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**Stockholm University Linnaeus Center on
Social Policy and Family Dynamics in Europe, SPaDE**

Does Gender Matter?

A Capability Approach to Work-to-Home and
Home-to-Work Conflict in a European Perspective

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Working Paper 2012: 13

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Abstract: This paper examines gender differences in work-to-home conflict and home-to-work conflict in ten European countries and considers to what extent such differences can be linked to the institutional/societal context. The study combines the conventional demand-resource approach with an institutional framework on policies and norms inspired by Amartya Sen's capability approach. In applying this framework, I assume that individuals' perceptions of work-home conflict and the capability to achieve work-life balance are institutionally embedded. The study uses data from the European Social Survey. The analyses reveal that the two dimensions of conflict are gender asymmetrical and linked to patterns that result from men's and women's traditional home and work spheres. The cross-country comparative analysis shows greater gender differences in countries with weaker policy support for work-family reconciliation and more traditional gender norms. These gendered patterns would not have been apparent if only work-to-home conflict had been analysed.

Introduction

Much of previous research addressing *work–life balance* or *work–home conflict* are case studies of companies, specific professions or single country studies (see Frone 2003; Byron 2005) that do not consider the ways in which institutional context might shape not only men’s and women’s capability to achieve work–life balance, but also their perception of *work–home conflict*. More recent studies have addressed work–home conflict in a European comparative perspective, linking macro-level differences in institutional contexts with micro-level variations in perceived conflict (e.g. Crompton and Lyonette 2006; Gallie and Russel 2009; McGinnity and Calvert 2009; Van der Lippe et al. 2006).¹ However, previous studies have not systematically examined gender differences in work–home conflict, and the reason for this is that scholars tend to study work-to-home conflict and not home-to-work conflict, in which gender differences are less visible (Dilworth 2004). The former implies that work roles interfere with home roles and the latter that home roles interfere with work roles (Frone 2003).

The purpose of this paper is to study gender differences within and across different European countries by focusing on two dimensions of work–home conflict. The questions addressed are *whether home and work demands have similar impact on men’s and women’s work-to-home conflict and home-to-work conflict*, and *whether within-country gender differences in work-to-home conflict and home-to-work conflict are related to institutional contextual factors that vary across countries*. This study also seeks to extend the widely applied resource-demand approach beyond the workplace and the household spheres by accounting for the importance of work-family reconciliation policies and gender norms. The analytical framework is inspired by Amartya Sen’s *capability approach* (1992; 1993), which offers an innovative multi-layered framework for understanding how individuals’ expectations and agency to achieve work–life balance influence their perceptions of work–home conflict.

The first section presents the capability approach, followed by a discussion of the concept work–home conflict and previous studies, and a description of country variations regarding work-family reconciliation policies and gender norms. The second section presents the dataset and variables, and the results of (1) the analyses of the impact of work and home demands on work-to-home conflict and home-to-work conflict, and (2) a cross-country

¹ For convenience I use the concept work–life balance and work–home conflict even if the scholars referred to use the concept work–family balance or work–family conflict.

analysis of gender differences in work–home conflict. The paper ends with a discussion and conclusions derived from the analysis.

Capabilities and work–life balance: concepts and theoretical consideration

The capability approach is a normative framework for evaluating diversities in capabilities related to well-being (Robeyns 2003). It is a multi-layered perspective that focuses on people’s capability to realise valuable activities (Bonvin and Farvaque 2006; Sen 1992), and helps us to understand how societal settings interplay with individuals’ life situation in shaping their capabilities to achieve (Agarwal et al. 2003; Hobson and Fahlén 2009; Robeyns 2003; Sen 1992). In our case, the achievement is work–life balance, the failure to achieve this is revealed in work–home conflict. Yet, the concepts of work–life balance/work–family balance and work–family conflict are rarely defined or mainstreamed. *Work–life balance* is often used as something self-evident, or linked to policies aimed at reconciling work and family life (see Frone 2003; Guest 2002). Nevertheless, the generally held meaning of work–life balance is an absence of interference, or conflict, between work and non-work life (Frone 2003).

Work–home conflict can be defined as: “a form of interrole conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect” (Greenhaus and Beutell 1985:77). This implies two dimensions of conflict; work-to-home conflict and home-to-work conflict (Frone 2003). Previous studies have shown that work-to-home conflict (hereafter WHC) occurs more frequently than home-to-work conflict (hereafter HWC) (Byron 2005; Frone et al. 1997), and Kinnunen and Mauno (1998) have found a modest correlation between the two conflict dimensions, denoting the importance of a conceptual distinction. In this study, perceived WHC and HWC are seen as factors affecting work–life balance.

Considering gender differences in work–home conflict, previous studies report contradictory results. This can be related to research designs and measures of conflict, which has been operationalized either as dissatisfaction or perceived time and strain pressure (e.g. Crompton and Lyonette 2006; Hill et al. 2001; Kinnunen and Mauno 1998; Strandh and Nordenmark 2006; Van der Lippe et al. 2006). Studies using the former measure often find no gender differences, whereas studies using the latter measure more often find such differences. This suggests that indicators of satisfaction might be gender biased and reflect how well people have adapted to their present situation (Fahey et al. 2003; Robeyns 2003). For instance, Clark (1997) found that women tend to be more satisfied with their work than men,

even if their work situation is worse. In this study, WHC and HWC are operationalized by perceived time and strain pressure in order to evade potential gender blindness.

The resource-demand approach is widely applied in studies of work–home conflict (e.g. Frone et al. 1997; Greenhaus and Beutell 1985; Voydanoff 2005). Demands refer to psychological, social, physical or organizational factors that involve constant mental or physical effort, which can be related to certain psychological or physiological costs (Bakker and Demerouti 2007). Two main sources of demands can be distinguished; time-based and strain-based. Time-based demands denote the amount of time devoted to work and home roles. Time is assumed to be a fixed resource and the more time spent on work, the less time available for home activities, and vice versa. Strain-based demands relate to insecurity and psychological pressure, which can spill over from work to home or from home to work (Voydanoff 2005).

Time-based work demands (long working hours, inflexible work schedule, shift-work and overtime) interfere with personal life and restrict people’s ability to fulfil home responsibilities and spend time with household members (Voydanoff 2005) and thus increase WHC (Crompton and Lyonette 2006; Gallie and Russel 2009). Consistent in several studies is that the number of weekly work hours is positively related to work-to-home conflict, and that the number of hours spent on home chores is positively related to home-to-work conflict (see Frone 2004). Furthermore, with a flexible work schedule a worker is able to adjust working time according to his or her needs, which should decrease WHC (Gallie and Russel 2009; McGinnity and Calvert 2009). WHC can also occur if a person experiences *strain-based work demands*, such as high work demands or insecure employment (Greenhaus and Beutell 1985; Gallie and Russel 2009; McGinnity and Calvert 2009). These factors can also affect HWC (Voydanoff 2005).

Time-based home demands relate to the household structure, and it is widely accepted that parents, especially mothers, experience more role conflict than those with no dependent children (Strandh and Nordenmark 2006). Previous studies have found that the presence of children is a relevant factor, though not always statistically significant. This can be related to inconsistency in samples and measurements. However, Grandey and Cropanzano (1999) found that the presence of children increases HWC but has no significant impact on WHC, and Van der Lippe et al. (2006) found that the impact of children on WHC varies by gender and country. Other time-based home demands, such as housework and partner’s work hours, can also influence a person’s HWC (Greenhaus and Beutell 1985). *Strain-based home demands*, such as low spousal support, may result in HWC (Greenhaus and Beutell 1985) and

Grzywacz and Marks (2000) have shown that intra-household disagreement regarding time and money issues increase HWC. Economic hardship, another strain-based home demand, has been shown to place family stability at risk and strongly affect quality of life at risk (Voydanoff 2005) and thus increase WHC (Steiber 2009). The impact of economic constraints is less explored in regard to HWC.

As noted above, work demands are more associated with WHC, while home demands are more related to HWC (Frone et al. 1997). However, some studies have shown that work demands are related also to HWC even if the associations are less strong (Voydanoff 2005). Nevertheless, work and home demands, shaped at the workplace and within the family, increase the negative interference between the two domains and generate weaker capability to achieve work–life balance (Drobnič and Gullién 2011). We should therefore expect that work and home demands will increase people’s WHC and HWC.

The resource-demand approach is a successful framework for studying work–home conflict at a socio-psychological level. When applied in cross-country comparative studies, this approach lacks the theoretical framework that is needed for analysing work–home conflict within a broader societal context, as it fails to take into account that experienced level of WHC and HWC can be contextually embedded (Drobnič and Gullién 2011; Van der Lippe et al. 2006). To overcome these limitations, the capability approach will be incorporated in the analysis of gender differences in WHC and HWC, accounting for the role of institutional context (policies and norms) in regard to men’s and women’s perception of work–home conflict.

Family policies and gender norms shape men’s and women’s opportunities and expectations regarding work–life balance (Hobson and Fahlén 2009) and influence how people perceive their ability to make use of the options available to them (Sjöberg 2004). Gender norms and policy support for work-family reconciliation in different societies can therefore be regarded as institutional capability structures, which either facilitate or obstruct people’s capability to achieve work–life balance. Hobson (2011) argues that capability inequalities for achieving work–life balance reflect norm constraints at the societal level as well as demands and expectations at the workplace. For instance, in societies where women are expected to be the main carer, the provision of childcare facilities can expand mothers’ capability to combine work and family life (Robeyns 2008), as can entitlements for part-time work. If no such facilities and entitlements exist, women may feel less entitled to make claims for work–life balance (Hobson et al. 2011) and be forced to withdraw from the labour market during the childrearing years (Drobnič and Gullién 2011).

In addition, workplace cultures tend to strengthen traditional gender roles, which can result in different working experiences for men and women (Gregory and Milner 2009). For instance, when women's and men's claims for work–life balance are considered legitimate, supported by policies and norms, this increases their capabilities to exercise entitlements, such as part-time work and other reduced working hour arrangements (Allard et al. 2011; Hobson et al. 2011). Hence, gender norms are a key component for understanding how capabilities are shaped. In turn, gender norms are shaped by institutions, such as the family, the labour market and the welfare state (Gregory and Milner 2009).

Work-family policies and gender norms

Countries vary in the way that social policy is institutionalised and in labour market regulations and gender norms (Esping-Andersen 1990; Ferrarini 2006; Korpi 2000; Lewis 1992; Orloff 1993). The welfare state is a structure that constitutes gender relations, but also responds to existing gender norms and changes in the economic sphere, which affects peoples' private life (Fahey et al. 2003). This section briefly discusses work-family reconciliation policies and gender norms in ten European countries, selected to represent ideal types with different policy configurations (Esping-Andersen 1990; Korpi 2000).²

Denmark, Finland and Sweden represent the *Dual Earner model* (Korpi 2000), with strong institutional support for work-family reconciliation (Gornick et al. 1997). Parents with pre-school children have the right to reduce their working hours (Moss and Korintus 2008), mirrored in relatively high incidence of long part-time (30-39 hours per week) (OECD 2009). Formal childcare is a social right and highly subsidised (Plantenga and Remery 2009), which is reflected in a high employment rate for mothers with pre-school children (OECD 2010).

Germany and the Netherlands represent the *General Family Support model* (Korpi 2000), where institutional support for maternal employment is relatively modest (Gornick et al. 1997). Parents have the right to request reduced work hours combined with part-time parental leave (Moss and Korintus 2008), hence part-time work is highly frequent among women (Anxo et al. 2007), especially short part-time (less than 30 hours per week) (OECD 2009). However, childcare provisions are rather underdeveloped, especially for the youngest children and on full-time basis (Plantenga and Remery 2009).

² The conventional welfare regime typology (Esping-Andersen 1990) has been challenged on many fronts, especially its lack of gender dimensions (e.g. Lewis 1992; Orloff 1993), and the need for a distinct southern Mediterranean model (Ferrera 1996). Korpi's (2000) typology incorporates policies that affect women's capability to combine motherhood and employment. However, both sets of typologies assume policy constellations prior to the 2000s and do not include the post-socialist countries.

The UK represents the *Market Oriented model* (Korpi 2000). This model offers fairly low institutional support for work-family reconciliation (Gornick et al. 1997), reflected in the comparatively low employment rates for mothers of pre-schoolers (OECD 2010) and relatively low proportion of young children in formal childcare (Plantenga and Remery 2009). Parents with a child under six have the right to request part-time work (Moss and Korintus 2008), hence the proportion of part-time working women is rather high (Anxo et al. 2007), especially short part-time (less than 30 hours per week) (OECD 2009).

Spain represents the *Southern model*, with strong familialism and weak institutional support for working mothers (Ferrera 1996). Parents can reduce their working hours while on parental leave until the child turns eight, but without leave benefits (Moss and Korintus 2008), seen in the comparatively low share of part-time working women (OECD 2009). The childcare enrolment rate of younger children is fairly low (Plantenga and Remery 2009), which corresponds to a relatively low employment rate for mothers of pre-schoolers (OECD 2010).

Three Central East European (CEE) countries, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland, represent the *Post-Socialist countries* with institutions that simultaneously preserve a gendered division of labour and dual-earner families, i.e. a mix of the dual-earner model and general family support model (Ferrarini 2006; Ferrarini and Sjöberg 2010). This policy combination encourages women to withdraw from the labour market for several years after having children (Saxonberg and Sirovátka 2006), reflected in the low maternal employment rate and low enrolment rate for younger children (OECD 2010; Plantenga and Remery 2009). Part-time entitlement is not fully implemented (Saxonberg and Sirovátka 2006), hence the proportion of part-time working women is very low (Anxo et al. 2007).

The interrelation between policies and gender norms is also reflected in people's attitudes regarding work and care, which vary across the ten selected countries. Less traditional gender norms are found in the Nordic countries (Figure 1), where both policies and norms encourage a more equally shared division of caring and earning responsibilities. Most traditional gender norms are found in the CEE countries, as seen in the high proportion of persons agreeing with the statements; 'a woman should be prepared to cut down on paid work for the sake of family', and 'a man's job is to earn money; a woman's job is to look after the home and family' (Figure 1). These are countries with long parental leave and a lack of childcare facilities or part-time options. Relatively strong support for women to cut down on paid work for the sake of the family is also widespread in Germany, the Netherlands, the UK and Spain, though attitudes regarding traditional gender roles on women's rights to work are

less prevalent (Figure 1). These are countries with less institutional support for maternal employment, compared with the Nordic countries, yet high prevalence of part-time work, except for Spain.

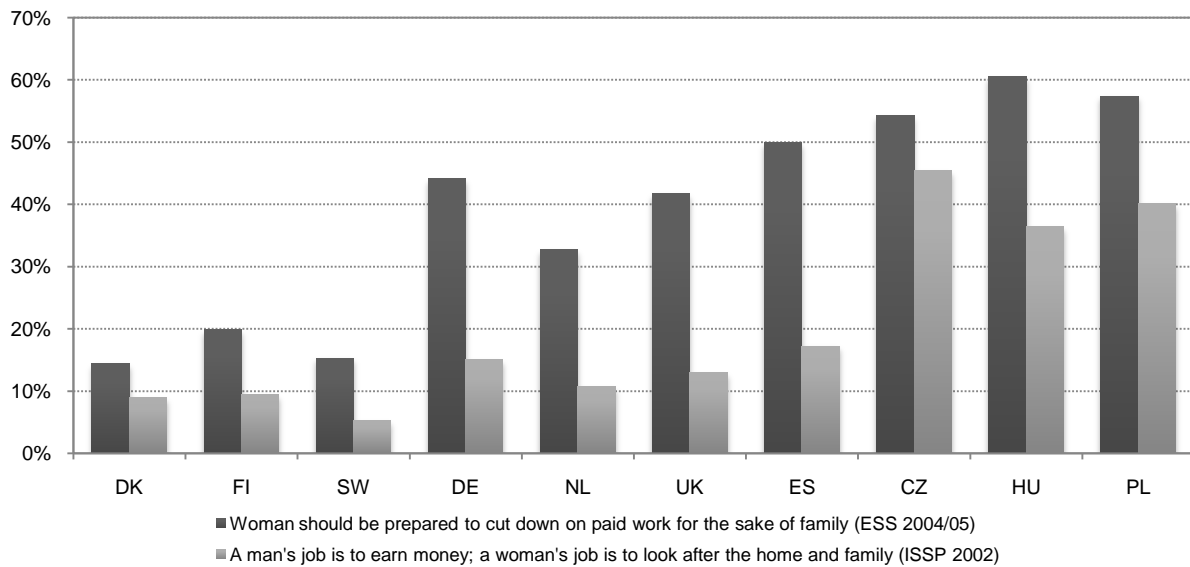


Figure 1: Gender role attitudes related to work and family in ten European countries. Proportion that agrees with the two statements (men and women aged 20-65).

Source: European Social Survey 2004/05 and ISSP 2002, 'Family and Changing Gender Roles III' (author's own calculations).

The interplay of policies, norms and work-home conflict

In several countries there are growing expectations on men to be more involved in the household; and not only women, but also an overwhelming majority of men across Europe want to have a job that allows them to combine employment with family responsibilities (see Hobson and Fahlén 2011). However, the institutional contexts (policies and norms) constitute varying conditions for men's and women's capabilities to combine work and family life across the ten countries. Yet, the interplay of policies, norms, capabilities and expectations regarding work-life balance are multifaceted. It is widely assumed that policy support for work-family reconciliation inhibits work-home conflict among dual-earner families (Gornick et al. 1997; Strandh and Nordenmark 2006). Others have argued that the dual-earner model increases women's labour market integration without increasing men's involvement in the home, resulting in a double burden of labour for women and a greater tension between work and home responsibilities compared with women in societies where they are expected to reduce their labour market participation (Gallie and Russell 2009; Strandh and Nordenmark 2006). Part-time work may decrease the tension between work and non-work life for women due to reduced work pressure, but the male breadwinner role may increase work-home

conflict among men as a result of longer work hours to sustain the household income (Gallie and Russell 2009).

Policy support for work-family reconciliation, which is linked to gender norms, increases people's expectations regarding the services needed to be able to combine work with home responsibilities (Van der Lippe and van Dijk 2002). Furthermore, gender norms regarding appropriate work and family roles of men and women can influence how work and home demands are perceived (Greenstein 1995), and people may conform to gendered expectations without reflecting upon other potential options available (Bielby 1992). Strandh and Nordenmark (2006) and Van der Lippe et al. (2006) found that women in countries with strong policy support and egalitarian gender norms experience more work-to-home conflict than women in countries with traditional gender norms. The explanation given is that traditional gender norms tend to coincide with a traditional division of work and care, and that multiple demands are perceived as less problematic for women with such norms, while women with more egalitarian gender norms will react towards an unequal division of labour by expressing more work-home conflict (Strandh and Nordenmark 2006).

This suggests that institutional context not only shapes people's capabilities for work-life balance, but also expectations regarding work and home activities, and that perceived work-home conflict might be influenced by such expectations. Cross-national comparisons of the levels of perceived conflict may therefore primarily reflect expectations. In this paper I analyse gender differences within countries and compare these differences across countries in order to reach the gendered dimension of work-home conflict. Given the complexities in the interplay of policies, norms and expectations, I expect the following:

In countries with strong policy support for work-family reconciliation and less traditional gender norms (such as the Nordic countries), men and women are expected to be equally integrated into the labour market. For women this might result in higher expectations regarding work and family roles. As men are now expected to be more involved in the household, policy support and more egalitarian norms should weaken gender differences in perceived work-home conflict. The assumption is that these contexts generate smaller gender differences in perceived WHC and HWC.

In countries with weaker policy support for work-family reconciliation and more traditional gender norms (such as Spain and the CEE countries), women are expected to be the prime carer and men the prime earner. This may result in lower expectation among women regarding employment demands and higher expectations to be carers, while the opposite should be true for the men, as prevailing traditional gender norms might obstruct

men's capabilities to make claims for work–life balance at their work place. The assumption is that women in these contexts experience more HWC than men and that men experience more WHC than women, resulting in greater gender differences in perceived WHC and HWC.

In countries with policies and norms supportive of female part-time work (Germany, the Netherlands and the UK), women are expected to solve potential work–home conflict by reduced working hours, while the men are expected to be the main breadwinner. This may result in lower work pressure among women and higher work pressure among men. The assumptions are that these contexts generate intermediate gender differences in perceived WHC and HWC.

Data and variables

The European Social Survey, Round 2 (ESS2) was conducted in 26 countries during 2004/05.³ The present study utilises data from ten countries including 6,527 working men and women aged 20-60 and living with a partner. The multivariate analysis is by OLS regressions with separate models for work-to-home conflict and home-to-work conflict.⁴

The t-test for gender differences across models is based on the formula: $t = (b_W - b_M) / \sqrt{(SE_{bW})^2 + (SE_{bM})^2}$, where b denotes the coefficient for women (W) or men (M), and SE is the standard error for each coefficient (Paternoster et al. 1998).

The first dependent variable includes three questions as to how often the following are experienced: too tired after work to enjoy things I like do at home, job prevents me from giving time to partner/family, and partner/family fed up with pressure of my job (responses 'never' through 'always'). Cronbach's Alpha is 0.74 for both men and women; denoting high scale consistency, with an index range of 0-12 (high scores equals more WHC). Home-to-work conflict includes two questions: how often do you find it difficult to concentrate on work because of your family responsibilities? (responses 'never' through 'always') and there are so many things to do at home, I often run out of time before I get them all done⁵ (responses 'strongly disagree' through 'strongly agree'). Cronbach's Alpha is 0.32 for women and 0.23 for men, denoting weaker scale consistency for men, with a measure range of 0-8 (high scores equal more HWC).

³ The response rates in ESS2 vary from 50.1 percent to 79.1 with an effective sample of 579-3,026 individuals across the countries (European Social Survey 2005).

⁴ Weights are used to correct for differences in sample design (European Social Survey 2010).

⁵ This indicator mainly relates to perceived time deficit at home. However, such deficit is related to the responsibilities in the household, which can influence the spill over to work performance in terms of fatigue and concentration difficulties.

The independent variables relate to time- and strain-based work and home demands. *Work hours* (overtime included) are divided into the following categories: less than 35 hours/week, 35-40 hours/week and more than 40 hours/week. *Unsocial work* is based on how often the respondent works 1) evenings and/or 2) weekends, coded as 1 if a person works unsocial hours several times a month or more. *Overtime at short notice* is coded as 1 if this occurs several times a month or more often. Work time flexibility refers to whether the respondent can decide the time to start and finish work. The response ‘not at all true’ is coded as 1, denoting *no flexi-time*. *Insecure employment* is based on the statement ‘*my job is secure*’ in terms of an actual or implied promise/likelihood of continued employment. The responses ‘not at all true/a little true’ are coded as 1. *Work intensity* refers to ‘*my job requires that I work very hard*’. The responses ‘agree/strongly agree’ are coded as 1. *Number of children and age of youngest child* is a combined variable (to prevent multicollinearity) divided into eight categories. *Partner’s work hours* are divided into similar categories as the respondent’s work hours with an addition of ‘partner not in paid work’. *Housework* measures the number of weekly hours spent on cooking, washing, cleaning, shopping, care of clothes and maintenance of property. As men and women devote different amounts of time to housework the variable is divided into three percentiles of the distribution for men and women. The lowest percentile equals less than 7.6 hours a week for women, and less than 2.8 hours a week for men. The middle percentile equals 7.6-15.4 hours for women, and 2.8-5.8 hours for men. The highest percentile equals more than 15.4 hours for women, and more than 5.8 hours for men. *Economic constraints* refer to how well the respondent manages on the household income. The responses ‘finding it difficult/very difficult’ are coded as 1. Intra-household disagreements are based on how often the respondent disagrees with the partner about; 1) *time spent on paid work* and 2) *how to divide housework*. If such disagreements occur once a month or more often, each variable is coded as 1. The models also include country dummies (Sweden as the reference category), age, and educational attainment.

Results

On average men experience more WHC than women, while women experience more HWC than men (Table 1) and the correlation between WHC and HWC is 0.42 for women, and 0.39 for men.

Considering home demands, the working sample includes a smaller proportion of mothers with small children than fathers (Table 1). The proportion of working mothers with pre-school children is also smaller compared with the total sample (the same age group, living

with a partner). This is especially evident in Germany, Spain and the CEE countries in which close to 50 percent of the total sample of mothers of pre-school children are out of paid work (figure not shown). This suggests that women in paid work are a select group, especially in countries with weaker institutional support for working mothers, indicating that a large proportion of mothers in some countries may face structural difficulties to combine work and family life during the early childrearing years, as suggested by Drobnič and Gulli  n (2011). A higher proportion of men have a partner out of paid work, and a woman’s partner tends to work longer hours than a man’s partner (Table 1). Women spend on average twice as much time on housework as men, and 13-14 percent of both men and women experience economic constraints. In regard to work-related demands, the average work week is 37.4 hours for women and 45.3 hours for men. This gender gap in work hours is even greater for parents with at least one child aged 0-17, especially in Germany, the Netherlands and the UK, where the average work week for mothers is less than 30 hours, but less so in the Nordic and the CEE countries (figure not shown). Men tend to work unsocial hours and overtime at short notice to a higher extent than women, and a higher proportion of women have less flexi-time, an insecure employment and more work intensity compared with men (Table 1).

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of working men and women in couples (aged 20-60). Significant gender differences indicated by stars.

	Women	Men	Gender diff.
Work-to-home conflict (SD)	4.6 (2.4)	4.9 (2.4)	***
Home-to-work conflict (SD)	3.2 (1.6)	2.8 (1.6)	***
Correlation	0.42 ***	0.39 ***	
Age of youngest child in the household % ⁽¹⁾			
Childless	19.7	17.6	*
Youngest child <6 years	16.2	23.7	***
Youngest child 6-17 years	29.9	30.3	
Child 18+/no longer at home	34	28.2	***
Partner not in paid work %	14.3	32.2	***
Partner’s average work hours (SD)	43.5 (10.2)	36.2 (10.8)	***
Housework, average hours/week (SD)	11.5 (7.9)	5.2 (4.9)	***
Economic constraint %	13.4	14.4	
Often disagree: time spent on paid work %	18.9	22.9	***
Often disagree: division of housework %	37.6	39.1	
Work hours, average/week (SD)	37.4 (11.1)	45.3 (10.8)	***
Unsocial work hours %	42.6	53.2	***
Overtime at short notice %	23.1	41.1	***
No flexi-time %	47.8	35	***
Insecure employment %	30.4	28	*
Work intensity %	55.9	53.2	*
N=	2963	3564	

*** $p \leq 0.001$; ** $p \leq 0.01$; * $p \leq 0.05$.

Note: 1) Proportions do not add up to 100 percent due to unknown age of the youngest child (6 cases for women and 8 cases for men). Weights are used on the mean conflict scores.

The impact of work and home demands on work–home conflict

Separate OLS regressions have been conducted for men and women (Table 2), adjusted for country, age and education. Hierarchical regressions (see bottom of Table 2) confirm that work demands are more related to WHC, while home demands are more associated with HWC, consistent with previous studies (see Frone et al. 1997). Turning first to WHC (Table 2:1), we find that as expected, both home and work demands increase WHC. However, the results show that these demands influence men's and women's WHC somewhat differently. Not surprisingly, mothers with young children experience more WHC than mothers with older children, when compared with childless women. Also fathers experience more WHC than childless men, but the pattern across age and number of children is less straightforward. The gradient of the coefficients indicates higher WHC for mothers than for fathers, but the difference is not significant.

Having a part-time working partner increases women's WHC, while having a partner with long working hours (more than 40 hours/week) decreases men's WHC (Table 2:1). This result challenges Greenhaus and Beutell's (1985) argument, that a more present partner in the home can enhance women's capability to achieve a better work–life balance in terms of reduced home responsibilities. Women who spend more than 15 hours a week on housework (highest percentile) experience less WHC than women who devote less than 7.6 hours to such tasks (lowest percentile); a result partly related to work hours, as part-time working women tend to spend more time on housework than full-time working women.

Economic constraints have a greater impact on women's WHC. Disagreement about time spent at work has a greater impact on men's WHC (Table 2:1). When one considers actual work hours, part-time work decreases the WHC for both men and women, while long full-time has a greater impact on men's WHC. Unsocial work hours and no flexitime have greater impact on women's WHC, as these working conditions interfere with women's home responsibilities, as suggested by Voydanoff (2005).

Table 2:2 presents the results for HWC. Not surprisingly, gendered expectations of parental roles increase mothers' HWC to a higher extent than it does for fathers, when compared with non-parents. Having a non-working or part-time working partner reduces the HWC for men, but has no significant impact on women's HWC. Time spent on housework increases HWC, especially for men. This indicates that a less traditional division of housework has a greater impact on men's perceived HWC. Strain-based home demands increases HWC, but displays no statistically significant gender differences. Considering work demands, Table 2:2 shows that long working hours increase women's HWC only. Unsocial

work hours and employment insecurity have greater impact on women's WHC, while work intensity has a greater impact on men's HWC.

Table 2: OLS-regressions of work-to-home conflict and home-to-work conflict by work and home-related time- and strain-based demands (unstandardised coefficients), and gender differences.

	2:1 Work-to-home conflict			2:2 Home-to-work conflict		
	Women	Men	Gender diff.	Women	Men	Gender diff.
Time-based home demands						
No. children/age of youngest (1)						
1 child <6 yrs.	0.20	0.34*		0.73***	0.32**	**
1 child 6-17 yrs.	0.16	0.19		0.34***	0.12	(*)
2 children/youngest <6 yrs.	0.64***	0.53***		1.00***	0.72***	*
2 children/youngest 6-17 yrs.	0.45***	0.40**		0.66***	0.30***	**
3+ children/youngest <6 yrs.	0.76***	0.38*		1.16***	0.65***	**
3+ children/youngest 6-17 yrs.	0.33(*)	0.65***		0.81***	0.38***	**
Child 18+/moved out	0.22	0.16		0.11	0.12	
Partner's work hours (2)						
Not in paid work	0.15	0.13		-0.07	-0.13*	
<35 work hours/week	0.36(*)	-0.01	(*)	0.19	-0.15*	*
>40 work hours/week	0.09	-0.22(*)	*	0.01	-0.03	
Housework (3)						
Middle percentile	0.15	0.05		0.27***	0.76***	***
Highest percentile	-0.30***	-0.02	*	0.21**	0.90***	***
Strain-based home demands						
Economic constraint (4)	0.86***	0.53***	*	0.35***	0.34***	
Intra-household disagreement						
Often: time spent on paid work (5)	0.50***	0.95***	***	0.40***	0.35***	
Often: division of housework (6)	0.37***	0.30***		0.36***	0.37***	
Time-based work demands						
Work hours (7)						
<35 work hours/week	-0.74***	-0.63***		-0.19**	-0.23*	
>40 work hours/week	0.40***	0.58***	(*)	0.13*	0.00	(*)
Unsocial work hours (8)	0.79***	0.50***	**	0.13*	-0.03	*
Overtime at short notice (9)	0.97***	0.81***		0.21***	0.30***	
No flexi-time (10)	0.29***	0.07	*	-0.03	-0.12*	
Strain-based work demands						
Insecure employment (11)	0.25**	0.37***		0.22***	0.08	*
Work intensity (12)	0.74***	0.67***		0.21***	0.34***	(*)
Constant	2.76***	2.57***		1.66***	1.48***	
R^2 Countries	0.02***	0.02***		0.05***	0.05***	
ΔR^2 Socio-demographics	0.01***	0.00**		0.01***	0.02***	
ΔR^2 Home demands	0.06***	0.08***		0.11***	0.12***	
ΔR^2 Work demands	0.15***	0.12***		0.02***	0.02***	
R^2 Full model	0.24***	0.22***		0.20***	0.22***	

*** $p \leq 0.001$; ** $p \leq 0.01$; * $p \leq 0.05$; (*) $p \leq 0.1$.

Note: All models control for age and educational attainment. Reference categories: (1) childless, (2) partner in paid work, (3) lowest percentile, (4) less/no economic constraint, (5) rarely disagree about time spent on paid work, (6) rarely disagree about the division of housework, (7) 30-40 work hours/week, (8) no unsocial work hours, (9) no overtime at short notice, (10) flexi-time, (11) secure employment, (12) minor work intensity

These results reveal a reciprocal relationship between work and home sphere that varies by gender. The results also indicate that the two dimensions of conflict are more intertwined for women, reflected in a stronger unadjusted correlation between WHC and HWC (see Table

1), which prevails even after controlling for work and home demands; 0.39 for women and 0.33 for men. This indicates that women face more obstacles to achieve work–life balance due to greater multiple demands as seen in the intersections of WHC and HWC.

Gender differences in the two dimensions of conflict across countries

As argued, gender norms and policy support for work-family reconciliation coincide and may shape men’s and women’s capabilities to achieve a better work–life balance somewhat differently, as well as their expectations regarding work and care, and their perceptions of work–home conflict. This section analyses the within-country gender differences by comparing the unadjusted and adjusted means scores of WHC and HWC. As discussed earlier, we should expect the Nordic institutional context with strong policy support for work-family reconciliation, non-traditional gender norms and a dual-earner model, in which women and men are assumed to be equally integrated into the labour market, to generate smaller gender differences in WHC and HWC. The most gender differences should be found in Spain and the CEE countries, where there are traditional gender norms that assume women to be the primary carers and men the primary earners, and weaker policy support for work-family reconciliation. Intermediate gender differences in WHC and HWC are expected in Germany, the Netherlands and the UK, countries with policies and norms that encourage women’s part-time work, though men are expected to be the main breadwinner.

The results partly support these assumptions. The unadjusted gender differences in WHC are larger in all other countries compared with the Nordic ones, except for Poland, which displays a similar gender difference as in Finland (Table 3:1). The largest gender differences in WHC are found in Germany, the UK, the Czech Republic and Hungary, where men experience significantly more WHC than women. No statistically significant gender differences in WHC remain after work and home demands are taken into account, however (Table 3:2). This suggests that the gender differences in perceived WHC in these four countries are mediated by gender differences in work and home demands.

The unadjusted gender differences in HWC are largest in Spain, the CEE countries and Denmark, where women experience significantly more HWC than men. Germany, the Netherlands and the UK display slightly larger gender differences in HWC compared with Sweden and Denmark, but lower compared with the other countries (Table 3:3). The statistically significant gender differences in Spain and the CEE countries remain even after controlling for work and home demands (Table 3:4), suggesting that there is a direct effect of

gender that can be related to normative expectations regarding the roles of men and women that in turn influence how role conflict is perceived, as suggested by Greenstein (1995).

Table 3: Country and gender differences in unadjusted and adjusted mean scores of work-to-home and home-to-work conflict.

	Work-to-home conflict					
	<u>3:1 Unadjusted mean scores</u>			<u>3:2 Adjusted mean scores</u>		
	Women	Men	Gender diff.	Women	Men	Gender diff.
Sweden	4.77	4.82	-0.05	2.76	2.57	0.19
Denmark	4.68	4.59	0.09	2.68	2.46	0.22
Finland	5.22	5.43	-0.21	3.05	3.05	0.00
Germany	4.44	5.08	-0.64 **	2.53	2.56	-0.03
Netherlands	4.09	4.36	-0.27	2.75	2.28	0.48
United Kingdom	4.63	5.56	-0.92 ***	2.88	3.02	-0.14
Spain	4.54	4.80	-0.26	2.58	2.39	0.20
Czech Republic	4.26	4.78	-0.52 *	2.17	2.28	-0.11
Hungary	4.22	4.89	-0.67 *	2.05	2.38	-0.33
Poland	5.05	5.25	-0.20	2.49	2.52	-0.03

	Home-to-work conflict					
	<u>3:3 Unadjusted mean scores</u>			<u>3:4 Adjusted mean scores</u>		
	Women	Men	Gender diff.	Women	Men	Gender diff.
Sweden (ref.)	3.18	3.10	0.08	1.66	1.47	0.19
Denmark	2.41	2.02	0.39 *	0.88	0.47	0.42
Finland	3.22	3.05	0.17	1.63	1.29	0.34
Germany	3.07	2.81	0.26	1.68	1.36	0.33
Netherlands	2.88	2.61	0.27	1.57	1.18	0.39
United Kingdom	3.59	3.32	0.26	2.20	1.91	0.29
Spain	3.70	2.40	1.30 ***	2.14	1.06	1.08 ***
Czech Republic	3.47	2.67	0.80 ***	1.97	1.11	0.86 ***
Hungary	3.04	2.12	0.92 ***	1.58	0.61	0.96 ***
Poland	3.62	2.85	0.78 **	1.86	1.33	0.53 *

*** $p \leq 0.001$; ** $p \leq 0.01$; * $p \leq 0.05$.

Note: Socio-demographic factors, work and home demands are controlled for in the adjusted mean score.

The results indicate that the two dimensions of conflict are highly gendered, i.e. that men experience more WHC and women more HWC in countries with more traditional gender norms and weaker support for work-family reconciliation, such as Spain and the CEE countries. The polarity between the two dimensions of conflict is largest in these countries, even after work and home demands are taken into account.

Discussion and conclusions

The aim of this study was to investigate gender differences in perceived work-to-home and home-to-work conflict in ten European countries by 1) examining whether home and work demands have similar impact on men's and women's perceived conflict, and 2) exploring whether gender differences can be linked to country variations in work-family reconciliation policies and gender norms. The analytical strategy is inspired by Amartya Sen's *Capability*

Approach, an innovative multi-layered framework which allows us to go beyond the individual level of home and work demands by analysing work–home conflict in a broader societal context. This approach takes into account that expectations regarding work–life balance and perceptions of work–home conflict might be context bound. Applying this framework on work–home conflict does not diminish the importance of the widely applied resource-demand approach, as this perspective is supported in the analyses, but underscores the importance of incorporating an institutional/normative framework for understanding how perceptions of strain and time demands are embedded.

Consistent with previous research, this study shows that work and home demands weaken the capability to achieve work–life balance, and that work demands are more linked to work-to-home conflict and home demands are more linked to home-to-work conflict. However, the results indicate that perceived conflict is gender asymmetrical and linked to patterns that result from men’s and women’s traditional home and work spheres, i.e. men experience more work-to-home conflict and women more home-to-work conflict. This can be explained by men’s longer and more unsocial working hours, and overtime at short notice, while women in general shoulder the home responsibilities.

The results also suggest that the two conflict dimensions are less separable for women, indicating that multiple roles entail a greater challenge for women to achieve work–life balance, especially when faced with care responsibilities, economic constraints, irregular work hours, no flexitime and job insecurity. These factors have a greater impact on women’s capability to achieve work–life balance, compared to their male counterparts.

Considering gender differences in work–home conflict, within and across the ten selected countries, I expected to find greater gender differences in countries where women are expected to be prime carers and men the breadwinners, and where policy support for work-family reconciliation is weaker and under-utilised. The results partly support this, as Spain and the CEE countries display a large polarity between the two dimensions of conflict, even after work and home demands are taken into account. One explanation is that men and women, in such contexts, have different expectations and perceptions of work–life balance (Drobnič and Gullién 2011). Women may downplay the perceived work-to-home conflict because they have accepted their role as the main carer in the family, as suggested by Strandh and Nordenmark (2006). In societies with more traditional gender parenting roles, these norms are harder to challenge. Nonetheless, these women face difficulty in coping with various demands and responsibilities, which is expressed in their perceived home-to-work conflict. Furthermore, in contexts where men are expected to be the primary earner, they feel

less entitled to make claims for work–life balance at their workplace, as suggested by Hobson et al. (2011).

I also expected to find less gender differences in perceived WHC and HWC in countries with strong institutional support for work-family reconciliation and less traditional gender norms, such as the Nordic countries, as these factors increase women’s labour market integration and enhance men’s and women’s expectations and capabilities to be both earners and carers. The results partly support this. These countries display relatively small polarity between the two dimensions of conflict before work and home demands are taken into account. This pattern disappears, however, in comparison with Germany, the Netherlands and the UK when work and home demands are taken into account, which suggests that the West European country variations in gender differences in the two dimensions of conflict can be linked to variations in men’s and women’s work and home demands.

From a gender perspective, this study has shown the importance of analysing both dimensions of conflict within different institutional contexts, as the cross-national gender differences in work–home conflict that emerged from the analyses would have been shaded out if the focus were only on work-to-home conflict. By ignoring these factors one fails to assess the gendered dimension of work–life balance within and across different institutional settings. We know that gender does play a role in the capability to achieve work–life balance (Hobson et al. 2011). This study reveals that gendered policies regarding work-family reconciliation and norms are intertwined with expectations regarding work–life balance and perceived work–home conflict.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This paper is part of my PhD thesis, *Facets of Work–Life Balance across Europe*. I am truly grateful to my main advisor Barbara Hobson at the Dept. of Sociology, Stockholm University, for all the support and encouragement when writing my thesis, and for introducing me to the capability approach. I also thank my second advisor Livia Oláh for valuable constructive feedback and support, and Lina Eklund for comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

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