Tensions in Aspirations, Agency and Capabilities to Achieve a Work Family Balance: A comparison of Sweden and Hungary

By

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Abstract
In this paper, we seek to develop a theoretical framework using a capabilities approach and apply it in an analysis of a unique qualitative capabilities survey collected in two societies (Hungary and Sweden). They represent two institutional contexts with different working time regimes, levels of precarious and insecure employment, and dissimilar gender equality discourse and norms. These differences shape expectations and the ways in which mothers and fathers subjectively experience the tensions between family and work demands, and the scenarios for change that they imagine. In the paper we present two models that underlie our analyses of capabilities and agency (1) a multi-layered model of a capabilities set adapted to a European context; (2) a model illustrating how subjective states of agency reflect the individual and institutional/societal resources of working parents to take up European/national policies for WLB. We operationalize agency freedom in terms of a sense of entitlement to make a claim for WLB, considering leave policies, flexibility/autonomy in working times, with a special emphasis on workplace organizational culture. Comparing our two societies, we find similarities in subjectively experienced tensions involving time pressure and time poverty, cutting across gender and education. Our Hungarian parents nevertheless, have greater agency inequalities for WLB, which reflect weaker institutional resources (conversion factors) as well as cultural/societal constraints in challenging gendered norms at workplaces and in households. Our survey reveals that Swedish parents, both men and women, express a strong sense of entitlement to exercise rights to care.

Introduction

Worklife Balance (hereafter WLB) is a discursive refrain in European public debate that mirrors rising expectations for women to be earners as well as carers and for men to become more involved in caring for children. It is not merely a in policy circles, but also encompasses tensions within individual lives, households, policy frameworks and work organizations. It has become a norm within European societies, something to be strived after; both women and men maintain that WLB is a main priority when considering job and workplace (Hobson and Fahlén 2009). Yet there is a growing gap between norm and practice, the ideal and real, as seen in the rising numbers of those working long hours (Boulin et al. 2006 and Guest 2002), and the increase in jobs with unsocial hours (Perrons et al. 2006; Boulin et al. 2006). In addition, we see more types of jobs that lack time and space boundaries (the spillover effect in the new economy) in which workers are expected to be on call and accessible all the time, unable to 'switch off' during family and leisure time (Fagan et al. 2007; Duvendak and Stavenuiter 2004; Perrons 2006). Not surprisingly worklife balance is often defined in its absence; work-life imbalance, or work-life conflict (Guest 2002), reflected in international research that shows that individuals more often see work demands impinging on family time and not vice versa (Frone 2003).

Over the last decades, we have witnessed the emergence of new policies, guidelines norms at the EU and National Levels promoting WLB, including flexibility in the organization of working times and hours of work, leaves for taking care of children and the disabled and elderly. Innovative policies have been introduced in some countries, such as working time accounts, which allow workers to build up time credits during periods in the life course in which workers have few responsibilities for care. The discourse on gender equality in care has set in motion policies aimed at increasing father's capabilities for worklife balance. At the same time, undercutting these measures are the pressures for increased productivity and competitiveness in the global economy. These pressures translate into greater work intensification, precarious work situations and unstable futures for individual workers and their families (Perrons 2006). We know that there is the gap between rights and the ability to exercise them (Hobson and Fahlèn

2009a, 2009b) In this paper, we are focusing on how these tensions are subjectively experienced-- between rising expectations for women and men to be both cares and earners and the constraints preventing them for actualizing WLB. We are asking: To what extent does the institutional context reduce the gap between aspirations and agency inequalities, between rights and the ability to exercise them. This core question is built into the theoretical and conceptual framework of our study on capabilities and agency for a WLB, inspired by Amartya Sen's influential work on capabilities.

The capability framework offers a powerful conceptual model for analyzing the social politics of WLB as it offers a dynamic agency-centred approach in which institutions are at the very heart of whether an individual has the substantive freedoms to choose a life that he/she values. Moreover the capabilities paradigm assumes that societal/institutional context shapes not only what one does but also the opportunities to be and do. There is an implicit recognition that institutions, rules, and informal norms held by others (collectively) not only affect access to resources, but also subjective states of efficacy, the real freedom to choose (Sen 1992, 2003). This is a crucial analytical dimension for understanding gendered agency in WLB, since gendered norms and values are legitimated and reproduced in policy and discourse, and can either inhibit or enable a sense of entitlement to make a claim for WLB.

Our purpose in this article is two-fold (1) to develop a capabilities framework that allows for more dynamic and multi-layered theoretical approaches to WLB, sensitive to gender analyses.[1] We build upon and extend Sen's model of a capability set, by positing WLB as an evaluative space for achieving quality of life; and by incorporating a range of institutional, societal/cultural factors context specific to European societies that shape the agency of individuals to achieve a WLB, what Sen refers to as conversion factors. (2) Our second aim is to operationalize the capability approach using a unique survey that we specifically designed for analyzing agency inequalities and capabilities for WLB:[2] We apply this framework to an analysis of agency inequalities of individual mothers and

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[1] We use the term Work Life balance rather than Reconciling work and family life. These concepts are often used interchangeably: EU Commission's document *"A better work-life balance: stronger support for reconciling professional, private and family life"* (European Commission 2008). We use the concept of WLB throughout this study in order to include how work /family conflict is interpreted by the respondents as including leisure and time to develop oneself. It also reflects our broader interest in quality of life issues.
[2] Throughout the text, we refer to the survey as the capabilities survey.

fathers with young children in two institutional contexts (Hungary and Sweden) with differences in working time regimes; and divergent in gendered discourses around parenting norms. These differences shape expectations and perceptions of the constraints and possibilities to make claims and exercise rights for WFB, the real freedom to make choices.

Theoretical Framework and Conceptual Models

The capabilities paradigm is a normative framework for the quality of life[3] that can be adapted to different institutional contexts.[4] It allows for a context specific approach in selecting and weighing different functionings (outcomes for achieving quality of life) in relation to capabilities, a way of analyzing which values are valued (Sen 1992), in different societies, or geographic, social and political regions (Europe in this study). Sen refers to this process as the comprehensive outcome (1992, p. 151) that encompasses the emergence of values through democratic dialogue. WLB can be seen as example of a value that has become hegemonic in most European societies, imprinted as a norm in EU documents and discourse on gender equality and family well-being. This has occurred through dialogues on many levels: EU policy discourse and norm construction, mobilization of actors beneath and above the state; advocated by NGOs and epistemic communities. It has become a normative space for well-being and quality of life (Sen 2006). Although WLB is used to support instrumental goals of increasing labour force activity and incentives for higher fertility (EC 2002, 2003; MacInnes 2006; McManus 2009) from a capabilities perspective it is a value in itself in which quality of life is the heart of the matter.

In our study we employ WLB as evaluative space to achieve ways of living that are valued, functionings in Sen's terminology (Sen 1992, 2003). Functionings can include basic forms of well-being, such as having health care and education, shelter, and

[3] See the recent Report by the Commission on Economic Performance and Social Progress 2009.
[4] One of the main critiques of Sen's theory of capabilities is that he does not provide a specific set of capabilities, rights, but rather a general framework. This is articulated most fully by Nussbaum (2003) who maintains that it is imperative to develop a normative model of basic capabilities of social justice that could be applied across societies, a list of conceptions of what we should be doing and being. However, studies, such as Hobson and Fahlén and Agarwal et al. 2003; Robyens 2003 consider Sen's insistence that his capabilities framework should be context specific as strength rather than a weakness.

employment and other standard measures of welfare. They can also embrace other areas of social life, (Sen 1992). In European industrial societies, many of the elementary functionings have now been accomplished considering a basic standard of living. In our study, we maintain that WLB is a functioning in advanced industrialized societies, the lack of which, can affect one's health and well-being. WLB intersects with many areas of quality of life involving the work side: quality of one's job, the economic security it provides as well as the ability to have employment that uses one's skills and experience. For women this aspect of gender agency inequalities and WLB translates into disruptions in employment after having children or being forced to downgrade job status if they want to work shorter hours, (Sjöberg 2004; Lee and McCann (2006) On the Life/time side, quality of life encompasses the ability to have a family and care for family as well as the leisure time to develop oneself.

Our multi-layered framework for capabilities and WLB recognizes that gendered agency inequalities operate in different sites that inhibit or promote the exercise of one's rights and sense of entitlement to make a claim for WLB. There are many studies of household strategies and work family conflict (Wallace 2002, Hantrais 2005; Weissman et. al 2009;Blossfield and Drobníc 2001) that focus on the imbalance in the division of unpaid work, the double shift of working women beyond their paid working day-- doing the household work. Moreover there is a vast literature on reconciling employment with family related to WLB (Grönlund and Halleröd 2008; Hantrais and Ackers 2005; Crompton and Brockman 2006: Knijn 2006; Gornick and Meyers 2003). Though there is a growing awareness of the firm level as a crucial site for making claims for WLB (Fagan et al. 2007, 2009, Boulin et al. 2006; Bygren and Duvander 2006), it is research area nevertheless that is undertheorized, especially if one is considering gendered agency inequalities for WLB. This study with its multi-layered framework and empirical focus on firm level characteristics in WLB seeks to fill that gap.

Many applications of Sen's capabilities paradigm in Europe are normative frameworks that focus on social aspects of employment, employability, and poverty

(Salais and Villeneuve 2004; Supiot 2000; 2009; Bonvin and Farvaque 2004; Vladimirova 2010) [5] but in these studies gender is not the main focus (Lewis 2004).

Korpi (2000) is an exception in that he incorporates gender analytically within a capabilities framework using his gender institututionalist models.[6] He argues that variations in different policy configurations, including family allowance, family tax benefits, and public daycare services are highly relevant for variations in gender agency inequalities in women's labor force participation. Participation in the labour force is the evaluative space for gender equality. According to Korpi (2000) labour force not only determines the distribution of resources, but also it affects women's self perception, identity and the scope for capabilities and freedom in different spheres of life. He offers a model in which welfare state provisions and institutional contexts that support dual-earning couples are those most likely to reduce gendered agency inequality: it is the "arena for the major socio-economic processes in modern society". However, his model does not take into account that jobs in themselves may or may not lead to better quality of life: the social quality of these jobs may be poor in terms of pay and working conditions. Hence it is problematic to posit labour market activity as an evaluative space for gender equality, as it is a functioning that cannot be detached from other capabilities or bundles of functionings (Sen 1999; Robyens 2003) beyond the policy level that support different family types, which involve intra-household resources (Iversen 2003) labour markets and workplace cultures.

According to Browne et al. (2001, 2004), Sen's capability framework consists of two evaluative spaces, what they refer to as a dual methodology. One is for analyzing a set of dimensions for the potential of individuals to achieve a quality of life (their capabilities set),[7] and, two is a normative framework for evaluating institutional forms and policies that promote an individual's capability to achieve it. Both are key components for understanding the variations across welfare states, and for linking the macro-institutional level with micro level perceptions of risks and agency and actual practices. Most studies of advanced European welfare states concentrate either on the

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[5] Gender is given a nod in Bonvin and Farvaque (2003) analysis of a capability-Friendly Social Policy, as an example of how capability set should be seen in a larger perspective of the value of WLB. Yet gender is not incorporated analytically in this study.

[6] See his typology (Korpi 2000) of *Dual Earner*, *Market Oriented* and *General Family Support*

[7] This concept will be discussed further in the following pages.

normative policy level (Korpi 2000; Salais 2004; Supiot 2000, Barnard et. al; Deakin 2003; Lee and McCann 2006) or at the individual agency and capabilities level (Burchardt 2002, Iverson 2003). Our two models (below) illustrate how these two levels of analysis work in tandem in WLB. The aim of this study is to embed individual agency freedoms into the institutional/policy contextual level

In developing a capability set that addresses the gendered dimensions of WLB, we are not positing a standard for an optimum work-life balance . To do so would be to undercut the basic tenet in capabilities paradigm: the ability to choose a life that one values. Rather we are interested in the constraints and possibilities to convert resources into agency; the substantive freedoms to make choices and the consequences of agency inequalities in terms of wellbeing. In most studies agency inequalities for working parents is measured in terms of work life conflict, that parents cannot manage the competing claims of family and work, who experience stress or poor health and a low quality of life.[8] Our study seeks to capture another level, with agency as a core dimension, the ability of individual parents to make claims for WLB, their sources and sense of entitlements.

Two models

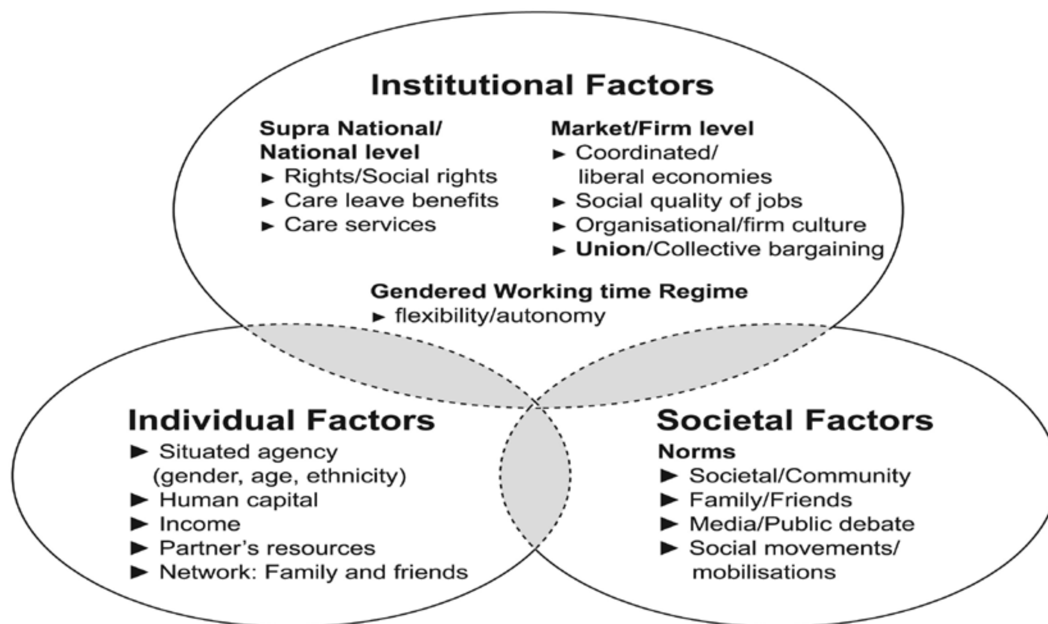
Our model of a capability set for WLB is a modification of Sen's capability set (adapted to our evaluative space: (WLB), European context and gendered lens. We use the categories of individual, institutional and societal resources and our model highlights their overlapping and multi-layered intersections.[9]

[8] Various indexes on WLB capture these different components in work to family conflict; See van der Lippe and Peters (2007) Grönlund (2007), Crompton and Lyonette (2006); MacInnes 2006 ; Van der Lippe et al. (2006).

[9] Sen's concept of the capability set consists of three categories that were constructed with developing countries in mind: (1) Individual factors that comprise gender, ethnicity age etc. (2) environmental factors, involve physical surroundings, technological infrastructure, (3) Societal factors include social norms, legal norms and public policies (gender and ethnic stereotyping). We employ the category of institutional factors instead of environmental factors and include laws and policies as well as labour market characteristics.

Much in the same way that the choice of valuable functionings are context dependent, we have constructed our institutional factors that enhance agency achievement from the vast research on European welfare regimes and studies of gender, states, and citizenship.[10] We introduce the firm level and market level, which has only recently been incorporated in capabilities approach (see Lee and McCann 2006; Fagan et al. 2007 and in this volume). Here the research on varieties of capitalism is relevant. Coordinated economies with regulations in the market and working conditions (Estévez-Abe 2005) can enhance capabilities for WLB: including job security and greater influence of unions and collective bargaining in shaping work environment, flexibility and task autonomy.

Model 1: Capability set for WLB in a European Context



[10] There is voluminous literature on welfare regimes and gender and welfare regimes (much of it has appeared in S*ocial Politics* that has influenced our institutional level dimensions on capabilities for WLB). We are also fortunate in that we have had the benefit of the research emerging from the Network, Reconciling work and welfare (FP6 network of excellence) on quality of jobs and flexibility.

Feminist research on policy and WLB have written extensively about various family/work reconciliation polices, such as care policies, types of benefits, including day care policies, job protection laws after parental leave, levels of compensation for care leaves. There is growing attention to the importance of work organizational and work cultural level in studies of WLB (Fagan et al. 2007). Work organizational cultures at the firm level (Bygren and Duvander 2006) are sites for mediating rights at the national and European levels (Fagan et al. 2007), including the three policy dimensions in our study, flexibility, reductions in working hours, part time work and parental leave. WLB also entails features of the labour market that affect the organization of time and the potential for achieving a work-life balance. Social qualities of jobs reflect agency inequalities in terms of money and time so that unskilled low paying jobs often force individuals to work long hours or work two jobs, as well as work unsocial work hours that do not allow parents to spend time with children.

Individual working times vary as do working time regimes – defined as legal and social norms of expected working times in different societies and work organizations within them (Bruning and Plantenga 1999; Rubery et al. 1999). The working time regime circumscribes what individuals can claim for altering work hours and the gendered patterns of work. Working time regimes are gendered in most European countries (Hobson and Fahlén 2009a, 2009b; Fagan 2004; Bruning and Plantenga 1999). Long working hours are designed for men who are assumed to be without family responsibilities. For women, not just part time work, but the types of part time work (short or long) reflect different working time regimes. The proportion and access to part time jobs are other dimensions of one's capability set and are often gendered, and reflect norms around women's main responsibility for care. If short-part-time jobs for women predominate in certain welfare regimes, this often reflects structural features in the labour market, which are built upon an assumption that there is strong male breadwinner in the family. Working time regimes interface with all three dimensions in our model: individual/household, institutional level (both state policy and work organizational) and the societal normative level. Hobson and Fahlén 2009a, 2009b found the widest gap

between men's and women's working time regimes in the UK as men work the longest hours and significant proportions of women are working short part time hours.

Gendering the capabilities set involves a focus on situated agency (the differences in individual resources of men and women in families) and a recognition that what fathers do in terms of WLB, affect mothers' ability to be and do: their range of choices. This has been well established in gender research and in research on capabilities (Iversen 2003; Robyens 2003). Another dimension that has been less analyzed or theorized within the capabilities framework is the importance of family and friendship networks (Stiglitz et al 2009 pp.).[11] Networks function as support systems not only as a resource for employment, but also for caretakers and backup in care (part of the resources at the household level). In fact, in the Hungarian example, this is institutionalized as one can even transfer one's childcare benefit to a grandparents taking care of a child.[12] The societal/cultural level in our model includes normative level that affects the conversion of norms into agency for WLB: alternatively it can be an arena for reinforcing traditional gender norms in parenting that are reflected in agency inequalities to challenge norms. Public debates and media campaigns have been important arenas for challenging gendered norms in care at the workplace and in the family. Men's carework has been the subject of government campaigns and media coverage, promoting active fatherhood. In Sweden, men's increased proportion of parental leave is front page news.

How institutional resources get converted into agency (Sen 1992) is a crucial dimension in the capabilities paradigm. We know that a law in itself may not lead to changes in practices; that laws may not be exercised. In our survey, these conversion factors involve specific policies at the state and firm level that legitimate a sense of entitlement to make a claim for care needs and more broadly family time. Variations in conversion processes can be found in the legal formulation of policies. For example whether flexible work arrangements are regulated by law, collective agreements or

[11]In the survey, we have a network component. In this paper it is not specifically addressed, though we consider networks in the general sense of support networks among family, friends and workmates and the norms of others in the same workplace.

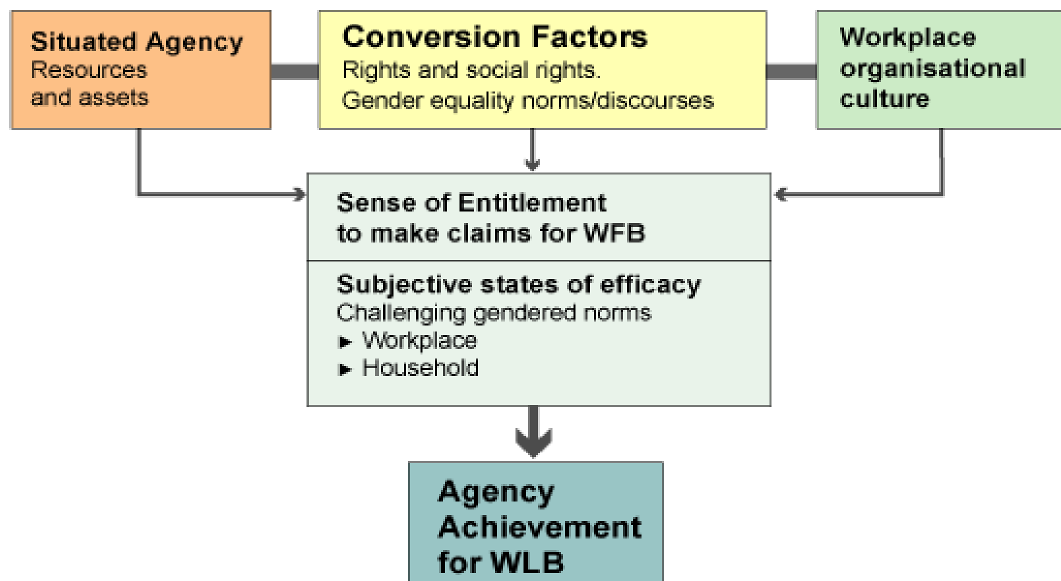
[12] Also in the survey are questions about norms and practices of family and friendship networks, as social networks are important for understanding how norms emerge from the ground up – in neighbourhoods, at workplaces and between friends and families.

negotiated at the workplace. Another example is the indisputable right to reduce hours when children are small in Sweden, versus the more generalized EU right to request to reduce hours (Eklund 2001). Furthermore whether a right can be converted in agency achievement often depends on whether it is social right (Deakin 2003). Here differences in how parental leaves are compensated often shape the possibilities to exercise them (this is particularly true for men's take up of parental leave: (see Hobson et al. 2006). Finally conversion processes operate within the implementation phase, for example, what happens in workplaces and whether there are consequences for using WLB policies. These can include job loss, discriminatory treatment in pay and promotion. Indeed, workplace and organizational culture that reflect a sensitivity to WLB is an example of a conversion factor (Fagan and Wathery in this volume); how policies are implemented on the ground.

Conversion factors for WLB not only exist beneath the state, but also beyond the state. At the EU level they emerge through court decisions imposing standards and creating new law. More indirectly they are found in discourse and policy documents noting best practices, encouraging policymakers, employers, union officials to emulate them (Den Dulk et al. in this volume, Carson 2004).

The existence of laws and policies are important factors in the individual capability set allowing one to convert her/his assets and resources into positive outcomes (Barnard et al. 2001; Browne et al. 2003, 2004; Deakin 2003). They argue that indirectly rights can lead to development of a different ethos or "seed" new norms that can have a destabilizing effect on conventional assumptions. However this seeding mechanism is only a partial explanation of how institutional/policy level leads to entitlements, and more importantly, to a sense of entitlement. We need to know more about how institutional conversion factors described above get translated into agency. Model 2 (below) seeks to present the complex processes involved in converting entitlements into a sense of entitlement, the cognitive level of agency that reflects one capabilities to make claims that challenge gendered norms operating in the workplace and household, which still assume that care is the main task of mothers and breadwinning men's obligation.

MODEL 2. CONVERTING ENTITLEMENTS INTO A SENSE OF ENTITLEMENT



Though not explicit in Sen's capabilities framework, the very sense of entitlement to make a claim is the conceptual lynchpin connecting functionings and agency: This agency space precedes the ability to exercise policies and rights and the self-efficacy to make claims for WLB. This is especially important in analysis with a gender focus on WLB as it encompasses gendered norms in household, workplace, community and society. As Model 2 suggests, conversion factors bracket both situated agency and workplace organizational culture. Those with more resources and assets (situated agency) are more likely to have a greater ability to make claims: their capabilities are enhanced in institutional settings with laws and rights as well as gendered ideologies articulated in public discourse that are institutionalized in policy and practice over time (conversion factors). Those with less education and skills and those most vulnerable to discrimination

often have weak capabilities to make claims for WLB and are most dependent on conversion factors. In our earlier studies, we found that these groups have the strongest perceptions of insecurity and risk in economic and job situation (Hobson and Fahlén 2009a, 2009b).

Conversion factors may have an effect on workplace cultures; as seen in acceptance of Swedish employers of men's right to daddy leave (Eurofond 2005). Converting entitlements into a sense entitlement reaches into subjective experiential level of capabilities, and our survey allows us to analyze the cognitive dimension in capabilities: the ability to imagine alternatives, the sense of efficacy to make claims for care. Our model assumes agency achievement (the ability to make claims from WLB) will result in better of quality of life, which we maintain (as discussed above) reflect greater control over one's time, less daily stress and overwork, and perceptions of security and wellbeing, all of which emerge from the questions in our survey as well as previous studies of WLB. Our comparative analysis of two different institutional contexts, Hungary and Sweden, makes visible the ways in which agency inequalities for WLB affect quality of life.

Two Institutional Contexts

We chose Sweden and Hungary as our comparative cases for several reasons. Both countries have had an institutionalized dual-earner family model. Sweden in gender welfare regime typologies exemplifies the weak male breadwinner model (Lewis 1997), and it is the paradigm of the dual earner institutional support in Walter Korpi's typology of family models (Korpi 2000). Hungary as was true of other former Soviet regime societies formulated a dual earner family model; it has continued generous state supports for parental leave and daycare, which is not the case in many of the CEE countries. However the two societies differ in the norms within the family around gender equality

and WLB, particularly the responsibilities for carework and housework in the family (Oláh et al. 2002; Oláh 2003).

These countries have several similarities but also dramatically differences along various dimensions. First, highly relevant to this study are significant differences in fertility between the two countries: Sweden fertility rate is 1.91 (Statistics Sweden 2009b), considered a high fertility country by European standards, whereas Hungary has one of the lowest fertility rates at 1.35 (KSH 2009). Hobson and Oláh (2006) inferred that the low fertility rate in CEE countries reflects uncertain economic situations and unstable futures (Philipov and Dorbritz. 2003; Spéder and Kamarás 2008) as well as long working time regimes.

At the institutional level working hours in 2007 was 37.5 for Sweden (set by collective bargaining agreements) and 40 hours for Hungary (Eurofound 2009). In reality the difference in actual work week is much more prominent. Hungarian men work on average five hours more per week than Swedish men (50 and 45 respectively); for Hungarian women the average work week is a forty hour one whereas for Swedish women it is 37 hours (Hobson and Fahlén 2009b) Swedish women have a higher proportion of labour force participation and many more Swedish mothers of small children are in employment compared to Hungary. Fifty percent of mothers in Hungary with a child aged 3-5 years are employed, compared to 81.3 percent of Swedish mothers (OECD *Babies and Bosses,* 2006). Yet many more Swedish mothers have part time employment. According to the most recent statistics, the average actual weekly working hours of women with children between the ages of 3-6 years is 27.6 hours per week (Statistics Sweden 2009a)[13]. According to Eurostat figures only 5 percent of the employed women age 25-59 work part-time in Hungary (Eurostat 2008b), though many of the self employed are not working full time hours.[14]

As we are focusing on working parents, unemployment rates should affect agency and capabilities to make claims for WLB; the sense of risk and insecurity in the job market hinders agency. They are higher in Hungary compared to Sweden. In the age

[13] In the Stockholm sample, the averages are higher, which reflects both the differences between Stockholm and the rest of the country and the slightly larger proportions of highly education among our sample than the rest of the country.
[14] This is discussed at length in the analysis of the survey data.

group 25-59 years, 6.8 percent for Hungarian men and 7.2 percent for Hungarian women; whereas in Sweden 4 percent of the men and 4.5 percent of the women are unemployed in the year of our survey (Eurostat 2008a).

Comparative Analysis on Selected Dimensions

Three policy areas

We have limited our analysis of capabilities to core policy areas that have emerged across Europe as entitlements to support WLB, flexibility, rights to reduce hours and parental leave.[15] All these policy areas revolve around time as a redistributive resource: how states compensate caring time after childbirth; how states regulate working time (working time regimes); how policies to promote flexibility provide working parent can offer opportunities to restructure working times that facilitate reconciling employment with family needs and responsibilities.

Parental Leave

Parental leave in Europe is a right that is protected under EU law: all mothers are guaranteed a minimum of three month leave each after a child was born.[16] By making parental leave gender-neutral (in contrast to maternity leaves), the EU Directive (96/34) gave men in several countries their first opportunity to exercise a right to take parental leave. Still, in many countries the parental leave right is not a social right to care given the minimal levels of replacement for men's income (Plantenga and Remery 2007; Ferrarini 2003, 2006; Moss and Deven 1999). In operationalizing a capabilities approach in our survey, we go beyond the traditional research approaches, the take up of parental leave and the division between the interviewee and her/his partner, but also address what are the capabilities for making alternative choices, if our respondent would have wanted

[15] Three EU Directives specifically address WFB time dimensions: Part Time Work (97/81/EC; The Working-Time Directive (93/104/EC; the Parental Leave Directive (96/34/EC).

[16] In June 2009 this agreement was updated to four month for each parent (European Alliance for Families 2010).

to divide the leave differently; what are the perceived constraints and penalties: and the ways in which agency inequalities reflect differences in the sense of entitlement to claim rights to care.

Flexibility and the rights to reduce hours

The ability to reduce hours is specifically addressed in the Part Time Work (97/81/EC). There are marked differences across EU countries in the extent and form in the rights of employees to reduce hours.[17] Fagan et al. (2007) have shown that there is wide variation in European firms on both the statutory provisions for the right to request part time hours and the employee take up of these and other care leave rights and the take up rates are often highly gendered. The rights to reduce hours have been most pertinent to mothers' reconciliation of employment and family, and many studies note the double-edged nature of part time work. It allows many women to have jobs who otherwise would not have been able to combine employment with raising children (Rubery et al. 1999; Ronsen and Sundström 1997). However, this option affects women's earnings, and lifetime earnings (Fagan 2004). In this study we focus on the access to part time jobs and the possibilities to reduce hours.

The survey was implemented in two capital cities, which in population size are fairly similar. We had three main participant selection criteria to be included in the survey: one had to be parent of at least one child younger than seven living in a couple, and having a regular work activity (having been employed over the previous year).[18] The sample was stratified by firm-level characteristics and firm sector (public and private sectors), and we have equal proportions within each category for both Budapest and Stockholm. For educational level, we sought to approximate the educational attainment levels in each city. Given the contextual differences in our two cities, there are variations based upon

[17] Ronnie Eklund (2001) referring to the Directive as the Chewing Gum Directive, highlights its vague and elastic parameters. He makes the point that the Directive follows a tendency in EU to leave the regulation of social policy to the social partners – assuming that they will take over the initiative in collective bargaining agreements.

[18] The sample in Stockholm was drawn from the Statistical Central Bureau, and in Budapest the personal data of respondents was provided by the Central Office for Administrative and Electronic Public Services for research purposes.

the selections from which we drew our samples: educational attainment, size of public and private work sectors and the proportions of small, medium and large firm size. The Budapest sample has a larger proportion with low educated, while the Stockholm sample has a larger proportion with high educational levels. The public sector is much smaller in Budapest than Stockholm and there are fewer small firms in Sweden than in Hungary, also reflected in our samples. [19]

We used a semi-structured interview schedule divided into four parts: *the Household, Employment* and *Working Time, Parental leave, Work Environment* and *Work Culture*.[20] In this paper, we do not present any material on the unpaid work in the household but concentrate on policies on working times, care leaves and work organizational cultures.[21]

In the following section, we compare the responses of parents in our two samples in three policy areas: *parental leave, flexibility in working times* and *reducing work hours.* We also include analyses of questions concerning family friendly work environments and work cultures. [22] In essence both reflect perceptions of capabilities and agency among those in both societies. Finally our survey is designed for capabilities and agency approach; with questions on what individuals can ask for refuse; what think is fair and what they would change.

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[19] In both sample 50 men and 50 women, aged 25-57 years old, are included. In the Stockholm sample 53% works in the private sector and 47% in the public sector, while 70% in the Budapest sample work in the private sector and 30% in the public sector. In the Swedish sample we strived to select equally large groups according to firm size. In the Hungarian sample 51% works in small firms (<20 employees), 24% in medium size (20-249 employees) and 25% in large companies (250+ employees). The educational level is distributed as follows. Stockholm: compulsory level 8%, secondary level 40%, tertiary level 52%. Budapest: compulsory level 25%, secondary level 20% and tertiary level 25%. The average number of children is 2.16 in Stockholm-sample and 1.68 in Budapest-sample. For a fuller description of the survey design and implementation.

[20] The questionnaire also includes on the division of Household work, a social Network Component and Social Policy Country-Specific module.

[21] Some of the responses in the section on household work also emerge in other parts of the interview, such as questions of fairness in the division of household work appear in responses to our questions on what individuals would change for a better WLB. As there many time budget studies, household strategies in WLB, we did not include this important dimension in this analysis, given space limitations and the focus of the special issue.

[22] Because of space constraints, we allude briefly to a series of questions on the respondents' scenarios for change and the constraints for making change. This will be developed further in a future publication

Parental Leave

We begin our analysis with parental leave, as it is has been a crucial policy for enabling parents (particularly mothers) to combine employment with family; the capabilities to have and care for children. Moreover it has been framed as policy measure that has the potential to reduce inequalities in the family and labor market (Hobson et. al 2006) specifically the proactive measures for daddy leaves. How the policy is structured and its take up by mothers and fathers connects to all three levels in our model (1) the individual, institutional and societal/cultural.

Whether this right is exercised is dependent on conversion factors (see Model 3); whether it is well compensated (a social right), so that individual resources are less important for parent's ability to take time off employment to care. Also the discursive and policy debates play a role in father's sense of entitlement to make a claim for parental leave, for example, whether gender equality is the driving force or increasing fertility (Hobson and Fahlén 2009a). As employees request parental leave from their bosses or managers, work organizational cultures are critical sites for making this claim for their care rights. Still as our two cases illustrate the forces shaping who takes the leave and for how long reflect the more general institutional and societal patterns described in our comparison of two institutional contexts, such as structure of labour markets, job security and social protection, as well as the gendered norms in parenting and care.

Sweden and Hungary have a relatively generous parental leave benefits, though Sweden has a much higher level of compensation because incomes are higher and the capped ceiling for the benefit is also high. The most obvious differences in the policy frameworks for parental leave in the two societies are the incentives and disincentives for women to re-enter the labour market as well as the pro-active policy for fathers to use their parental leave rights. These differences reflect and shape gendered norms in parenting and care.

If one considers flexible work hours (beyond the right to work part time), as ability to organize one's schedule, flexibility is not inscribed in EU Law, but rather as one of the

strategies to promote WLB at the European and national. It is part of the Post Lisbon era to promote productivity and growth and social cohesion. Flexibility in working time is also framed as a strategy that offers employers the opportunity to adjust workers hours to productivity. [23]. One can distinguish between two dimensions in the EU policy framework for external flexibility, in which the aim is to make workplaces more 'adaptable', by offering more flexible contract arrangements; and internal flexibility, those that are geared toward achieving more flexible patterns of work organization (Lewis 2009; Clausen and Clegg 2006). In our analysis we focus only on the internal flexibility (part-time, overtime, schedule, flexi time). Beyond the actual contractual times, many European workers are expected to work evening/weekends and extra hours. In this analysis, we are interested in the ability of workers to refuse to work extra hours because of family responsibilities.

In both societies, the generous benefits are linked to employment (one year in Budapest and ½ years in Sweden). However in Hungary the national policy provisions on child care leaves allow for an exceptionally long period of three years, a income related one year benefit at 70 percent of income and a low flat rate benefit that functions as a disincentive for the continuous participation of women in the labour market. The three year benefit reinforces gender role expectations about whom should be doing the caring, reproducing the gender divide in care. In one our cases a women was on leave for 9 years (three consecutive children). The most common pattern is that women take the entire three years of benefit, although there is here is wide gap between the leave taken by higher skilled and low skilled. The highly skilled professional women taking very short leave periods (3-9 months) compared to those working in routine administrative jobs or blue-collar occupations, who most often utilize the full leave period of three years (Plantenga and Remery 2005).

Returning to the labour market after a long period of parental leave can be quite problematic (especially for mothers with lower education and those living in smaller

[23] EU Commission regard flexible working time arrangements are a core component of the policy mix facilitating choices for combining work and family life (COM 2008) and that social partners play a crucial role in promoting flexible work arrangements (COM 2005).

settlements). According to one EU study, more than 75 percent of Hungarian parents on parental leave, mainly mothers, said that they plan to continue working in their old job after their leave is over. However, the actual return rate is less than 45 percent (KSH 2006; Plantenga and Remery 2005). There are various reasons contributing to the difficulty of returning to the labour market, including firm closure or the termination of the old position and the creation of a new position that is unsuitable for the returning employee's skills (Spéder and Kamarás 2008). This outcome suggests that while EU case law has strong protections against firing of women who take maternity leave, these are not in force in Hungary.

Given the overall precarious in the labor market, lower educated women in our Budapest sample actually used the flat-rate benefit as a quasi unemployment benefit. Quote in here. This reflects a broader pattern observed between 1993 and 2005 in Hungary, regarding the rapidly increasing proportion of women taking the flat rate childcare allowance with no previous employment tended to be those with lowest levels of education (Bálint and Köllő 2008).

Sweden has one of the most Sweden has one of the most generous in Europe, considering level of payment and number of weeks (see Plantenga & Remery 2005; Gornick and Meyers 2003; Hobson and Oláh 2006). It covers 390 days, set at 80 percent of previous earnings with an income ceiling.[24] It is also highly flexible: One can choose to take fewer days per week or even divide the days into half days, and by doing so, one can prolong the duration of leave. The flexibility facilitates father use, who can take days off or short periods and hence not interrupting work routine. For mothers, flexibility in the leave most often is strategy for extending their leave time, which they can accomplish by taking a much lower benefit level and using it for part of the time. Though a care allowance (flat rate low benefit exists in Sweden since 2008, few mothers use this option. As in Hungary the less educated are more likely take a longer leave, which we found in our survey). Though in Sweden, jobs are protected for those on parental leave, longer leaves can affect pay and promotion possibilities in jobs (Statistics Sweden 2007; Hobson

[24] The ceiling was held constant during the 1990's which lead to that an increasing proportion of parents received less than 80 percent of previous earnings. Since then the ceiling has been raised and are now price-indexed, so that majority of the parents receive close to 80 percent of previous earnings (Duvander 2008). During the survey year 2008-2009, was the ceiling set at 910 SEK per day, about €84.

et al. 2006). Nevertheless, return to the labour market is facilitated by the parental polices, even when women have children close together mothers can keep the higher level of benefit and return to work for a short period, keeping their foot in the workplace.[25] Compared to our Hungarian mothers, the differences between Swedish mothers with high and low education and skills in our sample were less pronounces when considering the length of leave and the reintegration into employment.

The most significant feature of the Swedish parental leave policy in European comparisons are the incentives for fathers to take the leave. Well known are the two daddy months in parental leave policy, known as the use it or lose it policy (two months of the leave must be taken by the mother or father) or one loses the entitlement for the higher income related benefit. The figures for 2008-2009 (the survey year) show that 84 percent of fathers take some of the leave by the time the child is eight years old.[26] The take up rate for father's proportion was 21.5 percent in 2008. [27]

The Stockholm survey departs slightly from the national averages as more men claim to have taken the leave and about one third claim that they that they have taken more leave than the actual daddy months. About 15 percent of the sample state that they have shared the parental leave fairly equally, which we define as between 40/60 percent, and those respondents tend to be highly educated, also found in other studies, (Hobson et al. 2006; Swedish National Insurance 2003).

Although we find that the majority of fathers said that they agreed with the division of the parental leave; a significant proportion, about one third, said that they would like to have taken more leave. This figure is higher than the one reported in the National Insurance Board study five years earlier in which 20 percent of the fathers made a similar claim (Hobson et al. 2006). In our survey, most fathers said that the main obstacle standing in the way of not taking more daddy leave is the economy, i.e. the

[25] This is referred to in Swedish policy as the speed up premium

[26] If one looks at fathers' take up rates for kids under 3, we still find that nearly ¾ of fathers are using their rights for Parental Leave (www.forsakringskassan.se).

[27] The most recent figures show that proportion of men's leave has reached 23 percent during 2009 (Swedish Social Insurance Agency: www.forsakringskassan.se).

reduction of the household income is less when the mother, who usually earns less, stays at home.

Work place culture and gender role expectations also came into play, particularly, among the highly educated fathers. Consider the case of a father who took his “daddy months” during the summer holiday to prolong the vacation. He would have like to have taken more leave, however, he felt constrained to do so because of his work situation: *“I would absolutely have wanted to do that [take more parental leave], but if you look at a lot of jobs, many on parental leave are badly treated and overlooked at work. If I’d been away for 6 months with both children then I don’t know if I would be here now.* His ideal would have been to work two days a week at least during parental leave to have some continuity at work*”*. When asked why he did not do this he said: *“When we had our child I had just changed jobs and saw a career for myself. So I don’t know if I’d wanted to step aside and take 6 months just then”*. . Then he added *“my partner didn’t have regular work* (44 y.o. father of two, having a managerial position in state administration).

As this example suggests, it is difficult to unpack the different layers in capabilities. Though many of the explanations have an economic rationale, gendered attitudes and norms in the workplace are also operating. As some earlier studies have shown (Albrecht et al. 1999) men have experienced a greater risk in exercising their rights for parental leave and for their career trajectories. Nevertheless, the Stockholm respondents reveal how legitimated a parental leave claim has become for both mothers and fathers. The public debate and discourse have given fathers a sense of entitlement to take up their parental leave rights.

Comparing capabilities of fathers for using parental leave, we found striking differences between Hungarian and Swedish fathers, both in terms of the take up rights and the strong gendered norms in the workplace and family that do not allow men to consider this option. Reflecting national patterns, in our Budapest sample we find a virtually “women only” use of parental leave. Out of 100 interviewees, we found only four fathers who took any leave. There are exceptional cases that deviate from the norm. These exceptional fathers tend to be men who have a partner who earns more than he

does, or for highly educated couples with a strong conviction that it is good for the whole family if the father actively take part of the caring (Takács 2008, Neményi-Takács 2006)

Clearly the level of payment and the economic loss that would have accrued result from father's taking the leave are factors for men not taking up parental leave rights. However one cannot ignore the undeniably powerful role of cultural gendered assumptions that come into play in determining why so few men take any parental leave beyond the targeted father days after the birth. Respondents (both men and women) in Budapest irrespectively of their education level often interpret the organization of care and the gender divide in parental leave practices as natural, essentializing gender difference. For example, breastfeeding was often given as a reason why men should not take any of the leave.

The role of socio-cultural normative expectations in the workplace in Hungary were so taken for granted that the very notion of making a claim for parental leave was out of the question. This was true even in the account of one father who said he and his wife discussed the possibility. *"We had doubts considering the potential reactions at my workplace. For example, in case I accepted a grant to do research abroad for a year, it would make sense at my workplace even if it would cause some problems, but surely it would be accepted. But going on childcare leave?! I think they can't comprehend even the fact that my family and childcare duties limit my working capacities to some extent."* (39 y.o. father of one, lecturer at a public sector university).

Both these countries have a fairly generous parental leave compensation in the first year of birth, however, there is a fundamental difference in how gender is embedded in the Hungarian and Swedish parental leave polices. The different policy formulas mirror the gendered assumptions and rationales. Long parental leave in Hungary presumes discontinuous female employment; the shorter flexible leave policy in Sweden aims toward reintegration into employment. Among the Hungarian respondents, both men and women, the idea of naturalized gender difference is invoked in rationales as to why women should be home during the entire period. Among our Stockholm survey respondents, we did not find this naturalized view of motherhood. Even among the

fathers who did not take any leave, the reasons given were based upon job situation, family economy or related factors economic conditions. Moreover, among many of our Swedish fathers, who took only short leave, there was often an apologetic response and defensiveness in their explanations as to why they did not take more leave. This cognitive shift in Swedish fathering responsibilities for care has been in the making for several decades, with campaigns and media debates that culminated in the use or lose it policy, a policy. It is important to underscore that this policy is not seen as coercive in Sweden (Hobson et al. 2006), but as a policy that actually increases men's capabilities and agency to make a claim for parental leave: The snow ball effect is now operating in many workplaces; as (Bygren and Duvander (2006) show in their study of all firms in Stockholm that the take up and proportion of leave that men took were dependent upon previous men's parental leave practices in the that firm. In many workplaces, men who do not take the leave are seen as less committed fathers.

Parental leave in the two societies also reveals differences in mother's capabilities for WLB beyond the gendered division of parental leave, which reflect broader labour market conditions and regulations in employment protections and security. For Swedish women, the parental leave system not only facilitates continuous labour force attachment, but also in reintegration in the work organization, which reflects other capabilities in the welfare regime, high levels of employment and secure jobs. This is less true in our Hungarian case, in which some mothers in the survey claim to have used the parental leave as form social benefit. These mothers, who were unskilled with low education, have limited capabilities, considering the high proportions of women unemployed and the precariousness of employment.

Working parents in our surveys have different starting points in terms of individual means and resources; though those living in Stockholm tend to have more education and higher incomes, the result of a more egalitarian educational system and compressed wage structure (LeGrand 1991). Yet even those Swedish parents with lower education levels, we still find the sense of entitlement to make claims for care parental leave, especially women. They know their rights and feel entitled to exercise them.

Work-life balance and Flexibility

To reveal the capabilities and agency, we constructed a series of questions relating family friendly workplaces, including different aspects of work flexibility to fit family needs, demands for overtime time work, and rights to reduce hours. In addition there are questions that revolve around perceptions for risk and rights for WLB, which allow us to tap into subjectively experienced tensions around the pull and push of work demands and the desire for more time with family.

Flexibility is interwoven in the web of WLB claims, including flexible working hours; work shifts and schedules; and possibilities to work at home or leave the workplace early in case of unforeseeable family obligations. Flexibility in the survey is operationalized employee-driven flexibility (Fagan 2004, whether individuals are able to organize their working time and/or rearrange their workday schedule to suit their family's needs in contrast to employer's needs for efficiency. In the survey we asked a series of questions, beginning with a general question on perceptions of flexibility at their workplace, and then unpacking this through specific questions on the rights to refuse extra work and knowledge of specific instances of mistreatment a the workplace for prioritizing family (what we refer to as narratives of risk), which address role of workplace organization and workplace culture in hindering or enabling agency and capabilities for WLB, operationalized in Model 2, as the sense of entitlement to make a claim revolving around care and family needs.

Considering our direct question on the ***perceptions*** of flexibility at the workplace for organizing time for family, we find very little difference between our Stockholm and Budapest parents: 77 percent of them in Stockholm and 75 percent in Budapest say that they are able to organize their time and workday according to their family's needs. In the Stockholm survey we found some gender differences in flexibility: among our Swedish fathers, 26 percent said that their workplaces are not flexible, while 18 percent of mothers felt this way.

More Hungarian men than women say that their work situation is not flexible (18 and 32 percent respectively). Men working in the public sector were the most dissatisfied, while both male and female respondents working in the private sector seemed to be quite satisfied with the level of their work flexibility. Again, this reflects the high proportion of self employed Hungarians and those working in micro-enterprises and the amount of outsourced home-based work (more men than women in our sample were self-employed). There is vey little gender difference regarding flexibility in the Swedish sample;. 20% of the women and 26% of the men (out of 50 each) say they lack flexibility in their work. When comparing men and women in different work sectors, we see the same pattern we found in among our Budapest parents: that men in the public sector have less flexibility compared to women; and women in the private sector have less flexibility than men (27% or 7 out of 26 of the women and 15% or 4 out of 27 for the men).

Among Swedish parents who claim not to be able to reorganize their schedule to suit family needs, the main reasons given are connected to job tasks. For example, to be responsible for someone's care often does not allow for flexibility in scheduling, which is how one woman working in the private sector characterized her situation. She has a specified time shift and has to remain with her client until someone else replaces here. A policeman also claims that he had little or no flexibility in rearranging his work schedule. *"Everything is controlled by external events. The jobs that come in we have to do. All the time in between we have open cases and assignments that we plan out together and do, But when something happens we have to drop all that and leave to do those jobs. So it is very free, but sometimes very controlled."* (38 y.o. father of three children, who was working reduced hours to 75 percent).

Nevertheless this same man maintained that he could leave work if there were family responsibilities that he had to attend to; hence he did not see his workplace as a family unfriendly. "*It is never a problem; the social things come first, and then work. […] No one ever complains. There are never any angry glances in the workplace because you are leaving."*

If we consider specific facets of flexibility and workplace organizational culture, we find more variation within and across our two cases (Stockholm and Budapest parents). Consider the question on whether parents could leave their work for family

reasons and whether they ask to permission. In Stockholm those working in the public sector said that they had to inform, but they did not feel hesitant to take time off to care for a sick child.

In Hungary the degree of flexibility also depends upon job sector. Being a private entrepreneur, especially a self employed was a key determinant of whether one could create space for organizing work schedules and flex time (20 percent of our Budapest sample listed themselves as self employed), as the two examples below suggest. A 40 y.o. mother of two, self-employed decorator stated that "*as an entrepreneur I am family-friendly. However, conditions are determined by the clients – although it is not like you must comply with them. You may decide not to work for them next time*", and a 35 y.o. father of two, self-employed joiner pointed out that "*I think entrepreneurship is family friendly because I decide on my schedule and nobody tells me what to do and when, though financially it is not profitable.*". It is important to keep in mind that the category of self employed covers a range of employment situations, from the small business entrepreneurs to irregular workers who depend on contract work from both private and public sector employers, without social benefits. In effect among this group, particularly among self-employed women, there seems to be a trade off between security and flexibility, as they cannot be assured employment contracts. This is suggested by the finding that these women would prefer to work more hours, if it means a gain in hourly pay.[28]

To consider capabilities and agency in WLB, we introduced a specific question, involving rights to refuse to work extra hours, weekend nights and evenings. Here we found some variation in our two cases. The vast majority of Swedish mothers and fathers (62 out of 87) said that could refuse to work evenings weekends and overtime and claimed family reasons are nearly always considered a valid excuse at their workplace. Family responsibilities and family time are given special status in Sweden. Several of our respondents said that they were not even asked to work off hours (evenings or weekends) as it was known that they had small children. Of course we found examples of men and

[28] In the questionnaire, we used the same ESS question: How many hours one would choose to work if it meant a loss or gain in hourly pay.

women who said that they were not asked to work extra hours but are expected to finish a task. Take for instance the CEO in a firm, in which the right to refuse extra hours was an irrelevant question. *"I am my own boss, so I am responsible for making sure the work gets done. And if it isn't, I get shit for it, so then I have to work extra myself. But no one really tells me to."* (35 y.o. father of two,Energy Market executive in an electronics firm)

. Leaving aside the 20 percent ,who are self employed in the Budapest sample in which this question was not applicable, we found that 40 out of 69 parents said that they could refuse to work extra hours. One example is that of a mother with three children who implied that family is the "most acceptable motivation" (mother with medium education working as a sales representative in the private sector). Yet the intense working time regimes and expectations of commitment to the firm are mirrored in the negative responses of Budapest parents and this is most true for fathers. Typical of this group are highly qualified parents working for private companies who were partial owners of them reflected,mirrored in this terse response of one such father: "*There is no such thing as overwork – there are only tasks to be completed*" (44 y.o. father of one, with higher education, working as a sales engineer in the private sector). Compare this response with a Swedish father who claimed that he also felt that overtime was often part of the job, however this father was compensated.
"I have never, in the 20 years that I have been here, had someone tell me that I need to work overtime. However you know what needs to be done and you take your responsibility. [...] Then I get overtime compensation" (40 y.o. father of two, middle level of education, working as an engineer in the private sector).

Other Budapest respondents, mainly fathers with larger families and/or partners with lower education typically working in the private sector, emphasized that they did not want to refuse extra work whether it was on the weekends or evenings, irrespective of whether they would or would not be allowed to do so. Rather financial reasons were primary; more work meant more money. This was true for a 35 y.o. father of two, with medium education, working as a courier, similarly to a 32 y.o. father of three, with basic education, working as a storekeeper, stated: "*I could refuse but I won't, as extra money is*

always good news". Alternatively, a 41 y.o. mother of one, with higher education working as an advisor in the public sector would choose time over money. "*I am not getting paid for the extra hours. Extra work should mean extra money. If I would get extra money, and I still didn't want to do it, I would bring up family reasons. It is already so little the time I spend with my child*."

Looking at flexibility in terms of rights to reduce hours (now inscribed in EU law), we can see profound differences between our Budapest and Stockholm parents in terms of their sense of entitlement to exercise this right. Every parent in Sweden has had the right to reduce working hours until the child is eight years and this has been in effect for several decades. About half (46.3%) of the Swedish mothers with a child younger than seven years take up this right (Statistics Sweden 2008), and a similar pattern in found in our Stockholm sample. In Hungary, there is no statutory to reduce hours for parents of young children and in the Budapest survey parents highlighted this kind opportunity as a sign of a family friendly workplace. The Hungarian labour market is characterized by a very low level of part-time employment (see section on Two Institutional Contexts). [29] It took one woman six months to find a workplace that would allow her to work six hours a day. *When they learned at the job interviews that I had a child, I was immediately dismissed. Working six hours only was out of question."* (33 y.o. mother of one, with basic education working as an office worker). A 42 y.o. father of one, with medium education working full-time as a journalist in a big private company also pointed out that "*You are not given a hard time if you have children. However, there is no opportunity to get transferred for a part-time job. And people who take a rather long leave usually don't return to the workplace.*

In order to capture the penalties and risks of putting family first, we asked our respondents about their own experiences of mistreatment at the workplace, , or whether they knew or heard about others who faced discrimination in pay, job task or promotion for prioritizing family. These *narratives of risk* travel through organizations.

[29] The tendency for full time work is also found among the permanent employed in the Budapest sample, while a larger share of the self employed women work part-time.

Less than one fifth (14 out of 68) of Budapest respondents brought up cases of mistreatment including both women and men from various forms of employment at different types of workplaces. Yet among this group, we can see gender-specific differentiation regarding workplace norms. For example, a 33 y.o. mother of one, with basic education, working as a clerk in the private sector, described the situation: "*One of my colleagues had a sickly child. That multinational [company] didn't stand that. She was continually being called in. She wasn't sacked, but left by mutual agreement. It was completely unfair. She did not know that she would bear a sickly child. I have yet to see a man take a lot of time off for family reasons [laughs]. It is always lumped on the woman*" Interestingly this blatant case of mistreatment toward a mother with family responsibilities involved multi-national corporation.

For the most part, there seemed to be more tolerance for women to prioritize family needs, as care for children in Hungary is still viewed as a woman-only or at least "woman-mainly" task. In this context fathers' WLB-claims at the workplace are sometimes perceived as peculiar, unrealistic, and with greater risks: For example, a 41 y.o. sales representative working in the public sector mentioned about a male colleague that "*They [i.e. other colleagues] thought that he was not telling the truth when he said that he needed time off for his family*"; and a 30 y.o. dressmaker working in a large private company noted that "*perhaps they are more amazed when fathers [ask for time off]*"; while a female respondent mentioned about her husband that "*My husband didn't have to go back [i.e. wasn't selected any more] to work after he had taken one day off because our child was ill. It was unfair and inhumane*."

In many Hungarian firms, the work organizational culture and the intense workload (long working time regimes) often translated into lack of tolerance for family needs, as this father, working as a financial director of a large private company pointed out: "*It's in the firm's culture – not just family, but anything that distracts from the work. Work has to be the very first thing in your life. This applies rather to the management than the employees*"; and as a 30 y.o. father of one with medium education, working as a controller in a large public company observed: "*It happened that somebody was away too much because their child was ill a lot and they told them that it was too much. I think that*

is unfair, because if your child is ill you have to stay at home." (40 y.o. father of one child in managerial position).

Whereas in Hungary the cases of mistreatment tended to involve men more so than women, we did not find this to be the pattern in our Stockholm sample. We found fewer cases-- only about one out of ten, cited their own experiences of being mistreated or heard about others. Nor did we find major differences between men and women or between work sectors in their personal experiences or knowledge about penalties for prioritizing family , there were slightly more cases of women being unfairly treated.

This reflects the fact that the majority of instances noted revolved around mistreatment in response to parental leave. Women tend to take much more of the leave than fathers and firms have difficulty replacing them with a substitute. Take for example, the account of a male senior project leader, who himself took parental leave and was actually sympathetic to the push and pull of family and job responsibilities. He referred to a woman in his workplace whose job was phased out while she was on parental leave so she could not return to same job. She was offered another position with lots of travel, which this new mother refused. He stated outright that in the company, there is a different attitude toward men and women. When he was looking at prospective job applicants, if a 28 to 32 girl walks in the office – "*on the verge of pregnancy I know that there will trouble in hiring a person like that*." His response is a classic example of how statistical discrimination operates in male-dominated workplace cultures, in societies with generous parental leave policies and high takeup rates by female workers (Mandel and Shalev). He claimed that although this is not official policy, he felt that it was not sustainable to hire women who will have kids – "*with travel and overtime project work, women with small children fail to deliver or quit"* (35 y.o. father of two, highly educated, senior project leader).

In many instances, the discriminatory patterns are covert or understood but never spoken about, as exemplified by this father who felt his family involvement put him in vulnerable position in the firm. *"There's a lot of talk behind the back. Partly it's been*

suggested that some people think that you're lying if you're home with sick children, or that there are some mean-spirited rumours. […] An employer cannot treat some differently because of their family circumstances, that's against the law. But behind the back talk goes on (28 y.o. father of three, working in a public warehouse). He also said that *"you're not in a great position when it's time for salary negotiations"*. Still, this man did not fear losing his job, but was in a weak position when pressing for a wage increase.

As the example above suggests overt cases of mistreatment are the tip of the iceberg in terms of work organizational cultures and gendered norms in work organizations. Nevertheless, they can tell us something about what is interpreted as mistreatment in the two societies and the contextual differences in perceptions of rights and the existence of protections between our two groups of respondents. One difference that we found in these narratives of mistreatment for prioritizing family is that in Hungary, the outcome most often resulted in losing one's job or not be called back, For the most part, the accounts in Stockholm related to discriminatory treatment in connected to parental leave and pay rises.[30] For example, three parents (two men and one woman) on parental leave in our sample said they were disadvantaged during wage negotiations. Since they were not at the workplace, they were in weak bargaining position. The Parental Leave Act is expected to protect parents from being mistreated when it comes to wage discrimination during parental leave and the rights to return to one's position. Both men and women cited the law as giving them a sense of entitlement to make a claim for family, yet in some workplaces the informal norms and expectations override.

We found only two examples of narratives of outright discrimination for taking up parental leave rights or for prioritizing family in the Swedish sample, one of which involved a multi-national corporation:, the father who went on parental leave was forced to sever his employment with the company.

[30] The law itself protects against discrimination in the use of parental leave; employers are expected to negotiate wages before one goes on parental leave. Even in cases of downsizing, employers are not permitted to openly discriminate against those who are on parental leave. Yet employers can argue that a worker on parental leave is not essential for the firm; they are functioning without him/her.

We posed a general question about whether the respondents considered their workplace family friendly, which in itself reveals contextual differences in terms of the salience of this debate in the two societies as well as the expectations of working parents for achieving work family balance. The latter is a crucial dimension for understanding agency for WLB and the sense of entitlement to make claims at the workplace for family needs.

More than half of the Hungarian respondents (54 out of 93) considered their workplace family friendly, while more than one fifth of respondents (21 out of 93) stated the opposite. Three men with basic education working in blue-collar jobs in the private sector, claimed that they did not understand the question or that they did not know what "that", i.e. family friendliness, meant. One of them, a 26 y.o. father of one with basic education working in the private sector as a semiskilled construction worker added: "*Well, I'm at a loss as to interpret this question. Obviously, one must support his/her family so working is a must. You have no choice. Well, I wouldn't mind to leave earlier sometimes. However, we don't have a say in this matter*." The inability to interpret this phrase suggests that among persons in certain type of jobs and labour market situations there is lack of awareness of work-family balance claims. In Hungary for some manual workers with low level of education, being employed is seen as an asset in itself: hence they could not consider any opportunities for further claims for WLB, no possibilities for negotiations. This is illustrated in the response of a 38 y.o. father with a medium education working as a repairman in one of the largest Hungarian state-owned companies. For him WLB was an individual problem to be solved by increasing his wages: Asked if his workplace was family friendly, he responded; "*Most of the employees are men. This is not an issue here. In fact, I do not know anything about it. I wish I could make the same money in fewer hours so I can spend more time with my family.*"

In contrast to the Hungarian parents, we found that our Swedish parents in various ways understood the concept family friendly workplace, regardless of education and

skill.[31] In Sweden WLB is an idea that has been featured in media and political debate. The vast majority of the respondents in the Stockholm sample (76 percent) perceived their workplace that way, and moreover, they define it relation to specific policies and work organizational practices.. Family/work friendliness was associated with flexibility; being able to work from home, having the ability to plan the work day, having flexible work hours, being able to bring children to work if the childcare centre or school were not open that day. Other aspects included scheduling of meetings sensitive to parental needs to leave or pick up their children from daycare or after school care, that is, not during early mornings or late afternoon and early evening. More generally parents acknowledged the importance of a family friendly work culture in which their employers and work partners demonstrated a favourable attitude toward parents on parental leave or those who took days off from work to care for sick children. An example noted by respondents was the pro-active family friendly in firms who topped up the parental leave benefit to compensate for the lower wage ceiling of 80 percent of a full time payment.[32]

In our Swedish sample gender difference in perceptions of workplace friendliness is mainly related to work sector (less women than men in private sector perceive the workplace as family friendly, and a reversed patter is revealed in the public sector). In international comparisons, Sweden is highlighted as having one of the most gender-segregated labour markets. This affects gender expectations at workplaces and the daily experiences of mothers and fathers at workplaces. Therefore it is not surprising that women in public sector employment characterize their workplaces much more positively than women working in the private sector. The public sector, predominantly female; is acknowledged as a gender sensitive work environment; many women move from private sector jobs to public sector jobs after they have children (Hoem 1995). Conversely more mothers in our sample working in the private sector firms characterized their work organizations as family unfriendly. As a mother working at an IT firm maintained, the gender role expectations work against mothers in her male dominated workplace. *"You are expected to have a partner that you do not share things equally with. After all we*

[31] We found one male respondent who was a truck driver who was not aware of his rights for daddy leave. He was exceptional as our other respondents knew about the main policies regarding WLB.
[32] The Discrimination act states "Employers are to help enable both female and male employees to combine employment and parenthood." (SFS 2008:567, Discrimination act, chapter 3 section 5).

have a majority of male consultants … some schedule meetings for strange hours, so that I can't organise my day" (39 y.o. mother of one, who works about 42 hours/week). Among Swedish men who reported that some aspects of their workplaces were family unfriendly, we found no differences between those working in public and private sector jobs.

In the Budapest sample, this pattern is reversed. Respondents, especially women, working in the private sector found their workplace more family friendly than those working in the public sector. This can be explained by the higher proportion of self-employment and micro-enterprises in Hungary compared to Sweden.[33] Self employed in our sample did not work long hours or unsocial hours, and tended to work less than those in regular jobs; only two held an extra job. However, the majority wanted to work more hours if it meant more pay. In this context work hours may be flexible, but may not reflect a better quality of life, as many of the self employed are irregular workers without social benefits. Though flexicurity is not a policy dimension that resonates in the Hungarian context, as there working parents are likely to have more precarious job situations, it is nevertheless difficult to cast those in self employment as having greater capabilities for WLB; hence what is characterized as family friendly (flexible work) masks the self-exploitive potential of private entrepreneurship.

Considering workplace organizational cultures in the two societies, we find similarities in the Swedish and Budapest samples. True for both our cases is that workplace culture itself creates pressures to compete, and work intensity results in weak capabilities and agency for WLB. Though very few of our respondents ranked their workplace as highly competitive,[34] there were indications of how internalized work pressures function, in which men and women characterized the pressure as coming from themselves. What we did not see among the Stockholm respondents was a perception that long hours spent at

[33] In 2006 there were almost 700.000 private enterprises officially registered in Hungary, 90 percent of which were micro-enterprises with a maximum of ten employees, while 50 percent of all enterprises functioned as self-employed sole proprietors (KSH 2008b).

[34]Fredrik Movitz maintains that in his ongoing study, few persons use the term competition to describe their workplace, as it is culturally taboo. However, they revealed the aspects of competition and pressure in their other responses: Communication, April 2009. Fredrik Movitiz, Senior Researcher Stockholm University and Expert in Pudisc Database.

work are an indication of work commitment (Perrons et al. 2006). Many of our fathers and mothers had the flexibility to take home work so they could pick up their children at the daycare early. However, the spill over effect and the lack of boundaries between work and home can also result in imbalance between work and family. Still, these highly educated flex workers are in a better position to rearrange schedules for family in compared with low educated who most often have fixed schedules and can have shift work

We find differences between our Budapest and Stockholm parents in their ability to make claims for WLB, which reflect institutional factors and societal norms for WLB. Our Stockholm parents seemed to have a stronger sense of entitlement to make claims for family life at the workplace, including flexible working times; the exercise of rights to reduce hours as well as the sense of entitlement to refuse extra week during family times, evenings and weekends. This holds for both women and men. Several men and women referred to the strong gender equality law and parental leave law that provided protections against discriminatory treatment and legitimated their claims for parental leave and family needs while they were at work. Parents were very much aware of their rights. In contrast, none of the Budapest respondents made any reference to the Hungarian Act on equal treatment and the promotion of equal opportunities,[35] in which there are specific protections assigned to family status as well as motherhood, pregnancy or fatherhood. Nor had they heard of the Family Friendly Workplace Competition.[36] This suggests not only the insufficient social promotion of these institutions but also a relatively low level of general awareness regarding WLB entitlements in Hungary, alongside a lack of capability and agency in exercising existing rights, including part time work and reduced hours.

[35] Act No. CXXV of 2003.

[36] The Family-friendly Workplace Award has been given by the government since 2000. Workplaces can apply in six categories: micro, small, medium, large size companies, public authorities, and NGOs. Family friendly competition criteria include work time flexibility, training opportunities, reintegration after parental leave, child-care facilities, allowances in money and in kind, safety at workplace, and events organized at the workplace involving the family. See: the announcement of the ”Családbarát munkahely 2008”.

More generally considering workplaces and work situations, the majority of Hungarian working parents expressed a greater sense of vulnerability in jobs and their financial circumstances compared to our Swedish parents. This difference mirrors a broader pattern in capabilities and agency for worklife balance in the two societies as seen in our questions relating to what are the greatest obstacles for change: For our Stockholm parents, the main issue was time; for our Budapest working parents it was a better economy. In Budapest financial circumstances were invoked again and again as the main reason standing in the way of the achieving of a better WLB. Almost a third of Hungarian respondents (most often those with basic and middling education) emphasized that economic constraints underlie the lack of capabilities for WLB: "*It is so hard nowadays to earn enough to cover the cost of living*" (32 y.o. father of three, with basic education working as a security guard in the private sector), or "*There is no choice: both of us must work in order to cover our living costs*" (35 y.o. father of three, with medium level education working as a courier in the private sector).

Although it is true that Swedish families felt time poor, however, in light of the long working time regimes for both Hungarian men and women and their limited opportunities for part time work among women, we presume that the time squeeze for parents is more intense, if we consider absolute time, the number of hours in the day. Every fifth Hungarian respondent referred to the **lack of time** as a hindrance to achieve a better WLB. Among our Stockholm sample, we did not find very many cases in which time poverty conjoined with economic insecurities. An example is that of a immigrant father from a country outside of Europe, , a nurse's assistant, whose wife is unemployed and works 16 hour shifts. For him it was difficult to isolate the main obstacle standing in the way of a better WLB. The job he had was not well paid (in the public sector and his Swedish skills were too poor to get a private sector job). His four day long working shifts kept him from seeing his family; there was a trade between money and time in his case (45 year old man from African country with three children). But he was the exception not the rule in our sample.

Discussion

Considering our model of capabilities in a European context, we find marked differences between our Hungarian and Swedish parents in the institutional resources that support claims for WLB. This can be seen in the weaker capabilities of Hungarian men and women to exercise WLB rights that are now grounded in European law, including flexibility, rights to reduce hours, job protections for mothers on care leaves. Underlying these agency inequalities expressed by parents in our Budapest sample are structural features of the economy and labour markets, including insecure and precarious employment, long working time regimes and low wages that force mothers and fathers to take extra jobs.

The level of job security is a dimension that indirectly affects agency to make claims for care at the workplace. Here we find dramatic differences between our two societies in the strength or weakness of collective agreements and the percentage of employees covered by them. Statistics in 2007 on trade union density showed that in Hungary it is only 16.9 percent compared to 68 percent in Sweden, and the gap in collective bargaining coverage rate is even wider: 91 percent in Sweden compared to 25.5 percent in Hungary (Eurofound 2009). Using a strictness of employment protection index based on OECD statistics we constructed, one can see that Hungarian workers have fewer projections for permanent workers against dismissal than Swedish workers (1.82 compared to 2.72) (OECD.Stat 2008).[37]

Though both Swedish and Hungarian parents are protected by law against job loss and job discrimination after returning from care leaves, the subjective efficacy to exercise these rights is strengthened when collective agreements exist that regulate dismissals. However, not just union density and power in collective agreements around general employment issues matter; but union advocacy of WLB balance rights is a conversion factor. In this context Swedish unions have a good record.

[37] Scale range from 0 (least restriction) to 6 most restriction. For more information on the construction of the indices, see OECD 2009b.

Perceptions of unstable economic futures, risk and insecurity in jobs and precarious economies, differed across the two cases in our capabilities survey: we found a much greater sense of risk and insecurity among our Hungarian parents compared to Swedish parents. This is supported by earlier analyses of ESS data (for 2004) in which a over a third of Hungarian fathers said that they have difficulties living on their present income, six times greater than Swedish fathers and many more view their jobs as insecure (Hobson and Fahlén 2009b). The differences are greatest among mothers (whereas 29 percent of Swedish mothers saw their work situation as insecure more than 46 percent of Hungarian mothers said that this was the case for them (Hobson and Fahlén 2009). The reality for Hungarian fathers with low education was one in which just having a job and wage shaded out all other concerns. The existence of family friendly policies, such as the ability to reduce hours, the rights to refuse hours, or claims for more flexible hours, were beyond their grasp.

A key dimension for analyzing capabilities for worklife concerns time. Time poverty is not a specific measure[38] but rather a perception of the lack of hours in the day that allow one finish work tasks and care and spend time with one's family (often expressed as work family conflict: see introduction). Time poverty can cut across differences in education, occupation and social class. Still those with fixed contracts and precarious economies experience time pressures more acutely (often holding two jobs or working asocial hours). This feature of dualism in the labour markets of insiders and outsiders) is becoming more widespread in European countries (Guillén and Palier 2004). Among our Hungarian parents, money not time was expressed as the main obstacle for achieving WLB. Yet when describing their situation our Hungarian survey highlighted the difficulties of both economic insecurities and working time pressures. Reducing hours of work was not a feasible option for most of the Hungarian mothers and fathers in our sample

[38] Goodin et al. 2008 construct such a measure, it is very crude ant considers only those as time poor who would fall beneath the poverty line if there were to reduce hours.

Time poverty is also a gendered phenomenon because it involves the whole working day; not just capabilities for decent working times in paid work (Lee and McCann 2006), but also the overtime spent in domestic and care tasks in which mothers do the lion's share. In our capabilities survey, women express feelings of time pressure and the time squeeze more than men. These could be seen in the vivid descriptions of Swedish and Hungarian women who say that they are on the go without a break, or not having time to even put one's feet up, or trying to get too much done in a short span of time after work.

Nevertheless, because Swedish women have greater capabilities to reduce hours when children are small and have more generous parental leave benefits, the time press in early childrearing (the first two years) they appear to have more agency for WFB..

As agency is a core dimension in our analysis, the gap between the existence of rights and the ability to exercise them is an indicator of agency inequalities. Here the agency gap is most strongly felt by low educated Hungarian women in their difficulties of re-entering the labour market after having children. Though rights to return to one's job after parental leave exist on the EU and national levels, the insecurity in the labour market and high unemployment weaken women's agency to return to employment.

Considering the agency gap presented in our model, we return to the link between the sense of entitlement to make a claim for WFB and the subjective efficacy to challenge gendered norms at the workplace. Here we see marked differences in the two societies. Swedish men and women knew about their rights and in the interviews would invoke the law and policy norms to support them, as seen in the claims for parental leave among both mothers and fathers and the sense of indignation when discriminatory practices were reported. It is also visible in the sense of entitlement that both men and women felt to make claims for family needs. The rights to reduce hours in Sweden predated the EU Directive by decades and women have take up this right and have a sense of entitlement to exercise this right during early childrearing years. This is clear example of the seeding process in which rights become embedded in institutions and daily practices reflected in the Swedish respondents' assertion that they were rarely even asked to do overtime or weekend work as their workmates and employers knew that they

had small children. Underlying this sense of entitlement are strong conversion factors discussed above: union organization and collective bargaining protections, as well as public discourse and debate on the importance of family friendly workplaces.

Nevertheless, we still find a gendered agency gap among Swedish mothers and father's abilities to exercise their rights that reflect gendered norms. Consider the men who would have wanted to take more parental leave and the gendered norms and practices in workplace organizational cultures that stand in the way or some men who took informal leave not wanting to appear too family oriented in family unfriendly workplaces. That said, in comparison with our Hungarian parents, barriers preventing change in WLB and gender roles appear daunting. Very traditional notions of gender roles remain intact, particularly women's responsibilities for home and childrearing, even though women in the past have had and continue to work in full time employment. In fact these two societies represent opposite ends on the spectrum in ESS attitudinal survey data (Hobson and Fahlén 2009). Hungarian fathers and mothers had the highest proportion with traditional attitudes toward gender and employment rights in a seven country-comparison of East and West Europe (Hobson and Fahlén 2009b). They also appear to be the most traditional among European parents surveyed in their position on gender roles in the family. (Hobson and Fahlén 2009b). For Hungarian men making claims for WLB, particularly exercising their rights to care, were beyond the realm of the possible.

Work place organizational cultures, particularly in the private sector, inhibit agency to achieve a WLB in both societies as seen in the competitive work environment that assumes a disembodied worker who does not have family ties. Among the Hungarian men in our sample this was business as usual. But our qualitative data also allowed us to see how this assumption was subtly operating in Swedish firms: one of the respondents, a male manager in a firm, who was sympathetic to WLB and had taken parental leave himself, openly admitted that he would not hire at woman of childbearing age. In both the overt and latent practices gender patterns of care produce agency inequalities.

We also find agency inequalities within our two countries when we take into account educational and gender differences and the sense of entitlement to make claims for WLB. In Hungary it is hard for all women regardless of educational level to make

claims for reduced hours, unless they are self-employed, yet the low educated are the most vulnerable. This is not the case in Swedish sample in which low educated women make use of their right to reduce work hours. Highly educated tend to work longer hours yet they have a high degree of flexibility in work hours. Again this raises the question whether flexibility in itself leads toward a better WLB and quality of life.

This study of capabilities in two institutional contexts confronts two basic questions in Sen's theory: How does one convert resources into agency for a WLB, and what are the substantive freedoms to do so? WLB involves not only a value that is valued but the means for a better quality of life. Considering our Hungarian parents, we find weak capabilities for WLB can result in poor quality of life, with time poverty, on the one side, and weak economy on the other. Hungarian mothers experience agency inequalities for WLB most acutely reflected in the lack of possibilities for part time work, the imbalance in the division of unpaid work and precariousness in employment. The very low fertility in Hungary can be understood in terms of this no win situation in WLB.

The capabilities approach is highly relevant to our era of post-global economic crises, as it offers the theoretical space to confront the contradictions and tensions in the new norms and rights for parenting and the risks and vulnerabilities that families face in global economies in which jobs are less insecure and in which welfare states are under pressure to reduce social costs. The tensions in the competing claims of family, work and welfare are subjects of much European debate, but they are also found at the subjective experiential level of WLB, as expectations for gender equality rise and men's desires for more time with family and greater involvement with care. We might ask if the agency gap between rights and the ability to exercise them is widening in an era of insecure futures. Issues of WLB appear to put on the back burner of European priorities now more focused on employability and competitive markets. The essence of agency freedom for WLB is the ability to create ways of living in which quality of life is the main driver. This necessitates institutional resources that undergird the sense of entitlement to make claims for care. In our era of global economic pressures and weakened institutional resources, it is hard to predict whether WLB will remain a priority in European policy and politics.

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