (Silverstein and Auberbach, 1999). This is also typical in the post-socialist countries, where during the state-socialist period female employment rates grew at a quicker pace and in a larger proportion than in Western European societies: however, gender equity regarding career opportunities for men and women has not been achieved, and doing housework and looking after children remained predominantly female tasks within the households (Gal and Kligman, 2000). Additionally, the 'discourse of a reverse gender order, composed of empowered women and failed patriarchs, resonates deeply in the post-Soviet world' (Radhakrishnan and Solari, 2015: 793): in various political contexts this can be used to warn of the potential harm caused by trying to alter the biologically determined capabilities of men and women regarding the traditionally gendered division of domestic labour.

Time use studies indicate that breadwinning women tend to do a higher proportion of the household chores and child-rearing than their male counterparts (Craig and Mullan, 2011). At the same time men tend to do more housework in dual-earner families than in male-breadwinner families, but typically they do not reach an equal level of housework with their female partner even in those cases when the woman happens to be the main breadwinner (Blaskó, 2006).

It is a well-documented practice especially among working class or poorer men that they can display compensatory behaviour by resisting housework and embracing an 'ethic of exaggerated masculinity' (Brines, 1994: 682) – a feature, we have also encountered in our present study. In this context 'the routine performance or nonperformance of housework facilitates gender display' (Brines, 1994: 662): for economically dependent husbands doing less housework is a way to 'do gender' (West and Zimmermann, 1987). Doing gender refers to the repetitious production and reinforcement of differences between men and women through a series of actions and accomplishments: while women practice and strengthen their femininity by providing care and performing household chores, men can perform masculinity by being the main breadwinner in the family and by not doing what women are expected to do, such as housework (Yavorsky et al., 2015; Deutsch, 2007).

Various Hungarian studies have found that heterosexual households are sites of doing gender in a traditional way: subordination of women and gender-based discrimination are still common experiences of many Hungarian women in the labour market and also at home (Neményi et al., 2013; Nagy, 2014; Tardos, 2012). In present day Europe, gender inequalities regarding labour market participation and domestic division of labour are most widespread in the post-socialist countries (Hobson and Oláh, 2006; Puur et al., 2008; Hobson and Fahlén, 2009). For instance, these inequalities are also reflected by the fact that in Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic mothers with children younger than three have the lowest maternal employment rates within the EU.[2]

Mothers' performing the main breadwinner role is not a widespread phenomenon in Hungary, characterised by traditionally familialistic social policy contexts (Dupcsik and Tóth, 2014), often reflecting the logic of the 'Becker equilibrium' (Esping-Andersen, 2009: 10), a term referring to Becker's (1981) – somewhat outdated – theory of household specialisation, according to which in order to achieve the highest level of household efficiency women tend to invest in domestic production, while men concentrate on market production. Therefore, according to the exchange-bargaining perspective, bargaining power is determined by the personal income position relative to the partner, and higher personal income might authorise one of the partners to carry out less work at home (Thébaud, 2010). However, this does not equally affect men and women in the breadwinner position, and the actual division of household labour does not necessarily reflect the division of the spouses' income (Yavorsky et al., 2015; Nagy, 2016).

The significance of household specialisation has diminished over time: empirical studies have found that it does not seem to be strongly related to relationship satisfaction, while gender roles and family life related attitudes do (Schoen

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[2] OECD Family Database (2015) http://www.oecd.org/els/family/database.htm Accessed: 2016-02-29

et al., 2006). For example, a recent study found that among contemporary Dutch couples 'unions of equals are happier than unions of less equals' (Keizer and Komter, 2015: 965), implying that too much household specialisation does not contribute to the well-being of couples.

In Hungary, similarly to other post-socialist societies, women are influenced by a historically determined *gender yo-yo effect,* subjecting them to contradictory normative expectations about their 'natural' roles, while dragging them back and forth between work and home (Takács, 2013). Competing norms of working versus stay-at-home parenting (especially mothering) and numerous demands to be met in parallel can generate tensions that may endanger the achievement of an optimal work-family balance. Parents, especially mothers, are increasingly likely to experience a time squeeze, reinforced by the structural characteristics of the Hungarian labour market, such as insecure employment, low wages, long working time regimes and limited opportunities to work part-time (Hobson et al., 2011).

2. Data and methods

This article focuses on the findings of a qualitative research study that was conducted in 2014 and 2015 in Hungary as part of a broader research project on new gender roles and their implications for family life in Europe.[3] Our main research questions were centred on how the fact that it is not the man but the woman who is the main breadwinner – at least financially – can affect the dynamics of family practices especially in term of sharing household and child care tasks, as well as the spouses' power relations and their gender role perceptions acquired through socialisation.

Even though female breadwinning is a defining feature in single-mother households, we have not included single mothers into our sample, because we wanted to learn more about the coping mechanisms of couples, characterised by the female partner being the main breadwinner in a Hungarian social context, where this family income generating pattern is considered quite unusual within partnerships. We wanted to find out whether problems that might derive from this situation – including potentially lower income levels for the families due to the gender pay gap, difficulties of developing a satisfying work-family balance due to the increased work load on women, and role conflicts deriving from tensions between traditional norms of femininity and practices of working women – would contribute to the disintegration of the interviewees' family life or whether family members can cope well with these irregularities. We had assumed that specific forms of cooperation can develop between the spouses if there are no fundamental differences in their gender norm perceptions either by both of them supporting an egalitarian cooperation, which is not based primarily on traditional gender role related expectations or, on the contrary, by both of them believing in, as well as practising the traditional complementarity of separate roles and tasks for women and men in the family. The interviews can highlight whether (at least from the interviewed women's perspective) the partners are

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[3] The Hungarian study on breadwinning wives was inspired by a similar study conducted by a research team of the German Youth Institute, led by Karin Jurczyk, within the FamiliesAndSocieties FP7 European collaborative project (*http://www.familiesandsocieties.eu/).*

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able to adapt without too much trouble to the irregular setting caused by the female occupation of the main breadwinner role, or whether they have to make compromises in order to maintain family harmony. However, compromises can lead to constraints: for example, when women besides devoting a lot of time and energy to their job with which they out-earn their partner, they also try to fulfil the traditional female role requirements of looking after the home and the children.

The empirical base of our study is a set of 22 in-depth interviews conducted with women who have been earning at least 60 per cent of the family income during the last two years. Additional selection criteria included co-residence with a husband or partner in a heterosexual relationship, and having dependent children younger than 14. Thus there are no single mothers or childless partnered women in our sample. The interviewees were found via advertising in electronic and print media, and by applying snowballing when that was possible.

Most interviewed women (13) were from Budapest, the capital city of Hungary, five of them came from small towns (located typically in the close surroundings of Budapest), and four women were from villages in an underdeveloped region of the Hungarian countryside. Half of the sample was in their thirties, seven in their forties and four in their fifties: the youngest being 33 and the oldest 59, with an average age of 39. The vast majority of the interviewees (16) had higher educational background (eleven had a Master's and three had a PhD degree), while there was only one woman whose highest level of education was elementary school, two completed vocational school, and three had medium level education. All interviewed women declared that they do not belong to any ethnic minority groups, except one: a Roma woman. Almost all of them worked as an employee with a permanent contract, only one woman was a self-employed entrepreneur; they worked in different fields but the financial and economic fields seemed to be dominating. Some worked as a lawyer, psychologist, communication expert, natural scientist but there were also social workers, a nurse and a cleaner among them. Even though these latter jobs could provide only relatively limited income, they functioned as the main income source for the families of some of the interviewed women.

When we compared the educational, employment and income related data of our interviewees and their male partners, the lower income level of these men seemed to correlate with their lower education attainment, and a less secure type of job or form of employment (for example, having seasonal or fixed term contract based employment). Some of the male partners had freelance jobs requiring varying labour intensity and characterised by employer driven flexibility; some were unemployed, including cases of long-term unemployment (related to the labour market restructuring following the political system change, leading to the devaluation of certain work skills and the disappearance of certain types of jobs); and a few men were pensioners. However, as it turned out from many of the interviews, the lower levels of the male partners' earnings were typically caused by the uncertainty of the available job opportunities: limited time periods of relatively well paid job opportunities fluctuating with certain periods of unemployment.

First, the interviewees gave their informed consent to take part in our research study. Then we asked them to fill in a questionnaire containing mainly demographic and attitudinal questions, followed by a semi-structured interview that lasted about an

hour on average. Each interview followed a standard topic guide, including open-ended questions on the interviewees' partnership and work history; describing family practices in a typical weekday; work-family balance issues with special emphasis on sharing housework and child care duties with the husband or partner; perceptions of their own role as the main breadwinner, their partner's and significant others' views on their family's 'irregular' breadwinning pattern; expectations and plans for the future.

The interviews were tape-recorded. The recorded interview material was first transcribed, and then the transcripts were structurally coded. Since there were only 22 interviews we have not used any specific computer assisted qualitative data analysis programs but relied on our own coding skills, and identified specific segments of interview texts that formed certain themes. These themes were related to the interviewees' practices, perceptions and feelings, and reflected not only the interviewees' individual experience in a subjective manner but also the normative expectations characterising the social contexts in which they emerged.

Due to limited resources we were able to conduct interviews only with the female partners but we could still gain some insight about the male partners' reactions to being in the 'out-earned situation' through the women's narratives. We expected that some of the male partners especially those who strongly believe in relationship equity would face this situation without too much trouble, while other men would feel trapped in a compromise, where his bargaining power is more limited than hers and thus he would be forced into participating in traditionally feminine household duties.

3. Findings

In our interviews we identified four models of family relations, which we refer to as (1) the traditional, (2) the egalitarian, (3) the externally forced role reversal and (4) the consciously implemented role reversal models. These models were constructed by examining the structurally coded interview material in two main dimensions. On the one hand, we examined whether in the view of our interviewees both partners had similar role expectations in terms of egalitarian sharing of family related tasks or traditionally gendered role specialisation. On the other hand, we have also considered to what extent other contextual factors (such as the work type and/or employment form as well as the income level of the partners, the number and age of children etc.) contributed to the woman becoming the primary breadwinner, either from the very beginning of the partnership or as a result of changes leading to a temporary arrangement that remained permanent.

During the interview analyses, we aimed to establish whether the examined families can function well in their 'unconventional set-up', whether the women's incomes can provide financial security for the families, whether the partners can cope with those difficulties that derive specifically from their 'irregular functioning', and whether the family cooperation strategies can work effectively in this context, and the couples are able to develop a sustainable, work-family balanced, and more or less stress-free family life. At the same time, we were interested in the practical implementation of the couples' division of domestic labour, and whether these arrangements were perceived as fair or unfair, at least from the interviewed women's perspectives. We have also examined whether there are conflicts between the

maternal and the occupational roles of the interviewed women, and how they can handle these potentially conflicting roles. Additionally, we were interested in whether these families are capable of developing a 'harm-free' interpersonal collaboration between the partners and work out practical decision-making procedures regarding child care, domestic division of labour, and money management.

Among the four models those that were based on similar role expectation of the partners – let them be similarly traditional or egalitarian – projected higher relationship stability than those where 'role reversal' occurred. In the case that 'role reversal' was seen by our interviewees as being accepted by both partners, they were able to develop a perhaps unusual, yet harmonious family cooperation – at most they had to bear disapproving views of their social environment.

However, in those family settings where the – even temporary – 'role reversal' was the result of external constraints, and neither the presently main breadwinner wife nor the former main breadwinner husband (who might have also suffered from an injured self-esteem due to the loss of his masculinity-supporting position) could identify with the situation, tensions and conflicts were more likely to emerge. We have to note that among the examined 22 families there were a few that showed signs of disintegration already during the time of the data collection: in some cases these signs became incorporated in our interviewees' narratives as explicit references to the possibility of separation or even divorce.

3.1. Traditional model

There were only three cases that could be categorised under this heading. In these three cases both parties believed in and practised traditionally gendered role specialisation, where breadwinner work activities are primarily seen as the man's job, while child-rearing and household duties are considered as the woman's job. In these settings we can still recognise the well-known 'Becker equilibrium' (Esping-Andersen, 2009: 10) with its traditional *male breadwinner – female home-maker* family model: even though the woman has – 'accidentally' – become the main breadwinner for various reasons, she consciously undertakes the double burden, trying to reconcile family responsibilities and income-generating activities and act as if she were not out-earning her husband. She accepts, and occasionally expects, her partner's increased participation in domestic tasks, but their division of domestic labour largely reflects the traditional pattern she has learnt in her family of origin during childhood socialisation. This seems to be a quite conflict-free form of family life, as the woman submits to a traditional social order, and even though she is the main contributor to the total family income, she does not act as the head of the family and does not gain increased decision-making power either.

In two of the three cases the higher income of the interviewed women was due to their higher level of education, more secure workplace, and specialised qualifications ensuring greater earning power on the job market, while in the third case the husband had already retired and had only a small pension. One of our

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interviewees (13)[4] works in a senior position at a chemistry laboratory; she married a widower who brought two children to the marriage, and then they had three more children together. They belong to a religious community with her husband which provides them with a special bond. She is committed to the traditional cast of family tasks: their children were born one after the other, and she has spent altogether seven years at home with the children on maternity leave. Even though the husband became unemployed several times during this seven year period neither she nor her husband would have felt it 'natural' that the father stayed at home for a certain period of child care allowance.

Another representative of the traditional model (8) lives in a small town, raising a daughter from her first marriage and a son of her current marriage. She has been the sole breadwinner in the family for a longer period of time: she works at a social service association that provides stable and sufficient income relative to the local conditions. Her husband lost his work a long time ago due to the long-term economic deterioration characterising the Northern Hungarian region, where they live. He can only occasionally get relatively well-paying casual jobs. However, despite their long-term work situation, characterised by the wife's main breadwinning activities, and the husband's unemployment, neither of them questions their traditionally gendered role specialisation.

A very clear example of the traditional family model is provided by a highly positioned intellectual interviewee (2) who attributes her steady career progress mainly to her diligence and higher educational achievements, while she does not recognise any status difference between herself and her husband who has only a vocational qualification and partly engages in manual work.

> During the ten years of our relationship, he has lost his job several times, searched for other jobs, sometimes found a better job, sometimes worse... My path was a bit straighter and easier after I finished the university. There was a time [when] ... it could be felt that there is a bit of a grievance in my husband about me earning more and working in such a [prestigious] workplace... both of us are coming from quite simple families, so it's a very big thing.

However, she took for granted that she would stay at home with the children for years and the father would not take any parental leave.

> It did not come to our mind because when I was at home on child care allowance, he always earned quite well so it was logical that he has to stay in the labour market. Additionally, when I worked as a university lecturer, well let's face it, it's not a nine to five job, it is much more relaxed time wise [than his jobs].

In their household housework is also shared in a conventional way:

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[4] We refer to our interviewees with numbers in order to protect their anonymity.

> There are specifically male and female roles, you can see that. Obviously, no way... I am not willing to change a light bulb. I say that I got married so that I would never have to replace a light bulb.

At the same time she points out that it was an important factor when choosing a workplace that her bosses would take into account that because of her maternal duties they cannot expect overtime or any extra workload.

3.2. Egalitarian model

Four of our interviewees lived in a family setting that we categorised as belonging to the egalitarian model. While they had completely different socialisation backgrounds, they all live in non-subordination-based relationships, where the partners mutually adapt to each other's needs. In three cases the marriage resulted from their first major relationship, which has been going on since their youth, while in the fourth case it was a second marriage that could be seen as an attempt to correct the mistakes of the first. In these cases it seemed to be an important aspect of partner choice that his views on domestic division of labour would not prevent her career development especially after childbearing, and reconciliation of work and family issues would be based on individual needs assessment and mutually satisfying negotiations between the partners.

A military officer interviewee (15), with a law degree and an upward career trajectory, met her husband during their university years. The husband is a university lecturer with an academic career. They raise their two children together with hardly any external help, and perform their family tasks harmoniously and attentively to each other. In her perception the difference between their incomes does not reflect different workloads, only different earning power:

> In an ideal world a university professor wouldn't earn less than a military officer ... My main problem with this situation is that he works much more than I do... while he receives only a fraction of my salary.

In her workplace choice family and career compatibility played a significant role:

> This was definitely part of the decision when I chose this job in public administration relatively early in my career that it is compatible with childbearing and family life. Additionally it provides a quite decent income, and the working hours are also fine.

At the same time in her view her husband sees it as natural that he takes his part in the household duties by taking advantage of his flexible working hours.

> He does the laundry because he spends more time at home, and he partly does the shopping... and sometimes he cleans up when he is at home during the day and has time for it.

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A university lecturer (21), having second and third jobs partly because of financial needs and partly because of commitment to certain NGO activities, organises their parity based marriage and family life in agreement with her husband. They have two children. The husband has a lower level of education than the wife, and finds jobs with varying degrees of success – but this does not cause tension in their relationship:

> ...he thinks that we should work to be able to live (not the other way around), to be able to accomplish what we want in life.

Carrying out household duties does not depend on their gender:

> His views on these roles are different from the average male. ... To tell the truth, I do not think much of those other men: they act as if they are really disabled, when they don't know where the sugar is [in the kitchen] or cannot even prepare scrambled eggs. This is not a specific female skill... I can hammer nails into the wall, it is not a problem for me... these are not gender-specific tasks...

Even if their different attitude to paid work does not cause any problems between them and they are able to share child care and domestic responsibilities without any conflict, they often have to face the disapproval of their environment:

> ...it is damned difficult to go against the mainstream. ... In the circle of my female friends and in the whole neighbourhood we are seen as a very strange family ... [here] everyone has an average of four kids, and stays at home as a full-time mother. In their eyes I am a careerist and a monster mother. [It...] is very 'new right[wing]' and very much organised according to the classic traditional gender roles.

Another interviewee (19) in this group, a chief financial manager of a multinational company lives with her daughter who was born in her previous marriage and her second husband in a big country town. Learning from the failure of her former marriage, she wanted a fresh start in her second marriage, with new family arrangements. Her career has been steadily rising since university. She feels that with her second husband they perfectly complement each other. The high income and security of her job allowed him to launch a business which can expand his creativity. She does not find the reconciliation of her work and family life hard, even with the occasionally very long working hours and night-time work:

> I can concentrate on my work and stay in extra hours any time ... because I know that at home everything is fine ... My working hours are limitless. There are practical problems to be solved, no matter how long it takes. ... I earn enough to provide for the whole family, and at least one of us can do what he enjoys to do ... at least he does not have to suffer from stress every day in the miserable life of being someone else's employee, and he can do what he loves to do.

In her view sharing their domestic duties is also well-balanced, and tension-free, mainly because of *'my husband's blessed good spirit'*. Although she gained practical experiences of how to practice traditional gender roles in her family of origin and during her first marriage, she prefers mutual support and equal sharing of duties among the partners:

> My first husband came from a [traditional] family, where things didn't really work this way. If he felt like it, he cooked a meal, it was like a hobby. But he was of the view that there are no obligations on him at home.

Another interviewee from this group (18), having a secure, professionally satisfying, well-paying job also in the financial sector, based her relationship with her husband on mutual adjustments and not on traditional gender roles.

> The way we live is close to how I imagine the ideal family... I think the ideal case is when burdens are shared equally. Even if I wanted to spend more time with child care this is not feasible with my work schedule ... We have this understanding that we both take part in child raising equally, there is no such deal that I bring in the money, and you look after the child; it is a shared task.

After the birth of their child she stayed at home for three years on parental leave but the flexibility of the husband's job helped her to return to work and move on with her career.

3.3. Externally forced role reversal model

Seven interviewees live in a family setting that we categorised as belonging to this model.

A common feature of this very heterogeneous group was that all of them started their relationship with their partner in a rather traditional set-up partly due to their family socialisation patterns and their unthoughtful conception of marriage and family life, which they started at a relatively young age, and partly due to their partners' traditional masculine gender display. However, for various reasons, their families had to face such challenges that transformed the wife into a primary breadwinner, thus contrary to their original expectations they had to learn to cope with this situation.

This group includes intellectuals such as women in very prestigious jobs with outstanding income levels as well as ambitious artists, whose partners had lost their jobs or who had become unsuccessful; a highly positioned Hungarian female manager with a foreign husband, and social worker women from a small village (including a Roma woman) whose husbands are unable to find work in that region of Hungary. In these cases the partners' views on marriage, family, paid work and domestic duties do not necessarily differ from each other: it is rather the gradually emerging and often long lasting overturn of the usual power balance regarding the income generation patterns within the families that can cause serious conflicts and much tension, so much so in some cases that this can lead to the idea of separation or even divorce.

Three interviewees in this group grew up in a traditional peasant or manual worker family setting and prepared for the traditional roles of becoming a wife and a mother as their main goal of life. However, despite their relatively low level of education, they were able to attain new skills to qualify for not particularly well paying, but secure positions in the job market. This way they were able to maintain their family financially even on their own. In two cases the marriage got into crisis due to this externally constrained career change of the wives – but at the same time this experience could provide them with self-esteem and a sense of agency that they had never encountered before when they were ready to accept their secondary rank in the family.

An interviewee (9) from the countryside, got married at a young age, and acquired qualifications and started to work when she was already a mother. On the basis of her own family socialisation and the experiences she gained during the first years of their marriage she was prepared for the traditional arrangements of family life. Even though sustaining their family required two incomes she still felt that her paid work activities were clashing with her maternal responsibilities.

> After having our second child I went back to high school... and when my son was four I started to look around to find a job ... but it felt very strange [to go to work] ... what will happen to the child? What will happen at home?

Since the husband lost his previous stable job and can work only temporarily in casual jobs, he is not as able to provide security for the family that she would prefer. Even though she identifies with the conventional female role she learnt from her mother, their real life situation with the double burden of paid work and housework that she has to take on by herself, makes her aware of how anachronistic and offensive her husband's masculinity performance can be for her:

> ...perhaps it is because of my upbringing: my mother kept telling me all the time that women should remain women, and when the husband goes to work ... by the time he comes home, the meal should be ready and the table should be set ...[but] there was a point when I realised that perhaps this is not a good thing to do.

In comparison with the previous case, very different circumstances transformed a highly positioned female professional with one child from Budapest into primary breadwinner of the family, when her husband's career got into a decline. In their case neither of them wanted to consciously follow any normatively prescribed family roles but she had internalised some elements of conventional gender socialisation – especially those connected to the priority of maternal duties over paid work responsibilities – to such an extent that even though she could fully count on her husband's contribution to child care when returning to the labour market earlier than she had originally planned, she could not accept this situation as a 'normal' one.

> Practically I have been providing for the whole family alone for the last six years. It is very distressing that our family stands only on one foot, and if

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> anything happens to me, no one knows what will happen. I think that's an awful lot of responsibility. ... I am gently trying to force him back to the world of work...

At the same time her husband's very active involvement in child care makes it easier for her to reconcile her paid work and family life. In fact the husband's involvement in looking after their daughter has been greater than hers:

> Our little daughter was born with a pretty severe congenital kidney disorder, which was discovered when she was one year old, and for the next one and a half years, until she got operated, it was really very necessary to have someone who could hold the fort at home so actually at that time it came in really handy that he could not work...

However, her narratives reflect many internal conflicts and regrets deriving from her two main conflicting roles of mother and employee:

> Well, if I regret anything, it is that I went back to work perhaps too soon... it still really hurts... My daughter was only 11 months old... But I very much regret that I did not stay at home with her for another year. It was a very difficult decision... there was this dilemma that now I can stay at home with complete existential uncertainty or I can come back here [to work] and do what I love to do, but there is a price for that...

3.4. Consciously implemented role reversal model

This family model represents mostly the idea that the 'breadwinner women' term might bring to most people's mind. The eight cases we have grouped under this heading include women who do play dominant roles in managing and controlling the life of their family. This dominant role performance could partly derive from their higher than average education and specific career choice, partly from different life-cycle positions of the male partners, and also from other personality related and personal reasons that could not necessarily be explored in full detail during the interviews.

Within this category, compared with the whole sample, there is a higher proportion of those couples where the female and/or the male partner live in their second or third marriage, and in some cases the previous relationship failed exactly because the former partner could not accept the woman's aspirations to build her own career. Since all of these families live at a relatively high material standard, the somewhat lower income level of one party does not lead to conflicts, and despite the increased workload of the main breadwinner, the daily operation of their family life is provided without any major problems. Besides the help from grandparents, most of the time paid external help can contribute to the minimisation of housework (for example, ordering meal deliveries instead of home cooking) and the achievement of a better work-family balance within these families.

An interviewee in her late thirties (1), a high riser in her career, lives with her much younger foreign husband and their preschool aged son. Motherhood is important for her but she did not wish to withdraw from work and public life even during the period of early child care:

> When my son was a year old... I felt that if I cannot go back to my office to work with adults, at least for six hours a day, then I'll jump out of the window. I didn't feel like staying any longer in isolation... I think I would have gone back to work even if I had a rich husband...

Division of domestic tasks does not cause any problems among the partners as the husband does not mind doing some of the 'feminine' tasks, and they can afford to buy some external help, too.

> ...at the age of 25 I realised that one should always earn enough to hire a cleaning lady once a week, and she does the ironing, too. My husband can also do the ironing anyway. I hate ironing. And my husband also does the cooking... After all, this is a well equipped apartment with everything mechanised ... and he [husband] can pick up a broom, iron his shirts, vacuum, if necessary...

A high earner interviewee (6) working in an international company, lives with her second husband and her two children, one of whom is from her previous marriage. Originally she believed in following the traditional gendered script of role sharing but later these ideas were overrode by new opportunities opening for her after the political system change. The resulting 'role reversal' led to the failure of her first marriage and a learning experience that resulted in developing a much more harmonious second marriage:

> We have a little bit of role confusion because I think I should have been born a man and he should have been born a woman... [in my first marriage] every evening I waited for my husbands with home-cooked meals – my husband went out at 7 am and got home at 9 pm...but he didn't earn anything, and then I decided that I should start earning.

Another interviewee (16), the second wife of her more than twenty years older husband, working in the private sector, consciously prepared to provide the right circumstances for her husband, having a financially unprofitable, but intellectually rewarding work. They have one child together, whom they raise in harmony, respecting each other's professional and family activities. However, she is aware of the responsibility deriving from the fact that she is the primary breadwinner; she can also foresee that this situation could affect her future choices and might even force her to compromise when choosing her workplace:

> It comes to my mind nowadays more often ... that after all I am the main breadwinner, thus I cannot suddenly change my mind: if I don't like it here I

cannot just quit and go for another job... because I am the one who provides for the whole family.

In her view the three year long parental leave that keeps mainly mothers away from the labour market is not the best solution for women – despite its alleged desirability according to social expectations:

> I am convinced that a child will be all right when their parents are. I could have stayed at home for three years, but that wouldn't have been very good for the child because surely... at some point it would have come out that I don't want to do this... Anyone who wants to stay home at home for three years should do that, but I don't think that this is a good solution, not even if she really wants to stay at home.

Parenting and household tasks are shared in a flexible manner in accordance with the partners' different work schedules, irrespective of the traditionally gendered nature of the given activity:

> My husband deals with the kids, taking them to the kindergarten, and bringing them home, while the woman keeps working. The fact that I earn more than my husband doesn't really matter ... he teaches at the university, where there is no need to go in at 9 am... so he has much more freedom to come and go. And when he is at home he does a lot of chores.

An economist interviewee (22), working at a large foreign airline, lives with her husband whose educational background is lower than hers and their two children in a town near Budapest. As her outstandingly well-paying job requires her to spend several days abroad every week, without her husband's 'role reversal', she would not be able to work in this job. Additionally, because one of their children is a disabled boy who needs special care, the husband stays at home with him on parental leave. She has tried to reconcile her professional and maternal duties by switching to part-time working hours after the birth of their first child, but later she was able to continue her important and very well-paying work by the complete withdrawal of the husband from the labour market, which solution at first was not received with unequivocal joy on his side:

> He is a very good father, having a really great relationship with both children... If he would not do this then I wouldn't be able to work. Obviously, he is aware of this but he also feels that he had to give up his work so that I could continue with what I love to do...

Due to their family background and upbringing, they have approached family and parental duties in quite different ways at the beginning, but essentially because of her strong personality and better career opportunities they were able to work out how to cooperate effectively in order to maintain their family life.

> ...the difficulty in our relationship [is] that he comes from a very traditional family...Obviously, he likes the life we have, but this is also the reason why we constantly fight with each other. Ours is not a normal Hungarian relationship, where the man makes money, and the woman is expected to subordinate herself to her husband at home... With us it is just the opposite. But we talked it over who could earn more, and it is clear that I can earn orders of magnitude more... he doesn't say it, but it can be felt that it is disturbing for him that he is the one who has to adapt to me, just like his mum had to adapt to his dad.

In comparison to the previous cases, much more tension is reflected in the relationship of our psychologist (17) interviewee, characterised by great professional advancement and financial success. She met her present husband whose educational background is lower than hers on an online dating site: she chose him on the basis of consciously formulated criteria and he perfectly fits the role that was required by her from the very beginning of their relationship. However, due to the significant differences in their socialisation patterns and socio-economic status there are several conflicts and compromises, debates and repressions accompanying their life together. The interview narratives indicated that in spite of all these potential problems their relationship is fully satisfactory for her:

> It turns out that [mine is] ... a terribly marketable profession, and family-friendly too. I'm very active in my work and very ambitious... My husband is ...coming and going between different jobs, paid work doesn't seem to be his terrain of self-fulfilment. It doesn't really matter for him what he does if he is with cool people, and if he is not overexploited... beautifying the house, organising holidays, enjoying ourselves together, these are the main thing in life for him... While the children were little he spent a lot of time with them, much more time than those breadwinner fathers in middle management positions with 12 hour long working times I know...

In her view the very long period of parental leave has a bad effect on equal marital relations, almost forcing women to return to traditional gendered modes of behaviour. Despite their roughly equal sharing of child care and housework related tasks she can also experience how coercive traditional role expectations can feel, especially when these are also conveyed through her husband's behaviour:

> I've seen it in my environment that when the mother stays at home on child care benefit it can bring out some very patriarchal patterns in men, and they suddenly slide back a hundred years, and start to function in a much more traditional set-up than before, and after the parental leave is over, it is very difficult to get out of this set-up... I don't like it that the basic set-up is that all the monotonous routine of things should be done by women ... and what my husband does is always optional... and this makes him so cool... [while] he is only there to help out. ... My main problem is about accountability: if something is not done, I'm the one who is accountable, I have the responsibilities.

The interview narratives also reveal that the inherently egalitarian ideas of the woman coming from an intellectual family, and the gender role perceptions of the man with a traditionally gendered family background might be attuned at the level of everyday practice, but at the level of principles the two fundamentally different systems of expectations may never converge. Additionally, it is also an important aspect that there is not too much external support coming from the broader family and social environment for 'role reversed' couples.

> My husband is very supportive towards my professional life, he might even be proud of me... but he looks at these things through a completely different lens... Because he is from a family with extremely conventional roles where the woman did all the classic women's activities, while his father...brought home the money, and that was his main contribution to the family division of labour. My husband is seen by his family [of origin] as a hero on a pedestal, a perfect husband and father who does an amazing job... and obviously this is one way to look at things...

4. Conclusion

Ours is the first Hungarian qualitative study, devoted to this 'irregular' subject, focusing on various work-family balance related coping strategies of Hungarian women acting as main breadwinners within their family. By examining our structurally coded interview material we could estimate the compatibility of the partners' gender norm expectations and their practical realisation, while regarding the subjective evaluation of female breadwinning we distinguished categories of external constraint and preferred choice. On the basis of our analyses we have identified four models of family relations: the traditional, the egalitarian, the externally forced role reversal and the consciously implemented role reversal models.

Our study was conducted as part of a broader research project on new gender roles and their implications for family life in Europe: when we chose this topic there was an implicit assumption that 'irregular' family formations (including those with female primary breadwinners) were likely to display new family and gender roles. However, we must admit that there were hardly any clear cases, where traditional gender role expectations of the partners entailed traditionally gendered behaviour; where (socialisation) differences between the partners unavoidably generated conflicts, and where one or both parties were unable to adapt to the emergence of some unforeseen external factors that modified their original expectations regarding their desired family life. Thus the heterogeneity of family practices with women performing primary breadwinning activities called our original assumptions into question.

By looking through the different contents and styles of primary breadwinning among the interviewed women we found that relatively tension-free family life arrangements could be produced in various ways, even when both partners seem to follow traditionally gendered family roadmaps. In such a context, the Beckerian equilibrium (characterised by female home-making and male breadwinning, supplemented with male domination and female subordination) could be seen as a

just and fair family arrangement ideal for some, while the same features can serve as conflict sources for others, whose main goals include the achievement of gender equity in their family life on the basis of, or often despite, their socialisation patterns. This latter scenario can also highlight that household efficiency and the (subjective) well-being of the household members do not necessarily associate.

Family models belonging to our traditional and egalitarian categories seemed to rest on relatively stable pillars in the sense that (at least according to the interviewed women's perspectives) both partners' family practices related expectations largely overlapped, and this firm structure did not seem to be shaken even by the irregular income generating pattern of the partners that is seen as highly unusual in present day Hungary. However, most of the interviewees belonged to the other two role reversal related categories, where at least a part of the reversed role performances developed as a result of external constraints, and did not reflect the expectations of (at least one of) the partners: these patterns theoretically included strong potentials for emerging tensions and conflicts. At the same time, we cannot assert that these relationships were always conflictual or more vulnerable than others, since (the often unavoidable) adaptation to external conditions could make the partners learn to listen to each other more carefully and accommodate themselves to the new challenges in ways potentially leading to the development of harmonious family life arrangements.

Our most populous category of the consciously implemented role reversal model included various cases representing an (at least in Hungary) still quite unusual set of female family practices, where ambitious career women are able to determine the developmental features of their relationship and family cooperation. If their male partners accept this atypical setting and they are also able to cope with the potential disapproval of the extended family and the social environment, they can create a well-functioning, largely tension-free relationship. In those cases, however, where female dominance goes together with neglecting the male partner's ideas and desires, an unbalanced relationship is likely to develop, which can be just as vulnerable as those more traditional settings where masculine primacy interferes with the female partner's self-assertion and career development opportunities.

One of the main limitations of our study is that we could present only the female breadwinners' perspectives since our limited resources did not allow us to conduct interviews with other family members, including the out-earned husbands. Another limitation derives from the lack of longitudinal data: our narrative interviews present the interviewees' relationship and work-life histories as well as childbearing related life events from a present-day perspective, thus we can have only some assumptions about the stability of the relationships and the future functioning of these families. We cannot be sure either whether the results of our qualitative research highlight the main features of Hungarian women being in a primary breadwinning position in their family; and it can be even less known whether the main female breadwinner family setting that still counts as quite unusual in Hungary will gain greater legitimacy following the increasing educational level of women, the further spread of dual-earner families, the (to be hoped for) decrease in gender-based discrimination and further inevitable steps towards gender equity. However, despite these limitations we believe that the present study does contribute to a better understanding of female primary breadwinning practices in Hungary and elsewhere.

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Behaviour-based Work-Family Conflict among
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Abstract

The paper focuses on a special type of conflict that emerges from the
contradictory demands of work and family life, assuming that the gap
between the ideal manager and the involved father might serve as
significant conflict source in men's life. In order to test the assumption
an interview-based case study was made at the Hungarian subsidiary of
a Scandinavian multinational service sector company, where 43 face-
to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted with manager
fathers. The interviews were analysed with the use of NVivo10 on the
principle of qualitative content analysis. According to the findings
behaviour-based work-family conflict is not the major source of
conflict between work and family responsibilities, rather the contrary,
managerial and father roles often enhance each other. In those cases
when manager fathers have experienced conflict it appeared in two
forms: as a double pressure that fathers are expected to be both
traditional breadwinners and available involved fathers and as the
difficulty to switch from managerial role into father role. The low level
of behaviour-based conflict can be explained by the traditional
division of labour and gender attitude in Hungary that conforms to
the workplace's expectations about ideal employees.

Keywords: work-family conflict; behaviour-based conflict; involved fatherhood; ideal employee; managers;
work-life balance.

1. Introduction

Empirical results from the United States (Ladge et al., 2014) as well as Sweden (Allard et al., 2011) showed that those men who are more family oriented and those living in dual-earner couples were more likely to experience work-family conflict than men in traditional male breadwinner families. Similarly, according to international comparative studies (Van der Lippe et al., 2006; Geszler, 2014), male employees in Northern- and Western-European countries face more work-family conflict than working men in post-socialist nations although the former ones put considerable emphasis on the issue of work-life balance.

This paradox can be understood as emancipation in Western and especially Northern countries expects both parents to be active in the labour force as well as at home resulting in conflict between the work and family domains (Ladge et al., 2014; Allard et al., 2007). On the other hand, in post-socialist counties, since female participation in the labour market was primarily economically driven, traditional views about the division of paid and unpaid labour (meaning that the man is the breadwinner of the family, while the woman is responsible for care and household tasks) were not influenced (Van der Lippe et al., 2006). The traditional male breadwinner model is also completely in accordance with the employer's expectations, the ideal employee model, which considers work as the main element of men's lives. In this interpretation being a good father, unlike being a good mother, is not seen as culturally incompatible with being a good employee. It is rather the contrary, where being a good provider is seen as an integral part of being a good father (Williams et al., 2013).

This is not the case however, in those situations where not the traditional breadwinner model is followed. The man as the breadwinner ideal is contested by the ideal of the *involved father*, who is committed to care and family responsibilities (Williams et al., 2013). The rise of the nurturing father ideal is not something to be understood in the frame of the ideal employee, since the expectations towards men are different. While the ideal employee expects men to focus primarily on their work neglecting the care responsibilities, the ideal of involved fathering expects fathers to take an active role in their child's nurturing and care. These contrary expectations might help us to understand why men now report greater levels of work-family conflict than before (Williams et al., 2013; Kvande, 2009).

Moreover, men in managerial and professional positions are found to face even higher levels of conflict (Allard et al, 2007). Ford and Collinson (2011) conclude that the ideal employee model, the taken for granted, uninterrupted, long working hours career model is even stronger in these positions (Burke, 2000). Even Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), whose conflict term is the most widely used one in the literature of work and family interactions, offer the example of male managers to demonstrate incompatible expectations regarding behaviour in different roles. According to these authors, the male, managerial stereotype emphasizes self-reliance, emotional stability, aggressiveness, and objectivity. Family members, on the other hand, may expect a person to be warm, caring, open and emotional. They define work-family conflict in general as 'a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect. That is, participation in

the work (family) role is made more difficult by virtue of participation in the family (work) role' (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985: 77). Within this term they differentiate three major forms: time-, strain-[2], and behaviour-based conflict. The last type, studied in this paper, refers to the different behavioural expectations attached to work and family domains and the inability to adjust one's behaviour to these expectations within each life sphere. Most of the empirical studies that use Greenhaus and Beutell's (1985) conflict definition focus on the time- and strain-based items and the findings for behaviour-based conflict are scarce, thus somewhat vague in comparison to the other two types (Rantanen, 2008).

The purpose of this paper is to analyse the behaviour-based conflict in life of Hungarian fathers in manager positions assuming that the gap between the ideal manager and the involved father might serve as a significant conflict source. Hungarian fathers in general are found (Takács, 2008; Pongrácz, 2001; Harcsa, 2014) to stand far from the involved father ideal experienced primarily in Nordic countries, since the division of labour between genders is unequal[3] and fathers' assistance in parental leave is remarkably low along with a weak ability to secure and use parental rights (Hobson et al., 2011). On the other hand, Pongrácz and Molnár (2011) highlight the fact that Hungarian society cannot be categorized as either completely 'traditional' or completely 'modern' but may be located between the two poles, with mixed and ambivalent elements. In line with this research, based on 2009 Family Values data of Hungarian Central Statistical Office, Spéder (2011) found that 24.5 per cent of the Hungarian public expected the man to be the breadwinner, without needing to sacrifice their time working on care tasks, while 18.5 per cent identified with a family-centric man, ready to cut back on work in favour of the family. The majority (48 per cent), however, raise contradictory expectations towards men by desiring them to be the family breadwinners but also expecting them to prioritize family over work.

The combination of modern and family-centric expectations can be assumed to create double pressure on Hungarian fathers that might lead to perceived behaviour-based conflict. Therefore, the research questions of this paper are focusing on whether manager fathers face any conflict arising from double expectations of work and family domain; and if so, how they experience this behaviour-based conflict; and how the discourses of ideal employee and involved father affect their work-family balance. To answer these questions a case study was undertaken at the Hungarian subsidiary of a Scandinavian multinational service sector company, where 43 face-to-face semi-structured interviews were made with manager fathers. The Scandinavian origin of the company is important since Nordic societies are well-known of their long policy legacy of promoting gender equality and work-family balance in the workplace (O'Brien et al., 2007). Organizational culture has been found to have a direct

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[2] Time-based conflict refers to overlapping schedules and pressures between work and family roles, due to which it may be impossible to be both physically as well as psychologically present within both roles. Strain-based conflict occurs when work- and family-related stressors arise that produce mental and emotional strain, due to which the demands of other life spheres are difficult to fulfil (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985).

[3] Even if a couple follows Western patterns of sharing housework responsibilities before they have a child, after the birth of the baby the traditional division of labour tends to re-emerge (Takács, 2013).

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relationship with work-family balance since claims for work-family balance are made and granted or denied at the workplace. A workplace organizational culture that reflects sensitivity to employees' work-family balance can be seen as a site for converting policies into work-family balance claims. At the same time, organizational culture can also affect how and to what extent employees face potential penalties and risks to work-family balance claims, including job loss and discriminatory treatment in pay and promotion (Hobson et al., 2011). Hobson and her co-authors (2011) found that in Hungary men's work-life balance claims at the workplace entailed a greater risk for them than for women, who can expect more tolerance towards their desire to prioritize family needs. But in general there is only a weak potential for maintaining a work-life balance and for taking advantage of family-friendly initiatives. The main reasons for these agency inequalities are the structural features of the economy and labour markets, including the prevalence of insecure employment, long working time regimes, and low wages that force mothers and fathers to take on extra jobs.

The next chapter approaches the question of behaviour-based conflict by introducing the concepts of ideal employee and involved fatherhood along with some important changes in the domains of both working life and home. This is followed by an overview of the applied method, the demographic summary of the sample and a brief presentation of interview results. The paper is closed with a discussion chapter that interprets and concludes the results.

2. Ideal Employee versus Involved Father

2.1 Manager Men in Organizations

Among all the changes in organizations most recently there is a special attention on the moves from the nationally based, single organizations to transnational, post-bureaucratic multi-organizations with looser structures, dynamic networks and project organization (Broadbridge and Hearn 2008; Kvande, 2009). The high performance organizations in globalized working life are increasing their expectations towards employees regarding time, energy and commitment (Lewis et al., 2007). Companies functioning in this high-paced environment are often labelled *greedy organizations* (Coser, 1974) that seek exclusive and undivided loyalty from their employees. Greedy organizations are able to generate commitment from employees in three ways: firstly they make significant demands on their members' time and energy. Secondly, they offer a position of status by creating an aura of exclusivity around the institution and by putting pressure on individual members to weaken their ties outside the organization. Thirdly, they build close links with the social identity of their members through the elements of this exclusivity (Burchielli et al., 2008). The pull of economic, social and symbolic power associated with male management reinforces an individual's commitment to, and engagement in business (Bowman, 2007). This is in accordance with the *ideal employee* definition of Joan Acker (2006; 2011). The ideal employee is a worker who exists only for work and has no other claims. As Acker (2011: 67) says 'He is expected to be at work at set times, focused only on the tasks at hand, responsive only to demands of supervisors, available for long working hours, and unhampered by other responsibilities, such as for children and housework. This

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is the ideal, unencumbered worker. The encumbered worker, most often a woman, does not fit the ideal assumptions very well.' Consequently, work is organized on the image of a white middle-class man (Acker, 2006). This means organizations and management are gendered and bear masculine values, although it is difficult to see when the masculine character of management is being taken for granted, neglected and thereby reproduced and reinforced (Collinson and Hearn, 1996). In this sense the hegemonic forms of masculinity[4] are still associated with work that entails long hours and behaviours to demonstrate prioritization of the work (Thompson, 2010), especially in managerial positions, which requires men to be irreplaceable at work (Kvande 2009; Halrynjo and Lyng 2013). Working long hours is seen as a 'heroic activity', as a manly test of physical endurance. The successful enactment of this masculinity involves displaying one's exhaustion, physically and verbally, in order to convey the depth of one's commitment, stamina and virility (Williams et al., 2013).

However, it would be simplifying to talk about only one dominant form of masculinity in organizations. Collinson and Hearn (1994) argue that hegemonic masculinity may appear in a number of different ways. They call these forms 'masculinities' and propose that different men and different organizations adopt different masculinities as normative behaviours, instead of there being just one kind of man. In accordance, Hearn (1992) considers bureaucracies mixtures of patriarchal and fratriarchal organizations. In these so-called organizational hybrids, men may meet with each other in fratriarchies, yet relate to each other through the processes of patriarchal and hierarchical authority. Organizational forms are still characterized as selective, competition-oriented and hierarchical, reinforcing the dominant models of masculinity that are readily associated with men of power. But the phenomenon of fraternity shows that the assumption that men act only in order to differentiate themselves from others by showing superiority and obtaining control over others is misleading. While they are encouraged to be self-reliant, innovative, and make their own career choices, at the same time they are expected to be good team players and to conform to company norms (Wajcman and Edwards, 2005). There is also a shift from authoritarian management styles toward more consultative and inclusive styles of management. The move towards more flexible corporate structures places more emphasis on attitudinal, behavioural and personality factors. Leadership is now concerned with fostering shared visions, shared values, shared directions, and shared responsibility, requiring a softer edge and more empathy (Wajcman and Edwards, 2005).

2.2 Involved Fatherhood, Changing Masculinities

In the past few decades some significant changes have occurred regarding fatherhood primarily in the Western and Nordic countries. The issue of the necessity of making men responsible for housework and childcare as well emerged as early as the 1950s. This approach was regarded as an appropriate way of promoting gender equity and

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[4] Hegemonic masculinity is the term of Connell (2009) describing the pattern of practice (i.e. things done, not just a set of role expectations or an identity) that allowed men's dominance over women as well as subordinated masculinities to continue.

create family solidarity (Nagy, 2008). This new idea of fatherhood is very different compared to that which existed about fathers in the 1950s to 1970s, who were presented as occupying a more distant breadwinning role. According to this approach, today it is no longer enough to be rational, goal/means oriented, career oriented, and disciplined: neither 'earning as caring', or having a family photo on the office desk is sufficient to validate being a good father. The 'new' father is more emotionally involved, more nurturing, and more committed to spend time with his children as well as willing to share the joys and work of caregiving with mothers (Wall and Arnold, 2007). Several supranational initiatives can be observed in the European Union, such as the European Committee's Gender Roadmap that was designed to invite men with the help of social policies to more actively participate in family responsibilities, and to support the notion that men and women should be able to engage in both employment and care-giving (Nagy, 2008).

In encouraging the norm of involved fatherhood Nordic societies are regarded as pioneers. From the 1990s in particular, there has been a rapid expansion in Nordic countries of both parental leave[5] and flexible working provision targeted at fathers (O'Brien et al., 2007). This can be regarded as a development towards a father-friendly welfare state (Kvande, 2009). Father's involvement affects children's development positively, since they can feel that both parents are available and able to take care of them. In addition involved fathering has positive consequences not only from the child's viewpoint but regarding fathers' well-being as well (Eräranta and Moisander, 2011).

Fatherhood, however, might have undergone more changes in culture than in practice (Wall and Arnold, 2007). Empirical results from Norway (Rudberg and Nielsen, 2012) show that men can be both traditionally masculine and involved fathers. Some research (Forsberg, 2007; Johansson and Klinth, 2008) claims that there is a conflict between the discourse that connects the father's involvement with gender-equality and that which connects it with child-centeredness. Paternal involvement does not necessarily imply gender equality. In fact, the tendency may be for fathers to spend more time playing and talking with their children than engaging in childcare and housework. According to these findings men's orientation towards children may be more a question of their 'picking out the good bits' than of a radical transformation of masculinity (Johansson and Klinth, 2008).

Rehel (2013) offers the typology of Lamb and colleagues (Lamb et al., 1987), which classifies the ways a parent might be involved in childcare: specifically *interaction, availability,* and *responsibility* (or as Rehel (2013) refers to them: engagement, accessibility and responsibility). This model captures various forms of involvement, from shared activities like reading and playing (interaction/engagement), to being present or accessible to the child whether or not direct interaction is occurring, for example preparing a meal while the child does homework (availability/accessibility), to planning and scheduling around the child, for example making an appointment with the baby-sitter or determining when the child needs new

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[5] Especially with the so-called daddy quota, which is an individualized, non-transferable entitlement to parental leave that was first made available to fathers in 1993, when Norway became the first nation in the world to offer fathers four weeks (Haas and Rostgaard, 2011).

clothes (responsibility). Rehel's (2013) interview results show that fathers in the United States and Canada have significantly increased their levels of engagement and accessibility but have changed little in terms of responsibility. Responsibility for children is consistently understood as one of the most fundamental elements of good mothering, often invisible, that adds to women's share of labour in significant ways (Rehel, 2013).

In comparison Hungarian empirical results also confirm the unequal division of labour within families. Slow changes however are being recorded: according to time-diary research (Harcsa, 2014) time spent on childrearing has doubled in the past 25 years among Hungarian couples. The father's time spent with children has significantly increased, although, as expected, there is still a huge gap between the genders. Similarly, using data from time-diaries Sebők (2015) found that the time spent on paid work and leisure has decreased, while the amount of hours devoted to child care increased between 1999-2000 and 2009-2010 in the Hungarian population. Takács (2013) draws attention to the fact that among Hungarian parents, quality parenting (namely, being a good enough parent who spends 'quality time' with a child) is becoming an important element of being a father or mother. According to another qualitative research study by Judit Takács (2015), the majority of interviewed men, who considered themselves as actively caring fathers, expressed their desire to spend more time with their children, but found that the time constraints of work did not allow this. In the meantime, above all, presence in itself was mentioned as a core element of an actively caring fatherhood. The men in the research were critical towards their own fathers' parenting: their presence was precisely the thing which they now missed the most. Compared to their own fathers' behaviour, they regarded their own parenting as more caring and emotional, emphasizing the importance of quality parenting and the need to 'slow down' and to prioritise being part of a child's life more than chasing after success at work after reaching a certain satisfying point in a career.

3. Methodology

The Hungarian subsidiary of a Scandinavian service sector company was chosen as the case of analysis. Within this company the sample consists of managers of Hungarian nationality, from group manager level to C level positions, who have at least one child younger than 10 years old[6]. The method of exhaustive sampling was used, therefore all the potential interviewees who met these parameters were approached[7].

In the current research an *interview-based case study* was conducted. According to Bryman (1989) in this type of case study the chief emphasis is on undertaking unstructured or semi-structured interviews in 1–5 organizations.

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[6] In order to have a more complete picture of the case, female managers were also included into the sample as a control group. Due to limited space the findings of the female sample are not presented in this article.

[7] The response rate was 86 percent. The main reason for rejection was that floor managers were working abroad or in another part of the country.

Observation may occur, but in a non-participant way with the researcher being very much on the periphery of interaction, carried out in the periods between interviews or at meal-times. As Bryman (1989) argues, however, the aim of case studies is not to draw conclusions from a sample to a population, but to reveal patterns and linkages of theoretical importance.

The semi-structured interviews of research were analysed with the use of NVivo10 software. The interview analysis was undertaken according to qualitative content analysis. The creation of coding categories happened in both deductive and inductive ways: most of the categories were created based on the literature and primary research, while other categories were formulated after reading responses to questions asked in the interview[8]. Categories constitute a tree structure, having narrower categories embedded in broader categories. Through this the advantages of both broader, more generalized categories and the narrower, detailed categories can be used and seen in a structured way.

4. Results

4.1 Description of Sample

At the very beginning of March 2015 I obtained access to the company by receiving a company account, access to the building, a company phone, a laptop and remote access to the Outlook e-mail system. As a next step the Human Resources Department compiled and gave me a list with the potential interviewees based on my selection criteria. Since I had access to the e-mail system I was able to get into contact with everyone directly. The fieldwork lasted from 3rd of March 2015 until the 13th of April 2015.

According to their position, the group contains 22 group managers, 13 heads of department, 6 directors and 2 C level leaders. The average age of respondents is 39 years, the youngest man in the sample is 29 years old, while the oldest is 49. The average and modus of number of children is 2, while the maximum number of children is 4. Some men in the sample had very young children: a 3-months-old baby was the newest family member. Only seven men in the sample had only children of school age, while all the other fathers had at least one child younger than 7 years old. Regarding marital status, with one exception all the respondents are married. The only divorced man in the sample is cohabiting with a new partner.

Regarding level of education the sample is unsurprisingly very homogenous. Almost all respondents have a higher education, college or university degree. The educational level of the respondents' partner shows a similar picture: one-third of male manager's wives were on maternity leave at the time of the research. No men from the sample have taken any parental leave beyond 5-day paternity leave. Another third of interviewees are part of dual-earner couples and their wives are also working full time, while 6 of the wives have a part-time job resulting in one-and-a-half earner

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[8] This mixed version of structuring is labelled by Mayring (2014) as *content structuring or theme analysis*.

couples. There are 6 male managers whose wives are self-employed, such as being a manicurist, a tattoo artist or a dance teacher.

4.2 Becoming a Father

Before the analysis of the relation between managerial and father expectations it is important to briefly summarize how interviewees understand the two domains and to what extent they see involved fathering and ideal employee as ideals. Regarding fatherhood men in the sample were asked about the elements they found the most important in fathering and the tasks connected to childcare they were responsible for.

Two types of answers emerged connected to the question what managers consider the most crucial as a father: *materialist* and *post-materialist values.* Under materialist values I include the financial maintenance of the household, as well as the provision of safety and security to the family while under post-materialist values ideas about being a role-model to children, being present, and giving love are filed. These are, of course, not mutually exclusive categories; references to materialist and post-materialist values appeared simultaneously. As can be seen, materialist duties are closer to more traditional ideas about fatherhood since they assume that men will be the main breadwinners and are expected to provide their families with financial, existential and physical safety.

The post-materialist values are more complex; moral considerations such as providing a good example, giving guidance and being a role-model for a child can also be regarded as a characteristic of the traditional father model, making the father the head of the family. Other elements, however, such as loving the child, being available, giving care, attention, and unconditional acceptance are clearly typical of a more care-oriented, involved father. Post-materialist values were more frequently mentioned than materialist tasks; being a role model, teaching values and morals were particularly popular answers. Materialist values rarely appeared alone, but were usually accompanied by ideas about the importance of being a role-model. It is important to highlight that these comments only relate to ideas about ideal fatherhood. The lengths of the interviews did not allow me to ask the respondent fathers in detail about their everyday practices and routines. It is well-known that what is revealed through interviews is not necessarily equivalent to actual behaviour. Consequently when an interviewee is hypothesized to be a more involved father, this refers only to his discourse about fatherhood.

It was common that fathers expressed a desire to spend more time with their children. It seemed, however, that they were more or less satisfied with their performance as fathers, or they only had slight doubts about whether their parenting would prove successful in retrospect. Only few seemed to be suffering from not being able to represent the father ideal that they wanted to: *'Now we are living as a classic family, an orthodox one. I put the bread on the table and that's where my father responsibilities end. But obviously it's not good. I would like more than this. I don't know, I would like to raise happy people and I want to take my share of that.'* (head of department, 40).

The tasks fathers undertake in parenting may be classified as interaction and availability according to the typology of Lamb (et al., 1987). Most fathers are engaged

in the evening routine during the weekdays which includes helping with dinner, bathing and putting the children to bed. Reading bedtime tales is an important part of the evening routine for many families. As if the interviewees felt a need to explain the lack of family time during weekdays, they often emphasized the importance of weekends as compensation. The term 'quality time' was used at such moments in the context that children do not need to played with much, but this requires complete concentration. The weekends are the time when fathers can pay undivided attention to their children that includes playing, watching cartoons, doing sport together, or checking homework.

Not much was said about chores but the interviews gave the impression that manager fathers did not play a big role in doing household duties. Most interviewees either hire a cleaner or leave a partner to do chores, especially when she is on maternity leave. The tasks they mentioned that they did do were rather administrative in nature, such as paying bills and going to the council, or undertaking more gender neutral housework, such as shopping or cooking. Some interviewees admitted that their wife managed household tasks and played the greater part in parenting, especially in the first years. In these first periods most of the fathers stay alone with their children for only a few hours while their wife goes to the gym or asks for some rest. Later, however, when the child is older, the bond strengthens as time is spent alone with a child more frequently.

The responsibility tasks are equal to taking the child to kindergarten or school and bring him or her home from extra classes or sport activities. It often happens that an upcoming meeting at work in the last moment ruins the planned schedule and the other parent has to solve the situation. According to the interviews there are precedents when manager fathers use the option of flexible working hours to manage these cases. The flexible use of working hours and the home office were seen as the number one work-family balance tool that employees benefit from. In addition to flexibility, organizational culture, what the interviewees labelled as Scandinavian, was another important factor in employees' work-family balance. By Scandinavian working culture they understand the supervisors' people-oriented and supportive approach, the informal communication and the company's democratic style of decision making (everyone's idea is listened to and taken into account based on the concept of equality). The evaluation of the Scandinavian management approach is unambiguously positive and is seen as an example to follow. Critiques are therefore not aimed at Scandinavian culture but rather at the inadequate adaption of Hungarians to this foreign culture. Interviewees do not see the Hungarian subsidiary as a Scandinavian company but rather as a mixture of Hungarian and Scandinavian cultures where the Hungarian employees still have a lot to do to catch up to Scandinavian standards.

4.3 The Role of Work

In order to see that what forms of managerial masculinity the interviewed men identify with and whether the ideal employee model serves as an example, manager fathers were asked about what they enjoyed the most in their work. It would be an exaggeration to narrow the picture to the two extremes of working only for the salary,

or having work as the core of masculinity, especially since almost all interviewees expressed a certain feeling of engagement with the company. There are some managers who obviously consider their work to be more than just a job. These are the managers who usually do not mind answering e-mails at night, who want to be up-to-date about every project, who are perfectionist and are proud of their results and of the company as well. As one of the directors put it, some people need to do extreme sports for adrenalin; for him, that purpose is served by work.

Those who see their work as less determinant rather highlight the importance of family: *'You have to decide what's important in life. And that this is only a workplace in fact, it isn't worth falling ill or sacrificing your marriage for.'* (group manager, 36) These managers prefer to separate their work and family life and can stop themselves from constantly checking their e-mails. This does not mean that they do not like their jobs or do not try to do their best. But they do not chase work success at all costs, or do so no longer since they have had children.

When interviewees were asked about the parts of their work they enjoyed the most, creativity and diversity of the work were mentioned in first place. Managers like innovative, interesting tasks and the fact that there is always something new to learn, which prevents them from getting bored by routine duties. The often challenging projects make them think and focus hard, creating a busy and exciting pace for the day that many enjoy. The second most frequently mentioned element was the influence and responsibility they have in their jobs. They enjoy the autonomy and freedom they have in decision making. They do not consider the responsibility their work entails to be a pressure but rather a form of power which allows them to influence outcomes. What managers like the most in their work in the third place is the team and teamwork. This includes the everyday interactions with their colleagues, the good atmosphere, being able to work well together and create results as a team. This perspective is very similar to the next point interviewees talked about, which was leadership. Similarly to the previous, one also has a focus on human interactions but is rather connected to coordination than cooperation. Some explain in detail how they enjoy seeing their team members progress and develop with their help. Consequently, leadership requires coaching skills as well, since a good leader has to find ways to motivate. The leader picture the interviewees described is far from autocratic in style and is close to the cooperative alternative of leadership. This includes power and influence in the same way, but builds it on trust and cooperation.

4.4 The Relationship between Work and Fatherhood

The most important part relates to the relationship between and the reconciliation of managerial and father roles. In order to map this aspect, the interviewees were asked how managerial and parental roles were compatible with each other, what were the similarities and differences between the two roles, and whether they faced any contradictory expectations or difficulty with switching between them. As can be seen, the question focuses rather on potential conflicts, although interviewees did not seem to be diverted in this direction.

The majority of interviewees identify a relationship between the two roles and find them very similar to each other. According to them being a parent and a manager

includes plenty of parallel expectations such as being a role model, showing a good example, and being able to encourage and motivate others. Consequently, a manager does not necessarily need to be cold or strict neither with his subordinates nor with his child just because he is a leader. Subordinates require teaching and help, just as children do, just in different aspects and on different levels. *'Emotions have a place at work just as much. A leader can become a good leader only if he is able to notice every flutter of his colleagues and can react with empathy and attention. Only in this way do relationships become good and stable. So there is no such distinction that the work is the place for rationality, while private life and home are about emotions.'* (group manager, 37) Some men even described themselves as the father of their team, emphasizing the coaching side of leadership and referring to their subordinates as their children at work. However, they drew attention to an interesting phenomenon: that subordinates tend to lose their independence and act like children when someone is standing above them. A director stressed that in order to avoid this, he has to treat his subordinates as equals, not directing them, only delegating tasks.

In addition, those interviewees who see a connection between the roles also emphasize that one cannot behave completely different in one role than in the other. This does not mean that they behave completely the same way in the workplace with their colleagues as they do at home with their partner and children, but on the whole they see themselves as complete, integrated individuals with certain personalities and habits. Consequently, these interviewees feel that they represent very similar values and attitude as managers as they do as parents. Accordingly, they have no problem with changing from one role to the other. *'Thanks to managerial self-knowledge training I just had the opportunity to experience how others see me from outside, and the two roles were amazingly overlapping. (...) When they described me here as a good old grandpa, then I thought yes, this is a projection of my home role.'* (group manager, 39)

Many manager fathers went beyond talking simply about similarities between fatherhood and management and highlighted the positive influence of one role on the other. According to this perspective, the two roles are not simply parallel in many regards, but some of the skills learnt in one domain can be used in the other. By becoming a father the managers had to be more patient, attentive, emphatic, and to use more care and emotions in their communication which they later found useful in their role as team leader as well. Similarly, many of them started to apply management techniques in terms of their communication at home to achieve consistency and order. *'I often say that you have to talk with a CXO the same way as you do with a child. Sometimes you learn from a better storybook how to make a presentation. I think they [the two roles] rather support each other, since they bring rationality to the private life and empathy to the world of work.'* (group manager, 35)

Only a small group of interviewees experienced any negative relationship between the behaviour expectations towards fatherhood and towards work. Based on the answers, two forms of behaviour-based conflict can be distinguished: the first one emerges from the pressure of simultaneous expectations of work and family domains, while the other is derived from the difficulty switching between roles. According to contrasting expectations, fathers can face the double pressure of being a 'super dad', as one of the directors put it, and a successful manager at the same time. Very often

exhaustion makes them unable to perform their roles as fathers or husbands. One of the directors had conflicts with his wife because after his exhausting work he did not appreciate the housework and care tasks his wife accomplished at home. One of the heads of department perceived external pressure from his wife which he experienced as a paradox between the traditional breadwinner and the involved father role: *'It's a strange paradox, many of my male companions face it, that we should "earn much more but also be home a lot!". Well, it's not possible. (...) I feel very schizophrenic about this. (...) I think the role model role is even more important. (...) But the whole story does not work if I can't provide the financial security besides this. And it's difficult, because for financial security you need intense work, which takes time.'* (head of department, 35) One of the group managers and a director added that they would find it useful to receive the help or guidance in fatherhood that they got during their work. A director identified the difficulty around the birth of the first child by highlighting the changed status within the family fathers have to adapt to: *'Fathers are in a special situation, like mothers are, only in a different way. They [fathers] actually become a service crew in the first three months, losing their previous stronger position. It is very difficult to come to grips emotionally with this, and there is not much help with it.'* (director, 40)

The other form of behaviour-based conflict emerged in relation to the difficulty of switching between roles. This was not a core problem; it concerned only some manager fathers and appeared only occasionally. Sometimes these interviewees realized that they remained in their manager role and used a commanding style of communication not with their children, but with their wives: *'The leader role is a leader role. And yes, my wife used to tell me, that she was not my subordinate because I tend to communicate that way.'* (group manager, man, 33). One of the group managers has a wife who also occupies a leader position. According to him, they had to learn to communicate with each other since both of them are problem-solving driven due to their management positions. Sometimes, however, they do not tell their problems to each other to receive advice and a solution, but only to be listened to. They both had to learn when their partner needs only to be listened to and when she or he needs advice.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to analyse the behaviour-based conflict among Hungarian manager fathers enriching the Hungarian literature on the work-family interface and to fill the gap in research about men. The novelty of this research is that it focuses on the type of work-family conflict least studied and most difficult to grasp (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985). Since the traditional division of labour fits the ideal employee model (Van der Lippe et al., 2006), those living in traditional families might expect less work-family conflict (Ladge et al., 2014; Allard et al., 2007). Since the Hungarian gender context includes many traditional elements (Takács, 2008; Pongrácz, 2001; Harcsa, 2014), it could have been expected that manager fathers in the sample would not face many contradictions between their work and parent responsibilities. According to the results, however, behaviour-based work-family conflict can be a source of problems in fathers' lives, although its frequency and severity is far from the level of time-based

and strain-based conflict that was experienced. Just as Spéder (2011) and Pongrácz and Molnár (2011) describe in their research, expectations towards fathers are neither clearly traditional nor clearly modern: they are responsible for both providing financial security for the family and taking care of children. Interviewed fathers found emotions, presence (Takács, 2015) and showing a good example to the child to be as important as financial security. These are not only external expectations and demands, but the discrepancy also appears at the level of their own contradictory desires as well. Similarly to the findings of Takács (2015) some fathers 'slowed down' after reaching a certain satisfying point in their career and becoming a father and learnt how to prioritise. It is not insignificant that despite the low level of freedom fathers in the sample have to claim a better work-family balance, few manager fathers undertook any concrete activity to change their situations: cutting back on work after becoming a father, or rescheduling days to be able to take children to school or bring them home. According to Lambs' et al. (1987) typology these are involvement in interaction and availability but rarely in responsibility. The types of involvement in childcare is closer to the child-oriented understanding of masculinity than to a more gender-equal attitude (Johansson and Klinth, 2008): household tasks and the less visible, routine components of child care are still the wife's responsibilities (Johansson and Klinth, 2008), although some men in the sample admit that this is not a gender-equal way of dividing up tasks. Many men feel guilty that they do not spend enough quality time with their children, like Takács (2013) found in her research, but similar to other studies (Rehel, 2013; Hobson et al., 2011) they legitimized their absence by referring primarily to economic rationality.

Those fathers perceived the highest level of conflict, who realized their absence as fathers but could not give up on their career dreams at the same time. Fathers' role as breadwinner is even more strongly highlighted in insecure situations, when 'pragmatic realism' (Ladge et al., 2014) can dominate the desire to be caring and nurturing fathers. Thus, a sense of risk and economic insecurity affect agency to make a claim for a better work-life balance (Hobson et al., 2011) and can still legitimize the absence of the father from the family domain, which explains why behaviour-based conflict is the least frequent among the conflict types. This also confirms the finding (Williams et al., 2013; Ladge et al., 2014) that fathers are seen as more trustworthy employees than men without children, since due to their responsibilities as breadwinners they will not risk losing their jobs.

Managers in the sample seemed to be engaged with the company having work as a crucial part of their lives. On the one hand the mechanisms of greedy organizations (Coser, 1974) and the demands for the ideal employee (Acker, 2006; 2011) function well with managers' identities. Such a feeling of commitment and engagement with work can both justify, and fuel very long working hours (Williams et al., 2013). On the other hand, this engagement might rather be understood as a paternalistic approach of leadership (Collinson and Hearn, 1994) in terms of informal relations between colleagues, rather than commitment to the company as an abstract entity. The sense of responsibility for their families is strong; like that for the colleagues and teams they lead, since they can also behave as 'greedy children'. This finding might be in accordance with Connell's (2006) and Acker's (2006) observation that the distance between managerial and non-managerial staff is short and

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management has been brought closer to employees socially. This means that not only the power-related attributes are valued in leading positions, but solidarity, cooperation, fratriarchy (Hearn, 1992), and diversity constitute managerial identity as well. As Collinson and Hearn (1994) highlight, managerial masculinities take several forms. What seemed sure from the interviews is that most of the managers avoid using an authoritarian style of management since requiring unquestioned obedience and rejecting debate would run contrary to the Scandinavian understanding of democratic corporate culture. This is consistent with the idea of Wajcman and Edwards (2005) about being a good team player and Connell's (2006) observation about the shift from authoritarian management styles toward more consultative and inclusive ways of leadership.

Besides examples of conflict, most interviewees found similarities between the managerial and parental roles. In addition, the harmonization of work and family can even include positive interactions: fatherhood can bring emotions, care and attention into leadership; a finding that confirms that involved fathering is beneficial to organizations (Ladge et al., 2014; Allard et al., 2007), while managing and organizing skills are also useful in parenting. This phenomenon of positive interaction is called enhancement[9]. This result draws attention to the importance of including positive approaches into the understanding of relations between work and family life. The lack of conflict can be explained by the fact that Hungarian fathers in this research did not perceive these roles very differently and in contrast, since their style of managing involves more cooperation and emotion, while their fathering is less involved than that common in Nordic or Western societies.

To sum up all this information, the sense of entitlement to make claims for a better work-family balance among manager fathers in the sample was not too high, taking into consideration the fact that taking advantage of parental leave or part-time work in order to spend more time with children did not even cross the minds of such managers, similarly to what Hobson and her co-authors (2011) found using a Hungarian sample. Therefore we cannot really talk about a clash between traditional organizational culture and the growing family needs of involved fathers, as for example O'Brien (2007) does, since fathers do not really challenge organizational culture. This can be explained primarily by the fact that according to gender norms men are still expected to be the main breadwinners (Takács, 2008, 2013; Pongrácz, 2001; Nagy, 2008). Consequently, even if some modern elements of fatherhood exist and fathers feel the need to spend more time (or 'quality time') with their child, the traditional separation between paid and caring roles is still strong. On the other hand, workplace organizational culture gives some room for manoeuvre in the form of the home office and flexibility, which are used by manager fathers to partly satisfy their need to devote more time to their families. This might be explained by the influence of having a Scandinavian leadership and parent company, a situation that was strongly praised by the interviewees due to its human-centeredness, informal ways of communicating, and democratic values. Optional, non-standard flexibility and leave solutions, however, do

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[9] Enhancement is a positive work-family interaction where 'aspects of the work or family role provide resources that facilitate the performance of the other role' (Voydanoff, 2002:149).

not challenge the ideal employee idea (Williams et al., 2013; Kvande, 2009; Lewis et al., 2007), since when deadlines are tight and projects are important, work can easily be over-prioritized. The Scandinavian ownership of the company might be influencing the corporate culture of subsidiaries, although in the Hungarian case exactly its gender equality values could not be transmitted.

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Book Review

Aziz Ansari and Eric Klinenberg (2016) Modern Romance, New York, Penguin Press. 277 pages.

Modern Romance is a crossover of genres, as the first book of Aziz Ansari, – a stand-up comedian, best known for playing a hopeless Lothario and deluded entrepreneur on the television show 'Parks and Recreation' – it offers fact, observation, advice and comedy in equal measure. As Ansari described at a book show[1], he wanted it to be a 'weird thing, a kind of sociology book with Ansari's humor in it'. Conscious of the fact that he might be lacking the background to conduct a serious investigation on the topic of mate seeking, he teamed up with sociologist Eric Klinenberg, author of the 2013 book, *Going Solo: The Extraordinary Rise and Surprising Appeal of Living Alone.* Ansari's romantic stumblings provided the initial inspiration, and the pages are peppered by personal anecdotes, but the core of the book is made up of substantial research that explores the trials and tribulations of the contemporary love seeker. The result is a pop sociology book that pairs statistics with the odd masturbation joke, where the extensive qualitative research is complemented with a photoshopped Jurassic Park themed love hotel suite.

The work is neither digital alarmist nor overly enthusiastic about the bright new future technological advances promise. As its premise, it considers technological developments, – the usual suspects, smartphones, online dating, and social media – to be only part of the explanation behind the significant transformation of the romantic landscape. A more in-depth analysis reveals that in the last few decades the whole culture of finding love has radically changed, it is not just the tools we use but who we search for; settling for anything less than the perfect person has become unacceptable.

The authors cite a wide range of studies from the fields of sociology and psychology but the primary source of data for their project comes from a year's worth of focus group interviews they conducted around the globe. For Ansari, the most revelatory information was obtained when people volunteered to share the contents of their phones with the researchers; this way, instead of having to rely on individuals' memory, they could observe first-hand how actual romantic encounters played out in people's lives. To complement the interviews, Ansari and Klinenberg set up a subreddit forum (on the Reddit website) where they posed questions pertaining to the different aspects of the modern dating process and relationships and essentially conducted a massive online focus group receiving thousands of responses.

The subject material of the book is vast but the authors' focus is on middle-class, heterosexual couples. Also, Modern Romance is not an in-depth scholarly analysis, Ansari comes to this project as a novice of sociological inquiry; his excitement of discovery is palpable but also reveals a lack of background in social sciences.

Chapter 1 examines how our ideas about 'searching' and 'the right person' are vastly different from what they used to be and how these transformations altered the

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[1] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JQAewgTopyc

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whole courtship process. A set of interviews conducted in a senior citizens' home underscored the changes that have taken place. In the 1950s, getting married was the first step in adulthood, young people, especially women, were primarily motivated by the prospect of gaining basic adult authority, they did not search far and married young. Today, there is a whole new life phase – what sociologist refer to as 'emerging adulthood' – that precedes marriage; the twenties and early thirties are a time for getting educated, trying out different jobs, having multiple relationships; marriage is no longer the foundation of adult life but sometimes a capstone (Cherlin, 2004).

The authors point out that not only has the timeframe for finding a mate changed but there is also a great shift in what people look for in marriage partners. Today, we are looking for the perfect person, who completes us, who we deeply and passionately love, 'good enough' is no longer an option, in the words of Esther Perel (2013) we say to our partners: 'give me belonging, give me identity, give me continuity, but give me transcendence and mystery and awe all in one' (Ansari and Klinenberg, 2016: 25).

And finally, the tools we use to find romantic partners have also changed; thanks to online dating we now have a virtually limitless number of choices available to us anywhere, anytime right at our fingertips. Ansari concludes that today, if you own a smartphone, you're in effect carrying a 24/7 singles bar in your pocket.

Asking someone out by text is on course to being the new norm. Chapter 2 details the problems that communication through text messaging poses. Through countless personal stories collected by the authors, a picture emerges that corresponds to what Dan Slater expressed so eloquently: 'But to live as a single adult in today's postrules world of technorelating is to play a nonstop game of puzzle-and-parse. ... To glean entire emotional states from messages hammered out in text-speak, punctuated with emoticons, all nuance rendered down to me happy, me sad (Slater, 2014: 187)'. People write cringe worthy messages, engage in endless texting banters that lead to no offline meeting, or play the 'nothing gambit' (Turkle, 2015) and disappear without any obvious explanation causing endless confusion and frustration. Texting also facilitates flakiness, rudeness and sexual aggressiveness, personal traits that would be far less dominant in in-person interaction.

Once heavily stigmatized, today it is estimated that a third of married couples met through an online dating site (Ansari and Klinenberg: 245 referring to Cacioppo et al.'s figures). The popularity of these sites is even more salient in 'thin markets' – the LGBT community being the most obvious example –, where the pool of potential partners is significantly smaller. In chapter 3 Ansari and Klinenberg conclude that it is easy to see why online dating has become so attractive to many: it provides a virtually endless supply of potential partners, it gives you the tools to filter and find exactly what you are looking for, the sites are available 24/7, and no intermediary is required. There is no doubt that online dating has opened up a plethora of new romantic opportunities, but interviews revealed that the fun and excitement soon dissipate, leaving exhaustion in their wake. This can partly be explained by the attention asymmetry – women receiving much more attention – and partly by the finding that what we think we want seldom matches what really attracts us.

The book mostly focuses on the dating practices of America, on a society where the individuals' freedom of choice is rarely contested. In chapter 3 the authors

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take a brief yet intriguing detour to examine the impact of the increased privacy facilitated by smartphones and the Internet in the much more constraining culture of Qatar. In a place where casual dating is strictly prohibited and young women are heavily supervised, having a secret communication line to other singles brings unprecedented romantic opportunities.

Ansari's father's decision to marry the third woman he was introduced to feels very far removed from today's culture of seemingly infinite choice where – as Turkle writes: 'Nexting has become part of our emotional ecology (Turkle, 2015: 184).' The Internet 'doesn't simply help us find the best thing out there; it has helped to produce the idea that there is a best thing and, if we search hard enough, we can find it (Ansari and Klinenberg, 2016: 125).' We live in a culture that inundates us with the message that we want and deserve the best, and now we have the technology to get it.

In chapter 4 Ansari and Klinenberg draw on Barry Schwartz's prominent work *The Paradox of Choice* to highlight how the abundance of choice affects romantic decision making and potential satisfaction with the partner selected. Applying Herbert Simon's concept of 'maximizers' and 'satisficers', they conclude that online dating encourages a maximizer mindset, which in turn leads to an endless search and an inability to commit.

The online dating environment also fosters a heavily analytical mindset, what Eva Illouz called a 'hyper-cognized, rational method of selecting a mate' (Illouz, 2012: 92), which leads to increased pickiness. What is more, as the authors explain, this pickiness is based on overestimating the importance of qualities that are easily expressed and compared through the online dating platform, and that – according to Helen Fisher – have little importance in determining face-to-face attraction or the viability of a relationship. Relying on psychological studies and personal experience, Ansari recommends us to invest more in getting to know a person, in the relationship itself, instead of waiting for the elusive experience of being instantaneously swept of our feet. Serial first dates rarely provide an opportunity for people's deeper and more distinctive traits to emerge, something that requires shared experiences and a series of intimate encounters.

Chapter 5 contrasts the two fundamentally different dating scenes of Tokyo and Buenos Aires and highlights some salient cultural phenomena. Amid the backdrop of a pending population crisis, Ansari paints a desolate picture of the Japanese dating scene where an increasing number of 'herbivorous men' have become passive and show no interest in sex or romantic relationships.

After Tokyo, the romantically aggressive culture of Buenos Aires presents Ansari and Klinenberg with a very different dating world. Here, hitting on women with abandon – including street harassment – is deeply ingrained in the city's cultural tradition; men are expected to be pursuers in 'the hunt' that takes place mostly on the street, and 'no' is still considered a prelude to 'yes.' While the dating culture in Buenos Aires is no doubt extremely exciting, Ansari concludes that women bear the majority of costs associated with its darker side of unwanted aggression, lies and infidelity.

Chapter 6 examines how the unprecedented private forum for communication that our phone worlds enable affects issues of jealousy, infidelity, and sexual intimacy. Technological advancements facilitate regular dating and maintaining a relationship

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but they also impact the potential of straying. The round-the-clock access to possible partners through the privacy of smartphones presents a perfect storm for temptation. As one man was quoted saying about other attractive women: 'It felt like the opposite of 'out of sight, out of mind.' They were in sight and in my mind (Ansari and Klinenberg, 2016: 191).' The privacy of the Internet and the phone world has also led to the emergence of settings – the controversial Ashley Madison site being a prime example – that are explicitly designed to facilitate adulterous escapades.

In this chapter Ansari and Klinenberg investigate the practices of sexting, snooping, and post-breakup disengagement on social media and conclude that there is no normative consensus on how people should navigate the digital landscape.

The last segment of the chapter examines the prevalence of cheating with a focus on differences in American and French attitudes toward adultery. Even though cheating is rampant, in the United States there is an optimistic expectation that most people will remain faithful and infidelity is considered 'morally unacceptable.' Contrary to this, France has the highest tolerance for extramarital affairs; Ansari and Klinenberg found that most people interviewed considered the urge to seek sexual novelty and excitement completely natural, there seemed to be a general understanding that at one point or another everyone will stray.

The last chapter of the book details why settling down is difficult in today's romantic climate – even if the endless string of first dates leads to widespread exhaustion. People are plagued by what Ansari refers to as 'the upgrade problem', constantly wondering whether there is a better match out there, and they are also driven by a desire for passionate love – an emotional intensity that long term relations fail to match.

Finally the writers investigate monogamy today and the concept of monogamish – a term coined by Dan Savage – relationships where couples are free to negotiate the terms of sexual freedom and infidelity for themselves.

Ansari ends Modern Romance by concluding that finding someone today is probably more complicated and stressful than it was for generations past – but there is also a higher likelihood of finding someone truly wonderful. He also warns that we should never forget that there is an actual living, breathing person behind every profile and every text. We should invest in people and give them a fair chance before moving on to the next one – he even names this concept the Flo Rida Theory of Acquired Likability Through Repetition.

In summary, Modern Romance does a good job at introducing the various problems that pertain to each phase of the contemporary quest for love, the questions of when, where, how, and what we search for, how individuals, without a set of normative guidelines, try to negotiate the ambivalences of searching for their soulmates in a market like environment offering an unprecedented abundance of choice. The writers offer a snapshot view, pointing out that the dating landscape is in constant flux. The copious sprinkling of explicitly present-day pop cultural references throughout the work subtly reinforces the ephemeral nature of any emerging patterns. As in the case of Tinder, which in over a little more than a course of a year went from the ultimate hook-up app to the go-to dating app, even a short amount of time can completely transform the perception of certain tools and behaviors associated with them. Thanks to the extensive research, the book is brimming with insightful personal

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stories that help to paint a nuanced picture of the romantic search and shed light on the mindset of the men and women engaged in it. Ansari's unique brand of humor – although best suited to live performances – also makes it quite an entertaining read. Modern Romance – Ansari effortlessly taking up the role of modern romance guru – also qualifies as an advice book and incorporating the conclusions of several well-known psychological studies, offers rather sound guidance on how to avoid the pitfalls of digitally mediated dating, where Sherry Turkle's words on how seductive a technology becomes when its affordances meet our human vulnerabilities rings especially true (Turkle, 2015). On the other hand, for anyone wishing a more in-depth analysis of how in today's world, love, choice, and technology are intertwined; the book should present itself as only a starting point.

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Book Review

Triin Roosalu and Dirk Hofäcker (eds.) (2016) Rethinking Gender, Work and Care in a New Europe: Theorizing Markets and Societies in the Post-Postsocialist Era. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan. 383 pages.

Work-life balance became an independent scientific field within sociology during the 1960-1970s as more and more women entered the labour market. In the beginning, theories and models mainly focused on Western countries and their circumstances. In recent years, however, studies have been published that attempt to tackle the special case of Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries (e.g. Glass and Fodor, 2011). The main goal of *Rethinking Gender, Work and Care in a New Europe* edited by Triin Koosalu and Dirk Hofäcker, is to describe the processes that took place in these countries from a cross-national perspective and to analyse their social outcomes not only from the perspective of work-life balance but care, an under-researched area in post-socialist countries. Their main question is whether standard theoretical approaches or empirical evidence, mainly based in Western Europe, can be applied to CEE countries.

The book offers a comprehensive approach; the authors examine all the post-socialist countries without presenting them as completely homogeneous. They not only look at them from a comparative perspective, but discuss (some of) them as stand-alone cases while building on Bohle and Greskovits's typology of post-communist political economies (neoliberal, embedded neoliberal regime, and neo-corporatist countries) (Bohle and Greskovits, 2012). The four main topics the authors cover are: family policies and norms, women's participation in the labour market, the balance between parenthood and paid work, and occupational and social mobility. As the authors emphasize, the most important conclusions of this volume are the following: there are intragroup differences between CEE countries and there are more similarities between Eastern and Western Europe than previously assumed. Furthermore, regional norms about parenthood have to be taken into account as the theories are based on Western European women's experiences, which indicates that a new theoretical background is needed. Lastly, findings on Eastern countries can still be ephemeral, given the high dynamics of changes the region is going through.

Among family policies of post-socialist welfare states, the most important to understanding the dynamics of female employment are the public policies regulating parental leave and childcare. The first chapter, written by Sonja Blum, focuses on the effect of the financial and economic crisis on family policies as a part of the comparative approach. The current categorizations of welfare regimes (like Esping-Andersen's) are also criticized for not being able to recognize the prevalence of hybrid forms. As the families' reaction to the crisis could be an important element of the comparison between existing typologies and recent trends of family policies, it is slightly problematic that the most recent data on family spending is from 2010. The same concern applies to childcare services. In that case, the most recent data dates back to 2006 (and as the authors point out, makes no distinction between part-time

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and full-time services). In terms of family spending (compared to the GDP of each country), the CEE group lags behind due to the cutbacks during the 1990s. Five of them can be categorized as low spenders (Poland, the Czech Republic, Latvia, Romania and Slovakia), and five as medium spenders (Bulgaria, Slovenia, Lithuania, Estonia and Hungary).

In the third chapter, written by Triin Roosalu, Marion Pajumets and Leeni Hansson, experts attempt to compare a social-democratic (Norway) and a post-socialist (Estonia) country regarding paternity leave. After outlining the main framings of Norwegian and Estonian research reports and academic articles published between 1998 and 2009, it becomes clear that there are no radical differences between the two countries as the texts focus on four key elements: gender equality, father-child relationship, choice and flexibility, family strength.

The next chapter's main question is why second birth rates are more affected by uncertain economic circumstances than first birth rates in Eastern and Southern Europe. According to Jan Van Bavel and Joanna Różańska-Putek's hypotheses, interplay can be found between economic uncertainty and cultural norms: the cultural value tied to parenthood still motivates couples to become parents, but the generally unfavourable labour market conditions prevent them from having a second child. The method used to investigate this question was a multilevel analysis, which included an individual, a regional and a country level interpretation among 21 European countries. The results show that the effects of subjective economic uncertainty on childbirth depend on the regional definition of adulthood – how important the status of parenthood is considered to be in order to count as a fully-fledged adult. The negative effect of economic uncertainty on second birth rates is stronger in the richer (northern) regions and countries, but higher GDP is also associated with higher second birth rates.

Part two deals with gender motives in the labour market where female employment and parental leave are the main questions of discussion. This part aims to differentiate the post-socialist countries' attitude to women's employment from different perspectives. During the years of socialism full employment facilitated women's entrance into the labour market, however state policies aiming at familization fostered retreats for a longer periods of time. Nevertheless, parents having children under three have a higher risk of unemployment and the chance grows linearly with the number of children.

The 5th chapter written by Ursula Bazant takes female employment in the European Union into an overall account. Examining the tendencies for all 28 member states, women's share in the labour market shows two different tendencies. In the old EU countries women more often react to unemployment or to family policies by taking involuntary part-time work, while in the CEE countries women tend to be excluded from the labour market. The level of education and field of industry influence employment for both sexes, but the number and age of children have a negative effect only on women's labour market situation. The employment rates for women with one child or none are almost the same in the 15-64 cohorts, but in the case of three or more children employment rates drop steeply. A similar effect cannot be detected in male employment rates. This trend is true for all countries investigated.

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Family policies undermine the above described tendencies where women can re-enter the labour market.

Chapter 6 takes a closer look at the employment situation of working and homemaking young adult women in Hungary and in Romania written by Reka Geambasu. While there are certain differences between the two countries' transformation, the overall decrease of female employment and declining fertility rates suggest similar tendencies. The difference between the access to higher education in Hungary and Romania could lead to the difference of the gender distribution in the service sectors. As a common feature, the availability of part-time jobs does not have the same meaning as in Western Europe. In Hungary and Romania part-time employment would not be a solution to find a better work-life balance, but would put more pressure on women, as the household still remains a female sphere.

Parental employment patterns in the Czech Republic were examined by Lenka Fermánková, Blanka Plasová and Jiří Vyhlídal. They explored the influence of parenthood in the context of work-life reconciliation policy measures. The questions of familization or defamilization are rooted in the cultural norms and in public policies as well. Re-entering the labour market later increases the risk of unemployment. In the case of single parents the difficulties of maintaining the work-life balance are the same. The parental allowance system in the Czech Republic was designed to be universal instead of income-related, consequently those having lower incomes or being unemployed tend to choose the allowance for a longer period. This means that staying out of the labour market can be a reasonable economic decision for them. It has a considerable withdrawing effect on female employment. Prevalent gender norms of full-time motherhood influence individuals in the Czech Republic, while public policies do not encourage fathers' participation in parental leave.

Tatiana Bajuk Sencar examines the topic of gender segregation in post-socialist Slovenia with qualitative interviews. Within twenty-five years of transition, wages of highly educated employees have risen significantly; however, sectoral segregation is prevalent and hinders both the increase of female employment and the improvement of their working conditions. Interviews conducted with women working in the retail sector and with trade union officials have introduced a wide picture of working conditions. The liberation of working hours has made work-life balance harder to achieve as open hours and shifts became longer. Moreover, the unfair handling of the overtime work and the increased expectations for effectiveness also worsened the situation of the interviewed group. Despite the fact that trade unions and legal codes have become active to relieve the tension, the precariat situation of women has not changed.

The third part of the edited volume explores the issue of reconciliation between parenthood and paid work, and particularly maternal employment in post socialist countries. The studies depict the patterns in the division of paid and unpaid work, childbearing behaviours of employed women and the impact of care breaks on mothers' occupational mobility.

The effect of state policies on maternal employment in eight post-socialist EU member countries (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) was examined by Jana Javornik. The various combinations of

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family policies offer a framework containing four types, such as explicit and implicit familialism, de-familialism and optional de-familialism based on Leitner's work (Leitner, 2003). Analysing the data from Mutual Information System on Social Protection (MISSOC), Eurydice, OECD and UNICEF databases have made it possible to create spider charts that depict the different spheres of childcare policies. As the accessibility of free childcare opportunities varies from country to country, and the allowance system is diverse too, while the type of familialism is different as well. This leads to different outcomes in terms of mothers' employment. The findings support the fact that the moderate duration and the affordable and accessible childcare enhance women's return to labour market.

Jan Rasmus Riebling, Rumiana Stoilova and Dirk Hofäcker aims to explain the phenomenon why household related tasks are said to be a female 'privilege' based on the analysis of habits and frames of social norms. The main focus of the research was on post socialist countries such as Hungary and Bulgaria and conservative Western European countries like France and Germany. Data from the Generation and Gender Survey (2004) demonstrated that life course patterns of men and women and the normative expectations have national specificities. The paternalistic value orientation is more prevalent in the post socialist countries presumably because the tradition of full time motherhood determinative in these countries as well. As the author suggests *'Therefore, the question "Who does the dishes?" seems to be answered mostly by tradition: "Those who have always done it."'* (p. 227)

In the following chapter by Anna Matysiak and Daniele Vignoli employed women's motherhood behaviours were examined in Italy and Poland. Several similarities can be captured, for example by means of low rates of cohabitation, marital disruption and non-marital childbearing. The researchers expected a solid conflict between fertility and women's employment connected to institutional and cultural circumstances. The connection between women's behaviours on employment and fertility were compared around the birth of the first and the second child to see how country-specific situations affect women's decisions on employment and childbearing. The findings show dissimilarities between the two countries, staying employed is more important for Polish women, which may be explained by financial reasons, as Polish salaries still do not reach EU standards.

Going on with the question of maternity leave, an Estonian study by Triin Roosalu and Kadri Täht shows that staying at home with the child for more than half a year significantly decreases the possibility to stay in the same job after their return to work. The present research shows an unforeseen result as a longer period of staying home with a child may even increase opportunities for receiving a better position. The writers suggest that perhaps only women who feel secure in their labour market position stay at home for a longer period of time or they may be aware that it is hard to get back to their previous positions as organizations change rapidly. These alternatives make mothers looking for a better, or at least a new job after maternity leave, so they are potentially mobile in the labour market.

The last part of the book explores occupational and social mobility, starting with a comprehensive study on CEE countries earning inequalities within dual-earner couples. Martina Mysíková conducted the research based on EU-SILC data of 2009,

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giving an overview on all European countries. She emphasized that the informal economy can influence men's results more often. The findings show that the investigated within-couple earning inequality is relatively low in Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic and higher in Germany and Austria. The inequalities were low when women had higher educational levels than their spouses and the couples had no children.

Still investigating the different gender gaps, the next study, by Eve-Liis Roosmaa and Kadri Aavik, compared Estonia and other European countries by participation in adult learning. Different welfare regimes were studied and the results indicate in general that women participate in adult learning to a greater extent than men. The researchers assume that women more often take part in non-formal and formal adult learning in Estonia because of the stronger expectations for women to gain higher education in order to compete in the labour market.

Educational pathways and gender inequalities were examined in the Estonian labour market in a broader sense, in which the main questions focused on horizontal and vertical gender segregation and their development. Ellu Saar and Jelena Helemäe used six categories of educational level from primary education to higher education. The conclusion shows that girls had a higher chance of reaching higher education because girls choose the general school as secondary education while boys more often decide to attend vocational schools. Concentrating on the labour market, the educational advantage of women helps them to secure senior positions but the glass ceiling can be observed in both Soviet and post-Soviet Estonia. Keeping managerial positions is more common among men by returning to higher education or even without higher education – as a new path to securing men's positions.

Female employees' problems were examined in Poland by interviewing leaders of women's movements to find out whether the question of gender equality in the labour market can be treated as a serious case. The author, Sławomira Kamińska-Berezowska showed that in Poland, women are more affected by unemployment or by working only part-time. Through the growing number of one-parent families, the feminization of poverty has also been present and the limited availability of contraceptives and strict reproduction laws have made the problem more visible, which motivated the advance of the Polish women's movement. Female leaders said that women have learned passivity: they are just a 'reserve army of employees' so they are easily losing their jobs based on the economic situation and the reconciliation of family roles with careers also raises problems. The interviewees had different notions on the usefulness of trade unions, but all in all, they saw them positively. Concerning social mobility and occupational problems, the fourth – and last – part of the book offered an in-depth picture of CEE countries, which gives a strong background for further research.

To sum up, *Rethinking Gender, Work and Care in a New Europe* has reached its aim by giving a comprehensive first insight to the case of CEE countries with highlights on post-socialist relations and on country-specific factors that have been neglected by former researches. Although in some cases the data used by the researchers dated back to several years, even a decade, this book starts answering

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questions about Central and Eastern European countries' gender, work and care connections and provides a solid background for exploring new questions in the field.

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Book Review

Barbara Hobson (ed.) (2013) WorkLife Balance: The Agency and Capabilities Gap. Oxford: Oxford University Press. *297 pages.*

The issue of work-life balance (WLB) has become a highly relevant field of discussion in academic and public debate as the pressure people feel as work intensifies in Western societies is increasing along with the perception of time famine (Van Echtelt et al., 2009; Robinson and Godbey, 1997). The interrelationship between work and life has been a focus of social research for decades. The volume under review provides an exceptionally comprehensive examination of WLB in the field of comparative welfare state research, mainly in the European context, although it provides an example from Asia as well.

Amartya Sen's capability approach (1992) serves as the conceptual framework for the analyses. The approach was developed by the author in the 1980s who introduced this concept of 'capabilities' as a measure of well-being, and held the view that equality of capabilities should be promoted in society (Sen, 1985; 1992). In accord with this approach, choice and agency are at the core of the model presented in the book. Consequently, individual preferences based on the capability of people to choose another way of life and an exploration of these capabilities and potential choices are the focus of the work. Accordingly, the complex, multidimensional nature of achieving balance between work and private life is underlined.

The aim of the book is twofold. On the one hand, it is designed to incorporate the agency and capabilities approach and based on this established model explore the gap between aspirations and practices in WLB. On the other hand, it is also intended to broaden the capabilities framework through its research into WLB.

The book employs an institutional approach to defining a multidimensional model which outlines the conversion of resources into agency and incorporates the determining factors, the capabilities, and finally, the opportunity to achieve WLB (which is called agency freedom) into this model.

The three levels which are investigated constitute the conversion factors which may be defined and modified based on Sen's categories. Individual, institutional and societal factors are distinguished; however, these levels are intertwined. Accordingly, these conversion factors define a set of individual capabilities which impact agency freedom and thus the real opportunity of people to achieve balance between work and life.

The concept of situated agency is employed in the book to accentuate the overlaps which exist between different social categories: this notion is employed to highlight the interaction between these dimensions – such as gender (the key dimension), education and skills, etc. – which shape capabilities. Therefore, as the individual factors together comprise the concept of situated agency, the role of gender is underlined.

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At the societal level, norms are the primary focus, and the central role played by gender also appears in the book at this point with a view to examining the significance of gendered norms related to parenting and employment.

Concerning institutional factors, these constitute the centre of the model since the most significant role in the conversion of resources is attributed to this level. The institutional level is divided into two further groups: welfare regimes and firms, and the policy dimension and organizational culture are thereby also integrated into the model. Furthermore, working time and flexibility are also included as institutional factors, revealing some of the features of the labour market.

Besides capturing subjective experiences with WLB, the cognitive aspects of capabilities are also developed in the book. Accordingly, the sense of entitlement to make claims (including individual-level perceptions) and the scope of alternatives for achieving WLB make up the dimensions through which the cognitive level of agency is captured. This approach reveals how the institutional and social context may modify alternatives and individual perceptions about creating balance between work and home life.

Consequently, by applying the agency and capabilities approach the author emphasizes that choice in WLB is multidimensional in nature: it reflects individual perceptions about available options and strategies, and it is substantially determined by the institutional and social context.

Concerning the extension of the conceptual framework, the investigation into capabilities at different levels, the integration of the firm as a decisive location for the making of claims, and lastly, the introduction to the cognitive dimensions of capabilities are underscored.

The innovative approach to researching WLB using an agency and capabilities approach is threefold in nature, considering 1) the broad theoretical framework, 2) the WLB concept, and 3) the measurement of WLB.

Focusing on capabilities using a multilevel approach facilitates a broader exploration of the factors behind work-life tension than by using classical approaches such as conflict theory (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985). Furthermore, in referring to models that reject the existence of a strict distinction between the life spheres (such as spillover and border theory (Staines, 1980; Clark, 2000), the capabilities approach also accounts for the blurring of boundaries between different domains. WLB is conceptualized as 'functioning for wellbeing' and is thus situated in the framework, therefore the researching of capabilities highlights the complex and dynamic nature of the interplay between the diverse spheres of life.

Moreover, the focus is on the cognitive aspects of WLB. These cognitive aspects are measured through integrating the sense of entitlement to make claims and the scope of alternatives for achieving WLB. This approach facilitates understanding not only of individual satisfaction based on subjective measurements but also of the complex relationship between expectations, the perception of opportunities and of satisfaction.

The book is well-structured and clearly written using ten chapters. Eight different empirical studies are connected through the theoretical and conceptual framework that is presented in the book. These chapters are framed by the introductory and concluding chapters. In the introductory chapter, Barbara Hobson

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establishes the model used in the volume. Furthermore, the book is divided into two sections according to the sites of WLB claims. The first part (Chapters 2-5) focuses on the individual/household level of agency and capabilities, whereas the second part (Chapters 6-9) addresses the firm level. One weakness of the volume arises from the application of the same framework in the research; namely, the fact that some studies overlap and repetition occurs.

Both sections contain a chapter (Chapters 2 and 6) that describes the capability approach at the investigated levels based on cross-national survey data, primarily covering European countries. The remaining empirical case studies mostly represent European examples and diverse institutional contexts by employing a variety of methods, although qualitative investigation is used in the majority. Most of the data analysed in the book were collected in the period from the mid-2000s to the emergence of the global financial crisis.

The book includes findings from Western countries (Germany, the Netherlands, the UK) and post-socialist ones (Slovenia, Hungary), in addition to one Southern (Spain) and one Scandinavian (Sweden) country, contributing to a comprehensive examination of the applied capability approach to exploring WLB-related issues. Moreover, a further chapter about Japan serves as an example of an Asian society.

Concerning the individual facets that are investigated to approach the problem of WLB, the volume includes some studies that concentrate on working time. Chapter 2 explores the agency gap through examining attitudes to WLB priorities and working time capabilities, thus comparing actual working hours and 'capability hours'. Susan Fahlén analyses the interrelationship between policies, gendered norms and practices based on various cross-national quantitative data that covers eleven countries from Europe and Japan. Laura den Dulk, Sandra Groeneveld and Bram Peper (Chapter 6) examine 21 European countries by employing cluster analysis. Their data come from a European survey on working time and WLB. The study is designed to identify what kind of country-level public policies and workplace support create the most agency and capability-related freedom for working parents in their quest for WLB. In line with this, the remaining chapters concentrate on examining the role of issues that enhance or constrain WLB for employees. Colette Fagan and Pierre Walthery (Chapter 7) use the same European dataset to investigate individual adjustment options concerning full-time and part-time work from the employers' perspective, emphasising that employer policy is one of the important conversion factors.

Since the sense of entitlement appears as a core concept, it is also addressed in two chapters in the book. The third chapter's main object of research is the cognitive level of capabilities which are explored through sense of entitlement. Barbara Hobson, Susanne Fahlén and Judit Takács investigate individual perceptions of alternatives and the ability to make a claim for WLB through a comparison of Sweden and Hungary. The study is based on qualitative interviews with employed parents in the two capitals. An Asian example is presented in Chapter 4, wherein Mieko Takahashi, Saori Kamano, Tomoko Matsuda, Setsuko Onode and Kyoko Yoshizumi apply the same framework used in the comparison of Sweden and Hungary to explore the obstacles that working parents face in Japanese organizational culture. The study

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focuses on the new policies that are designed to enhance WLB, while the role of gendered norms in work and family life appear to be emphasized most.

Furthermore, one piece of research approaches work life balance by accentuating the problems with the resources-demands model. In Chapter 5, Sonja Drobnič and Margarita León apply the capability approach to reconsidering inequalities with gender agency. This chapter compares German and Spanish employees. The analysis is based on different types of European survey data. The authors find that the difficulty of combining family and work roles for women still exists due to labour market constraints, normative expectations and a low level of social support.

As mentioned above, the studies in the second section address the organisational level. Two chapters discuss organisational culture and examine capabilities by comparing the perspectives of employers/managers and employees. Accordingly, managers' practices and attitudes towards work-life policies and employees' (working parents') perspectives are described by Bram Peper, Laura den Dulk, Nevenka Černigoj Sadar, Suzan Lewis, Janet Smithson and Anneke van Doorne-Huiskes in Chapter 8. The study focuses on the banking sector in three different countries (the Netherlands, the UK and Slovenia) and explores the impact of managers' attitudes on employee capabilities by applying a qualitative multiple case study design. Aleksandra Kanjuo Mrčela and Nevenka Černigoj Sadar (Chapter 9) examine qualitative data (focus group and individual interviews) gathered from both employers and employees in three different sectors (retail, health and IT) in Slovenia. The aim of this study is to increase understanding of the significance of the features of the sector that influence the capabilities and practices of parents in relation to achieving WLB in the same institutional and societal environment.

Finally, the book ends with a summary written by the editor.

Edited by Barbara Hobson, the book contributes to understanding the complexity of work-life balance by applying Sen's conceptual framework and therefore comprehensively explores the interplay of factors and dimensions that influence individual perceptions of satisfaction, thereby revealing the real opportunities people have to achieve balance between work and home life. Consequently, the book addresses the manifold mechanisms of WLB. Furthermore, by employing qualitative methods, more nuanced insights are obtained. Although the framework incorporates individual and also institutional factors which cover some components of home life, a more extensive, deeper investigation of the household level using this approach would enrich our knowledge of how work-life balance may be created.

One of the important merits of the book is its signal emphasis on fatherhood. Since gender is the main focus, gendered norms related to parenting are demonstrated through a focus on understanding the fathers' role in the household. The examination of both genders contributes to highlighting the importance of the interaction which occurs between family members in determining quality of life. In addition, the empirical results also confirm the concept of 'new fatherhood' and broaden previous findings about the increase in the work-life conflict of fathers.

The integration of the experimental cognitive level of agency through an investigation of the sense of entitlement and the scope of alternatives is, on the one

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hand, a notable contribution to the conceptual framework; on the other hand, it reveals the weaknesses inherent in the subjective measurement of satisfaction and happiness.

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Book Review

Maura J. Mills (ed.) (2015) Gender and the Work-Family Experience: An Intersection of Two Domains. New York: Springer International Publishing. 358 pages.

Work-family interrelation is a persistent issue keeping social research increasingly interested in it despite the wide range of research already conducted in this field. Balancing the work-family domains is a challenging issue for employees. The landscape of work-family conflict is changing as work becomes more complex and boundaries between work and home become more blurred than ever (Hochschild, 2001). Not surprisingly, this issue is followed with great attention in general societal awareness and by the popular media, too.

There is a growing intention within mainstream work-family research to explore work-family experiences in relation with employee's gender and gendered occupations/organizations. The book edited by Maura J. Mills definitely contributes to the debate on these intersecting relations. Generally, the chapters focus geographically on the United States, although there are some exceptions applying an international outlook (e.g., comparing occupational inequality in the US and Sweden in Chapter 17). The book uses an interdisciplinary approach, which seems adequate, however a slightly stronger psychological focus can be observed. On one hand, this book provides an overview of the current perspectives in the field of work-life balance and covers well-known issues; such as returning to work following childbirth or the issue of overwork. On the other hand, various new conceptualizations are introduced on the incorporation of gender into research on work-family issues. See for instance the comparative perspective between gender and poverty in relation to work-family issues in Chapter 3 and the perspective on the intersections between gender, race, and class in Chapter 4.

Several chapters focus on shifting gender roles and the changing family structures, hence strengthening our view that gender-related expectations change on how men and women should respond to work-life conflicts. In line with this, it is discussed in several chapters that work-family relation has become a serious issue for male employees as well; therefore, a scientific need is emphasized to call our attention toward more research on men and masculinity in workplaces.

The book contains three main parts, organized along the line of the macro level of societal influences, the domain of private sphere, and the framework of organization and career; or to put it differently the book explores the work-family issue through the lenses of intersecting macro level domains (Part1), from the perspective of home (Part 2), and from the perspective of the workplace (Part 3). In a traditional sense, this edited book is a textbook. It seems that the organizing concept behind the book is to review previous research results and then link them together with a variety of rather understudied or newly emerging issues.

The first part of the book addresses the importance of intersectionality, as broadening the scope of potential research directions on gendered work-family

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discussions by integrating new viewpoints - such as age, ethnicity, or sexual orientation - into the research. Lucas-Thomson and Goldberg (Chapter 1) focus on generational patterns of the insights on work–family balance, arguing that despite the emerging adults' ideas on gender roles showing an egalitarian picture, their actual behavior remains inconsistent with this.

Munn and Greer in Chapter 2 argue that traditionally men fit well into the stereotypical role of an 'ideal worker', however in contemporary relations - increasingly - this is not the case in practice: with the growing phenomenon of men being active at home and committed to caretaking roles as well, they often seriously struggle with work–family conflicts. Odle-Dusseau, McFadden, and Britt (Chapter 3) address a rather under-researched aspect by examining how poverty can cause gender specific discrepancies in work–family relations. They argue that the studies on work–family conflicts are mainly reflecting on the middle-class conditions neglecting the viewpoint of groups at or under the poverty line. Albeit as a result of 'feminization of poverty' women are more likely to be employed in lower-wage positions. These jobs are characterized by more demands and fewer resources, and consequently this situation leads to emerging difficulties of managing family life and it has a considerable negative effect on women's well-being and general health as well.

Following the thread, Frevert, Culbertson and Huffmann (Chapter 4) integrate race and ethnic minority issues into the study of work–family and gender relations. Their argument is based on the perception that work–family research applying a gender centered approach, are mainly focusing on 'professional white women'. Minority women have much less chance to access those occupational positions and structures that provide support for work-family balance.

Chapter 5 sheds light on how heteronormativity in using the current tools of measuring work-life conflicts restrict the horizons of researching work-family conflicts due to the non-applicability of these tools for describing the actual relations forming an LGB perspective. The authors highlight that work–family conflict studies should lay a greater emphasis on identity-based conflicts in future research.

Rajadhyaksha, Korabik, and Aycan (Chapter 6) formulate a demand for cross-cultural analysis for a potentially deeper understanding of the interface of work-family and gender domains. They argue that micro level variables such as gender and perceptions of gender role ideology should be supplemented and examined in connection with macro level variables like cultural norms and values in relation to gender equality.

The second part of the book 'Considerations from the Homefront' addresses work-life conflicts from the perspective of the home domain. Studies in this section are mainly reflecting on the effects of perceived work–family conflicts on the various groups and individuals. It starts with the issue of negative affective spillover from work to family (Chapter 7). The authors, Mitchell and her colleagues, emphasized the importance of the emotional processes in the unfolding mechanisms of work–family spillover and presented a theoretical base for examining the transmission of negative affect from work to family. They argue that gender is an important variable in shaping the emotional processes, thus the authors offer a conceptual work on the intersection of gender, emotion processes and affective spillover from work to family.

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'Work–Family Guilt', another effect of perceived work-family conflict, is the subject of Chapter 8 by Korbaik. The author argues that although women are more likely to feel work-life guilt than men worldwide, it should be important not to view W–F guilt as primarily woman's concern, accepting stereotypes as reality or miss the within-gender variability in research. By introducing a new viewpoint, Nomaguchi and Milkie (Chapter 9) discuss how partners' views on the amount and kinds of conflicts that an employee experiences may shape the quality of their relationships in the US. They demonstrate that more than half of couples either overestimate or underestimate their partners' work-family conflict. These findings indicate that expectations on partner's work–life conflict are filtered through gendered lenses.

In Chapter 10 Cleveland, Fisher, and Sawyer introduce the notion of 'work–life equality' reflecting on women's and men's different engagement to participate in paid work and housework. The authors argue that even though the genders' presence both in higher education and in the labor market is becoming more balanced, women still have more responsibilities in housework and family-related tasks. Similarly, a new notion is explored by Grotto in Chapter 11: the 'on demand jobs'. These jobs typically appear in executive, managerial, and professional positions, where the expected availability is no longer restricted to the working hours so they typically result in flexible work configurations and characterized with growing ICT usage. According to Grotto, these 'on demand job' models have a huge impact on work–family relations; therefore, the application of a gender-centered approach would be worthwhile.

Part III enhances our knowledge on work-family relations further by examining alternative work-family outcomes experienced by those groups that are either understudied or have specific experiences and greater conflicts in maintaining work and family. Sprung, Toumbeva, and Matthews (Chapter 12) for example examine how gender differences appear in the access to, and the outcome of using work–family policies. They conclude that family-friendly benefits show a mix of positive and negative outcomes; however women in general are more aware of work–family policies and have greater access to them.

Rosiello and Mills, in Chapter 13, examine the relatively understudied issue of shift work and consider its occupational and gendered context. By reviewing existing studies, they found a growing percentage of women and men working in nonstandard shifts. It is particularly emphasized that shift work has negative consequences on several aspects of employees' professional and family life including both physical and mental health problems and lowered social relationships in general.

In Chapters 14 and 15 work–family relations are discussed from the perspective of gendered occupations. Huffman, Culbertson, and Barbour (Chapter 14) provide a theoretically rich explanation on the notion of 'gendered occupation' and examine how employees working in a gendered occupation face a unique set of work–family expectations and norms. They examine the context of a military corps to illustrate that a highly gendered workplace makes it especially difficult for minority gender groups (women, LGBT individuals) to manage work-family conflict. Jean, Payne, and Thompson in Chapter 15 highlight that among the many factors creating a leaky pipeline for women in STEM jobs (i.e. Science, Technology, Engineering, and/or

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Math related jobs), family-related challenges and the expectation of work–family conflicts for women professionals especially impact the recruitment and the retention of women in these occupations.

Increased work involvement is a widespread and growing tendency all over the world. Clark, Belier, and Zimmerman, in Chapter 16, try to understand the relationship between workaholism and work–family conflict trough the unique experience of workaholic women in US. Finally, in the last Chapter (17), Stanfors calls our attention to the changing patterns in the relationship between education and fertility, which is quite a hot topic given that high level professional, career oriented women are associated with reduced family life and delayed childbearing. She uses comparative data from Sweden and the US to examine how postponed childbearing varies by gender and fast-track professions in the fields of law, medicine and academia. Data show smaller differences in Sweden than in the US, but it is clear that public support is not achievable equally across professions and genders. Stanfors argues that differences cannot be explained simply by income variations; it is rather that working conditions and career structure contribute to managing a professional career and children, and for some groups of professions it is easier to combine the two.

The book makes it clear that considering the gendered nature of work–family relations and conflicts, including individual's experiences and perceptions, is essential for a deeper understanding of this issue. A consistent usage of definitions for clarifying the basic concepts of 'gender', 'family', and 'work–family conflict' would have been helpful for a deeper understanding. It would also have been great, if the author had devoted a chapter in the beginning of the book to this very issue. Similarly, more chapters with empirical examination would have increased the value of present volume. In spite of the missing coherent terminology and the lack of its explicit presentation, a great advantage of the book is that most of the chapters offer recommendations and solutions on how to ease work–family conflicts and stress. Due to this intention to deepen both the scholarly and the practical understanding of the linkages between gender, work, and family, this book is potentially of interest not only to researchers but also to organizational persons and policymakers.

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