

Yuppie Kvetch? Work-life Conflict and Social Class in Western Europe*

Frances McGinnity and Emma Calvert

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Abstract: Recent debates on time-use suggest that there is an inverse relationship between time poverty and income poverty (Aguiar and Hurst, 2007), with Hammermesh and Lee (2007) suggesting much time poverty is 'yuppie kvetch' or 'complaining'. Gershuny (2005) argues that busyness is the 'badge of honour': being busy is now a positive, privileged position and it is high status people who work long hours and feel busy.

Is this also true of work-life conflict? This paper explores the relationship between work-life tension and social inequality, as measured by social class, drawing on evidence from the European Social Survey (2004). To what extent is work-life conflict a problem of the (comparatively) rich and privileged professional/managerial classes, and is this true across European countries? The countries selected offer a range of institutional and policy configurations to maximise variation.

Using regression modelling of an index of subjective work-life conflict, we find that in all the countries under study, work-life conflict is higher among professionals than non-professionals. Part of this is explained by the fact that professionals work longer hours and experience more work pressure than other social classes, though the effect remains even after accounting for these factors. Country variation is modest, despite much variation in policies concerning work-life conflict. We consider other explanations of why professionals report higher work-life conflict and the implications of our findings for debates on social inequality.

Corresponding Author: fran.mcginnity@esri.ie

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Yuppie Kvetch?

Work-life Conflict and Social Class in Western Europe

Introduction

Reconciling work-family life has become a critical issue for policy debates in Europe and the US (OECD 2001; Jacobs and Gerson, 2004). International evidence points to a growth in the proportion of people feeling rushed and stressed (Bittman, 2004), thus supporting Schor's (1991) 'Overworked American' hypothesis. However, there is also research suggesting that perceptions of work-life conflict are strongly related to social class. Gershuny (2005) argues that busyness is the 'badge of honour': being 'busy' is now a positive, privileged position and it is high status people who work long hours and feel busy. Hammermesh and Lee (2007) echo this point, claiming that complaints about being busy/lack of time are more commonly expressed by well-off couples, and that less public concern should be given for this relative to other concerns by the less well off.

Building on this literature, this paper explores the relationship between work-life tension and social inequality, as measured by social class, in eight countries in Western Europe, drawing on evidence from the European Social Survey (2004). More specifically, we ask to what extent is work-life conflict a problem of the (comparatively) rich and privileged professional and managerial classes, and how does this vary across countries? The countries selected for comparison vary significantly in terms of institutional and policy configurations concerning work and family life and include Denmark, Germany, Spain, France, Ireland, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

1. Relevant Debates: Social Inequality & Work-life Conflict

Research on social inequality has a long tradition in Western Europe, both by economists and sociologists. Social inequality can be measured in terms of poverty (Atkinson, 1998) or more broadly social exclusion (Paugam, 1998; Nolan and Whelan, 2007), class (Goldthorpe and Erikson, 1993), inequality in education (Shavit and Mueller, 1998), or in unemployment and its consequences (Gallie, Marsh and Vogler, 1994; Gallie and Paugam, 2000). There is also a strong overlap between

disadvantage in different spheres of life, i.e., between those who experience poverty, low paid jobs, unemployment, health problems and low education.

The concerns posed by high unemployment in the 1980s and 1990s have been superseded by issues around work intensification, increasing labour market participation and the appropriate balance between work and family life. Indeed reconciling work-family life has recently become a critical issue for policy debates in Europe and the US (OECD 2001; Jacobs and Gerson, 2004). Under the traditional male breadwinner model competing demands in the work and family sphere were managed by a division of labour between the sexes, whereby men were primarily responsible for 'employment' and women were primarily responsible for caring. The growth in female employment and dual earner families, the rise in lone parent families and ageing populations mean that an increasing number of EU citizens now have to combine both caring and employment roles. This increases the possibility of work-family tensions within households. In addition, there is a growing body of research concerned with increased work intensification (Burchell *et al.*, 2002). The effects of individuals struggling to combine work and family life are not neutral: work-life conflicts are seen to potentially have a detrimental impact on personal effectiveness, marital relations, child-parent relationships and even child development (Gornick and Meyers, 2003).

A related vein of research literature is concerned with increased time pressure. International evidence points to a growth in the proportion of people feeling rushed and stressed (Bittman, 2004). This growth in time pressure is associated with mental and physical health problems and deteriorating quality of life. From this evidence there seems to be general support for Schor's 'Overworked American' (Schor, 1991).

While there is some controversy about whether hours of paid work have actually increased (e.g. Robinson and Godbey, 1997; Gershuny, 2000; Bittman, 2004), there are indications that time poverty is particularly pronounced among the more privileged in society. In a recent paper using US time-use data Aguiar and Hurst (2007) find that in the last forty years the largest increase in leisure has been for the less educated. There is now a growing inequality in leisure that is the inverse of

inequality of wages and expenditure: the income poor are 'time rich' and the income rich are 'time poor'.

Gershuny (2005) argues that the reason people are feeling busier is that there is now a positive view of busyness and lack of leisure. He takes as his starting point Becker's (1965) important argument that time and goods are substitutable. People with higher earning power will work more and concentrate on 'goods intensive' leisure to maximise utility; lower earners with lower purchasing power will favour 'time intensive' leisure and purchase fewer commodities. Thus higher wage rates mean longer hours of paid work. Gershuny's addition is to stress the importance of paid work relative to leisure for privileged social positions. Historically, those who could afford a life of 'idleness' had the highest status. However the emergence of mass unemployment, along with other social changes, devalued 'idleness' and it is argued that being busy is now a positive, privileged position. But it is not just about money: the work of high status individuals is more intrinsically rewarding than the work of the lower classes. It is now high status people who work long hours - in rewarding, well-paid jobs - and feel busy.

Hammermesh and Lee (2007) echo this point when they argue that complaints about being busy/lack of time are more commonly expressed by well-off couples. They examine time stress controlling for actual time spent in paid and unpaid work, and find that households with higher earnings perceive more time stress for the same amount of time spent in market work and household work. They argue that complaints about insufficient time come disproportionately from higher full-income families partly because their members choose to work more hours, partly too because they have higher incomes to spend during the same amount of non-work time. They conclude that at least some of this complaining is 'yuppie kvetch' and should not perhaps be of such policy concern, particularly for policymakers concerned with overall inequality in society.

While it is mentioned in passing, one line of explanation not pursued by Hammermesh and Lee is the idea that high earners in professional/managerial positions suffer more time-stress because their work is more stressful and comes with more responsibility. This might explain why high earners report more time stress. In

the following section (Section 2) we consider evidence from previous research regarding the impact of the nature of the job, in particular working hours, work pressure and working-time flexibility on work-life conflict, and how these might influence differences between professionals and non-professionals in this regard.

The key question in this paper is therefore: is this inverse relationship between social inequality and being time poor/suffering from time stress also true of work-life conflict? Is it the rich and privileged who report high work-life conflict? Or, is it simply because they work longer hours and have more stressful jobs – or do professionals still report higher work-life conflict, even after accounting for these differences? It seems less plausible that work-life conflict has the same positive connotations as busyness, but we can reflect on the extent to which higher professionals choose to work higher hours, either for money or personal fulfilment. They may also have higher expectations of their leisure time, more money to spend it in, thus want more leisure and report this as ‘work-life conflict’.

A second key question in this paper then asks: do professionals across the different countries under study exhibit the same patterns with respect to work-life conflict? We compare a range of countries with different institutional settings - labour markets and welfare states - and ask whether an inverse relationship between work-life conflict and social inequality is found across the population. We then explore whether these class differences remain across countries, after accounting for other important factors suggested by the literature, such as job demands, longer working hours, as well as household characteristics. For this reason it is useful to consider some findings of previous comparative research on work-life conflict (Section 2) before moving on to consider the different institutional contexts of the countries under study (Section 3).

2. Previous Research on Work-life Conflict

Work-life conflict has attracted a growing amount of academic, as well as policy attention, resulting in an increasing body of research. Studies have focused on theoretical issues (Ransome, 2007), single country studies (e.g. Fagnani and Letablier 2004; MacInnes, 2005; Reynolds and Aletraris, 2007), occupational groups (Greenhaus *et al.*, 2003) and organisational and sectoral case studies (Perrons, 2003; White *et al.*, 2003). Cross-national studies have also been undertaken, based on

qualitative research (e.g. Abrahamson, 2007) and smaller scale quantitative surveys (Fine Davies *et al.*, 2004). However, Scherer and Steiber (2007), in their study of six EU countries including the UK, Netherlands, Sweden, Germany (East and West), France and Spain, note the relative paucity of cross-country comparative research on the topic of work-life conflict. In particular, they comment on the lack of research which takes account of the full range of relevant factors including both the household context (the organisation of paid work within the household) and societal context (the organisation of the interface between paid work and family life at a societal level). In this section we consider potential sources of work-life conflict at the individual and household level, before moving on to consider the societal level.

In terms of paid work, the level of work-life conflict depends on the demands in terms of time, intensity and scheduling. Long working hours and unsocial hours have both been found to be positively associated with work-life conflict (Dex and Bond, 2005; Crompton and Lyonette, 2006; Van der Lippe *et al.* 2006; Scherer and Steiber, 2007). There is also evidence to suggest that work-life conflict increases with higher levels of work stress (Scherer and Steiber, 2007). In terms of flexibility, previous research suggests that flexibility can be both a source of conflict between paid work and family life, or a means to reduce it, depending on the type of flexibility provided. In particular, forms of flexibility which allow employees to vary their schedule to accommodate their family lives should reduce work-life conflict (Fagan, 2003) whereas flexibility which benefits employers, like working overtime at short notice, will increase work-life conflict.

The level of work-life conflict will also depend on time commitments and demands in the home. These could include, for example, family demands in terms of caring commitments for children or elderly relatives, different household compositions and the household organisation in terms of paid and unpaid work, as well as the resources a family has access to. Previous research has found that as children increase family demands in terms of both time and financial resources, the presence of children increases work-life conflict (Cousins and Tang, 2004).

In terms of the organisation of paid and unpaid work, Scherer and Steiber (2007) find that, compared to 'dual commitment' households (where both partners work at least

40 hours per week), women in all other household types are less likely to report work-life conflict, whereas men in male breadwinner couples working over 40 hours record higher work-life conflict than men in other households. One might also expect that lone mothers in employment, bearing the full burden of caring and household duties, would also experience high work-life conflict. This brings us to a third point, namely that work-life conflict may depend on both the overall level of household work (in terms of hours) and how household work is shared.

In this regard, norms and expectations concerning housework will influence the total time required to maintain a house, and the domestic division of labour may influence how much time individuals spend on housework. Previous research has emphasised the importance of the gendered division of labour within the household in explaining work-life conflict (Crompton and Lyonnette, 2006; Scherer and Steiber, 2007). Crompton and Lyonnette (2006) suggest that a more traditional domestic division of labour is associated with higher levels of work-life conflict. However, they stress the interplay between the 'attitudes and practices' in relation to the domestic sphere in particular. For example, the contradiction between an individual's gender role attitude (i.e. liberal or traditional) and the actual division of labour could have implications for experiences of work-life balance. The importance of attitudinal factors has also been stressed by Scherer and Steiber (2007), who find that employed women who believe pre-school children suffer when the mother goes out to work tend to report high work-life conflict.

On the basis of previous research, it is therefore important to control for both work, household and attitudinal factors when considering the relationship between work-life conflict and social class. Given that long (paid) working hours and high work stress are more prevalent among professionals, we might expect professionals to suffer higher work-life conflict. However, at the same time, employee flexibility is more prevalent among higher-status occupations (Fagan, 2003), which may ameliorate some of the effects of higher work stress and long working hours. In any case, these factors may be crucial to explaining the difference between professionals and non-professionals in the experience of work-life conflict. In terms of responsibilities in the home, on the one hand, caring (and housework) responsibilities may to some extent be alleviated by the higher earning potential of professionals, who can afford to

pay for childcare and domestic labour. On the other hand non-professionals may be more likely to opt out of the labour force altogether if faced with financial difficulties with regards childcare, and thus not exhibit work-life conflict (as they are not in the labour market). With regards to the attitudinal aspects of work-life conflict, we might expect professionals to exhibit more egalitarian attitudes with regards the division of labour within the household; if these expectations are not met then we might expect such professionals to report higher levels of work-life conflict.

Considering the 'societal level', research has additionally stressed the importance of considering the full range of institutional-level factors which may explain variations in work-life conflict across countries. These include welfare regime and the extent of reconciliation or 'family-friendly' policies such as the availability of parental leave, the right to flexible working arrangements, and the costs and coverage of childcare provision (Strandh and Nordenmark, 2006; Van der Lippe *et al.*, 2006; Crompton *et al.*, 2007). Comparing across Great Britain, France, Portugal, Finland and Norway, Crompton and Lyonette (2006) find that Finland and Norway, relatively 'family-friendly' countries, had on average lower levels of work-life conflict, even after work and family factors are controlled for. However, while noting that such policies are designed to ease work-life conflict, Scherer and Steiber (2007) note the possibility that the lack of well-developed reconciliation policies implies the reduction of women's working hours and possibility of more traditional combinations of paid and unpaid work, thus potentially resulting in lower perceptions of work life conflict. In line with this, studies have found that Scandinavian countries such as Sweden, with well-developed reconciliation policies, to have higher levels of work-life conflict, compared to even the United Kingdom (Cousins and Tang, 2004; Van der Lippe *et al.*, 2006). Labour market regulations and employment regimes may also come into play, for example, the extent of the collective control over working time and flexibility (Scherer and Steiber, 2007; Tomlinson, 2007), where we might expect that strict limits on maximum working hours to reduce work-life conflict. In this regard, Scherer and Steiber (2007) find that greater time autonomy (measured at country-level) mitigates against work-life conflict. It is therefore important to consider both the policy context of the countries under study, as well as to characterise them more generally in terms of the labour market structure and welfare regime.

3. Welfare States, Labour Markets and Policies to Facilitate Work and Family Life

Since Esping-Andersen's pathbreaking book in 1990, and the gender critique of his work (e.g. Lewis, 1992), it is widely argued that welfare regimes are likely to affect how individuals engage in paid work, caring and unpaid work, and how these are combined over the life course. Tomlinson (2007) also stresses the importance of the varieties of capitalism literature (Hall and Soskice, 2001) which distinguishes between 'coordinated market economies' and 'liberal market economies' in considering how working time and employment regulations can explain variances in work-life conflict. While (female) labour market participation is strongly associated with welfare regimes, there is additional variation between states within each regime type in terms of state support for caring. While keeping in mind the general institutional context, it is also useful to consider how specific policies, like parental leave and an individuals right to reduce working hours, facilitate the combination of working and caring. Country differences in both welfare regimes, labour markets and specific policies are summarised in Table 1. The countries chosen vary considerably along these dimensions.

Denmark and Sweden typify the social democratic model, where there is a high level of state intervention in both family life and the labour market, with high taxes and high provision of support for caring. In particular there is a lot of support for combining working and caring with considerable state support for childcare and generous parental leave schemes. In Denmark and Sweden female labour market participation is high, and many women work full-time, resulting in a high proportion of dual-earner couples. Social partners play a strong role in regulating working time, which clusters around the statutory norm (O'Reilly, 2003). These countries are characterised by low income inequality as well as little gender difference in terms of labour market engagement (Esping Andersen, 1990, 1999).

While France, Germany and the Netherlands all fall into the 'conservative welfare regime' (Esping Andersen, 1990) group, and all link benefits strongly to engagement in paid work, they differ both in terms of institutional support for the combination of working and caring, and level of co-ordination of the labour market (Hall and Soskice,

2001). In Germany, both the tax and welfare system provides strong incentives for the traditional male breadwinner division of labour (or at most a modified breadwinner model, with the female working part-time) (Daly, 2000). Childcare is supported, though much of it is part-time and there is poor provision for children under 3 years old (Plantenga and Remery, 2005). In The Netherlands, tax and welfare provision tends to support the male breadwinner model, though also strongly encourages part-time work and is less socially conservative than the German model: in fact some commentators argue that The Netherlands could be classed as social democratic (Goodin et al, 1999). France is also often classified as a conservative welfare state, although women's full-time employment is facilitated and there is more state support for combining paid work and caring; however childcare costs are high (Lewis, 1992; Plantenga and Remery, 2005). These countries differ therefore in terms of female labour market participation. While in France more women work full-time: in the Netherlands, many women work part-time (as do a significant proportion of men); in Germany there are fewer women working overall, and many work part-time. All of these countries are also characterised by medium to low class inequality (lowest in the Netherlands), though gender inequality varies by country. In Germany and the Netherlands social partners have negotiated reductions in working time; in France, state legislation has reduced hours but employers implement their own 'flexible strategies' at company level (O'Reilly, 2003).

Table 1: Summary of Employment and Caring Policies relevant for Work-life Conflict

	Regime Type/ Inequality (Stylised)	Labour Market Participation (Stylised)	Childcare Provision 2004	Parental Leave (PL) & Flexible Working 2004	Working Time Regulation
Denmark	Social democratic/ coordinated; low class inequality	Dual full-time earner, state carer	High state support; full coverage	PL - Wage related; 32 wks Right to work p/t	Social partners strong role; working time clusters round statutory norm
Sweden	Social democratic/ coordinated; low class inequality	Dual full-time earner, state carer	High state support; Full coverage	PL - Wage-related; 480 days Employer-level flexible working arrangements.	Social partners strong role; working time clusters round statutory norm
Netherlands	Corporatist (social democratic?)/coordinated; low class inequality	Dual earner/ Female part- time carer	Good state support plus employer provision.	PL - Unpaid; 13 wks Right to adapt working hrs (certain criteria).	Social partners strong role; low normal working time
Germany	Corporatist/coordinated; medium class inequality	Dual earner/ female part- time carer	Good for child > 3+. Lots of places p/t.	PL - Flat Rate; 36 mths Right to work part-time	Social partners strong role; low normal working time
France	Corporatist/uncoordinated; medium class inequality	Dual full-time earner, state carer	Some employer provision. High costs.	PL – Unpaid, 36 mths; females. Employer-level flexible working arrangements.	State legislates reduced hours but low individual employee autonomy
Spain	Mediterranean/uncoordinated; high class inequality	Male-breadwinner/ female carer	Poor state support; mixed coverage depending on age	PL - Unpaid; 36 mths; Females Employer-level flexible working arrangements.	State legislates reduced hours but low individual employee autonomy
Ireland	Liberal/uncoordinated; high class inequality	Male-breadwinner/ female carer (though changing)	Public provision limited, very high costs.	PL -Unpaid; 14 wks Employer-level flexible working arrangements.	Low statutory regulation, employers shape working time
UK	Liberal/uncoordinated; high class inequality	Dual earner/ female part- time carer	Informal provision. Limited public funding, high costs	PL - 13 wks. Unpaid. Part-time work for parents of young kids only	Low statutory regulation, weak unions, employers shape working time

Sources include: Esping Andersen (1990, 1999); Hall and Soskice (2001); Crompton (1999); Plantenga and Remery (2005); O'Reilly (2003)

The UK and Ireland are often classified as liberal welfare regimes, with very little market interference, low taxes and low state support for caring. Costs are an issue, particularly in the UK and Ireland, with very little in the way of parental subsidies. Plantenga and Remery (2005) report low rates of parental leave take-up in Ireland and the UK, compared to practically universal take-up in Germany; Spain, France and the Netherlands. Both the UK and Ireland are characterised by high wage inequality, and class inequality generally. However the UK and Ireland differ in terms of female labour market participation, with the UK having a much higher rate, although many women work part-time. In Ireland, despite changes in recent years, female labour market participation is still much lower than the UK. Low statutory working-time regulation and weak industrial relations allows employers more power in shaping working time and this has led to high polarisation of working hours, especially in Britain (Fagan, 2003).¹

Spain is sometimes classified as belonging to the Mediterranean model with the 'family as breadwinner' (Gallie and Paugam, 2000). The shortfall in welfare provision is assumed to be met by the family, with women in particular taking on the responsibility for caring. Low availability of part-time work makes it particularly difficult for women to combine work and family life in the absence of state supports. Spain has the most traditional gender division of labour of all the countries.

However, as already outlined, it is important to bear in mind that policy and institutional supports for combining work and caring can influence work-life conflict in divergent ways. Firstly, family-friendly policies can ease the successful combination of work and family life (Gornick and Meyers, 2003). Secondly, however, family-friendly policies also encourage female labour market participation. This gives rise to higher paid work hours overall, a concentration of paid work in households and thus more of a time squeeze.² Traditional solutions, like in Spain, mean actually less work for women – and possibly less work-life conflict for them – though this may

¹ Since the late 1980s the Irish path has somewhat diverged from the British model: note the corporatist-style solidaristic agreements between the social partners and government (O'Connell *et al.*, 2003).

² This is precisely the argument put forward by Jacobs and Gerson (2004), i.e. that the subjective impression of time poverty in the US is based on changes in the distribution of *household* employment (rather than individual paid work hours) and the spread of the dual-earner household.

have implications for gender inequality. A comparative illustration of this point is: a woman with two small children and a low income might record high work-life conflict in Sweden, but the same women will not be working at all in Spain, and thus not record any work-life conflict. What matters for us of course is how work-life conflict varies across classes: we return to this point in the next section.

4. Research Hypotheses

Work-life conflict and social inequality

Our first hypothesis is that, like being ‘time-poor’ and feeling ‘busy’ or ‘rushed and stressed’, work-life conflict will be higher among the privileged high earners, in this case the higher and lower professional classes. Secondly, we examine time demands and work-life conflict. Do professionals experience higher work-life conflict because of greater demands on time, either from work or home? Are they just ‘time poor’ and thus more prone to work-life conflict? (hypothesis 2). Following previous research on work-life conflict, we consider how family commitments, housework and time spent in paid work influence work life conflict and affect differences between class groups in terms of work-life conflict. We also look at how time is allocated, i.e. the flexibility with which individuals can organise their paid work time and whether jobs require overtime/unsocial hours. This may affect work-life conflict more than the hours of work *per se*, which may, at least in some countries, be heavily regulated.

Our third hypothesis is that it may not be time commitments *per se* that influence work-life conflict; it is rather because professionals/managers have high stress jobs and responsibility that are more prone to ‘spillover’ into family life. In addition, we might expect that professional workers are more likely to ‘devalue housework’ and thus find it stressful, therefore contributing to higher levels of work-life conflict. We also look at attitudes to the gender division of paid and unpaid labour.

Class Differences in Work-life Conflict: Cross Country Variation

We also examine how the relationship between social class and work-life conflict varies across countries. Do we see differences in the overall pattern, and how is this affected when we consider working hours and work pressure? Our point of departure is that of no difference between countries, i.e. professionals will experience higher

work-life conflict, whatever the institutional and policy setting (hypothesis 4a). We also expect this difference to be reduced in each country when we account for factors such as work demands and work pressure (hypothesis 4b).

Alternative hypotheses suggest that class differences will vary by country. Firstly, from the overall consideration of differences between welfare regimes and labour markets we expect that class differences will not be as pronounced in the Nordic countries (Sweden and Denmark). Class differences will be moderate in the Netherlands, and slightly higher in France and Germany. The most marked class differences will be in the UK and Ireland (hypothesis 5)

Secondly, we are interested in the relationship between state reconciliation policies and work-life conflict (Gornick and Meyers, 2003; Scherer and Steiber, 2007) and the implications of such policies for expected class differences in work-life conflict across the countries under study. One possibility is that in countries with low state support for caring, it is a select group of high-earning professional women, on a career track, who participate in the labour market in spite of low support, and who are therefore prone to experiencing higher work-life conflict. Non-professional women either do not participate in the labour market, or work part-time, and experience low work-life conflict (hypotheses 6). In countries with high support for caring, there is higher participation overall, and therefore less difference between professionals and non-professionals with respect to work-life conflict.

Also drawing on institutional differences, a further hypothesis is that strong state regulation of paid work hours will tend to reduce the tendency for professionals - both men and women - to work long hours. If this were the case, we would expect countries with low average working hours like the Netherlands, Germany, Denmark and Sweden to have lower work-life conflict among professionals, and thus not differ as much from non-professionals. Countries with unregulated work hours, and specifically a long-hours culture among professionals, will have higher work-life conflict among professionals (Britain and Ireland) (hypotheses 7).

With this data it is difficult to adjudicate whether work-life conflict is due to 'complainers with high expectations' or 'yuppie kvetch', as implied by Hammermesh

and Lee, but we can discover whether it is the higher classes who are more likely to report it. Crucially the question is: do the differences between the classes remain, even after controlling for work hours and the nature of the tasks? Also, do the differences remain in all countries?

5. Methodology, Measurement and Data

Measuring Inequality

There are three potential measures of social inequality available in the dataset that could be used to examine work-life conflict and social inequality: education, personal income and social class. Gershuny (2005) uses education as a measure of human capital in his paper 'Busyness as the Badge of Honor'. The problem with education is that, while closely correlated with job quality, for some groups this is not the case, e.g. women working part-time are often overqualified. While the education system is an important mediator between supply and demand in the labour market, education systems may differ substantially as to how they match their outputs with labour market demand (Shavit and Mueller, 1998). The economists addressing this question, Hammermesh and Lee (2007) and Aguiar and Hurst (2007) use personal income. Personal income is a good indicator of 'being rich and privileged', but is not well measured in the survey (one third of the employed have missing information on income). Social class performs equally well, we would argue, with higher professional classes enjoying a privileged position in the occupational hierarchy, and is measured more effectively.

A substantial body of research has found evidence for the salience of social class in structuring the opportunities and constraints of individual life-courses (e.g. Erikson and Goldthorpe 1993). While more recent research in this tradition has considered the effect of globalisation and increasing economic uncertainty on differences between social classes (e.g. Giddens, 1994), the overall conclusion of this work is that significant inequality in life chances (e.g. poverty, unemployment, health) persists between social classes (Goldthorpe and Marshall, 1996).

From the class perspective espoused by Erikson and Goldthorpe (1993), the basic distinction is between those who buy and sell labour (employers and employees).³ Among employees, it is crucial to think about type of employment contract (Goldthorpe 2000, Breen 1997). Labour contracts are easy to monitor and involve a specific exchange of work for effort, similar to a “spot market contract”. Service contracts, by contrast, are more difficult to monitor, and require much more autonomy. The employer makes a longer-term commitment to the employee, making the service contract much more secure than the labour contract (see Goldthorpe 2000: 221-223 for further details).

The Erikson and Goldthorpe (1993) class schema differentiates between: (1) Higher professionals EGP I (e.g. doctors, lawyers, managers of large companies) (2) Lower Professionals, EGP II (e.g. nurses, teachers etc); (3) Routine service class EGP IIIa and IIIb (e.g. clerical workers and sales workers); (4) Skilled manual workers EGP VI (e.g. skilled tradesmen) and supervisors EGP V (e.g. line managers in industry) (5) Unskilled manual workers, EGP VIIa. Given that the primary interest in the present paper is to explore the relationship between professionals and work-life conflict, we collapsed (1) and (2) into a new “professionals” category, while (3) – (5) formed the “non-professionals” category. While much theoretically-guided class analysis focuses on the manual/non-manual or blue/white collar division, the focus of this paper is on professionals versus non-professionals.

Several authors have contested the idea that class theory is universally applicable (e.g. Esping-Andersen, 1993), in particular, that classes have a similar effect on outcomes like poverty and unemployment (e.g. McGinnity and Hillmert, 2004). While we accept there may be some truth in these arguments, as a general measure of inequality, the class schema is acceptable. And we do take account of country variation in class outcomes by allowing the association between class and work-life conflict to vary by country.

³ While there are other measures of social class, the schema proposed by Erikson and Goldthorpe (1993) is particularly appealing because it is designed to be used in empirical research.

Measuring work-life conflict

Work-life conflict, or the difficulties in reconciling work and other domains of life has been measured in a number of ways. Some authors take ‘objective’ indicators of conflict by assuming, say, that part-time work is an indicator of low work-life conflict (e.g. McGinnity and McManus, 2007) or they assume that high paid work is inimical to work-life balance (Gornick and Meyers, 2003). Writers from a time-use perspective usually add paid *and* unpaid work hours (e.g. Bittman, 2004). Fisher and Layte (2004) examine work-life conflict using time-use data by examining the proportion of free time; overlap of work and other dimensions of life, and time spent with other people.

A more common definition of work-life conflict is subjective, using the assessment of the individual. This perspective assumes that work-life conflict is primarily an experience, and allows different individuals with the same workload to record different responses. The indicator is usually a combination of a series of questions which individuals respond to, which are combined in a number of different ways.

In this survey the questions are: ‘*How often do you keep worrying about work problems when you are not working?*’ ‘*How often do you feel too tired after work to enjoy the things you would like to do at home?*’ ‘*How often do you find that your job prevents you from giving the time you want to your partner or family?*’ Responses are coded 1 ‘never’ 2 ‘hardly ever’ 3 ‘sometimes’ 4 ‘often’ and 5 ‘always’. These are very typical components of a work-life conflict index. A fourth question was considered (‘*How often do you find that your partner or family gets fed up with the pressure of your job?*’) but was very differently distributed to the others, with a lower mean, so was excluded.⁴ In this paper individual scores are combined for each of these three items and the mean is used. The index thus varies from 1 (never) to 5 (always). Where there is item non-response on any of the questions, the mean of the others is calculated. The items are highly correlated: this index has a Cronbach’s

⁴ Tests are conducted on the results with an index which uses all four questions and also an index which uses three questions but excludes missing cases on any of the items. Results are reported in the results section.

Alpha of 0.68 for the pooled sample.⁵ This reduces the number of missing cases overall in the index.

An alternative method is to sum the scores on each of the items, which means a high score on work-life conflict requires high scores on a few items. Here, these can be modelled using a linear regression, or a threshold is assigned and scores above a certain value count as 'high work-life conflict'. The disadvantage with this is that individuals missing on each item are excluded.

In both these methods each question is usually given equal weighting, though this may be problematic in some cases. Scherer and Steiber (2007) assign different weights to two questions in one index they calculate. They do this because answers to the questions are very differently distributed. White *et al.*, (2003) prefer a principal components analysis of the 3 factors and use this as the dependent variable. This method weights the items in accordance with their contributions to the assumed underlying common factor, and generates a closer approximation to a continuous variable than does a simple mean or additive index of the three items. White *et al.*, (2003) do test the methods and find the results do not differ between three methods they use.⁶ The simple approach is preferred here, which guarantees maximum number of cases.

Data

The analysis in this paper draws on the European Social Survey (2004). The European Social Survey (the ESS) is an academically-driven social survey designed to chart and explain the interaction between Europe's changing institutions and the attitudes, beliefs and behaviour patterns of its diverse populations. It was the result of a huge investment by the social science community. The survey covers over 30 countries and employs rigorous survey methodologies. There was a high priority put on equivalence of samples and equivalence of questions (Jowell *et al.*, 2007). The survey is excellently suited to measuring work-life conflict from a comparative perspective.

⁵ The Cronbach's alpha for individual countries varies from 0.63 for France to 0.74 for Ireland.

⁶ White *et al.*, (2003) also construct the 13 points of their additive scale as an ordinal variable as their third measure of work-life conflict.

Combining data from the special module on work-life conflict with the main data set provides a series of questions on work-life conflict, respondents' and their partners weekly working hours, the extent of unsocial hours, work pressure, housework time and division of housework in the household, family composition, gender role attitudes, educational attainment and occupational status, from which we derive our measure of social class.

Housework is measured in hours per household per week, while paid hours are individual weekly hours worked. Flexibility in schedule is measured by a question 'I can decide the time I start and finish work', answers coded 1 'not at all true' through to 4 'very true'. The extent an individual works unsocial hours is measured as a composite index, the mean of three questions: 'working evenings or nights', 'having to work overtime at short notice' and 'working at weekends' and coded 1 (never) through 5 'every week'. Job pressure is a combination of 'working hard', 'not having enough time to finish work' and 'finding work stressful', and coded 1 for 'disagree strongly' through 5 'agree strongly'. Two questions are used to measure housework stress: 'There are so many things to do at home, I often run out of time before I get them all done' and 'I find my housework stressful'. The housework stress measure is coded 1 for disagree strongly and 5 for 'agree strongly'. It is excluded from the country models as there are many cases missing, and those who answer the question are a different group who answer the work stress questions. Gender role attitudes are also measured using an index, which takes the mean of answers to the following questions: 'a woman should be prepared to cut down on her paid work for the sake of her family'; 'men should take as much responsibility as women for the home and children' and 'when jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women', coded 1 'agree strongly' through 5 'disagree strongly'. Thus higher values indicate more egalitarian attitudes. Finally, in the couples model, a variable measuring conflict within couples combines answers to questions on disagreement about dividing housework, about money and about the amount of time spent on unpaid work.

As the work-life conflict index, described above, is continuous and has a normal distribution of residuals, the effect of the covariates is modelled using linear regression. In the first step the eight countries are pooled (Table 3), and factors expected to influence work-life conflict among professionals entered in a stepwise

fashion. In the second part of the analysis country interactions are specified to test whether class differences vary across countries (Table 4).

6 Results

Work-life Conflict for all Employees

First, we explore overall patterns of work-life conflict for different social classes. Table 2 presents the mean scores of work-life conflict for all employees in the countries under study, broken down by social class. Higher professionals report the highest levels of work-life conflict, followed by lower professionals. The routine non-manual and skilled manual groups report lower levels of work-life conflict, with the non-skilled group reporting the lowest levels overall. This broadly supports insights from the time-use debate: time pressure and work-life conflict is most keenly experienced by the privileged.

Table 2: Mean work-life conflict scores by class

	Mean	<i>Standard deviation</i>
Higher Professional	2.91	<i>0.79</i>
Lower Professional	2.78	<i>0.80</i>
Routine Non-Manual	2.51	<i>0.84</i>
Skilled Manual	2.50	<i>0.86</i>
Non-Skilled	2.43	<i>0.87</i>

It is also clear from Table 2 that both higher and lower professionals differ from both routine non-manual workers and from skilled and non-skilled manual workers. In subsequent analysis we simply distinguish professionals (higher and lower professionals) from non-professionals (routine non-manual and manual classes): this also ties in with our substantive hypotheses.

Table 3 presents a series of linear regression models of work-life conflict to examine our first three hypotheses on work-life conflict and social inequality. These models are based on the same number of base cases, so that they can be directly compared. Model 1 simply looks at class differences in work-life conflict among the employed, with the non-professionals group forming the reference category. As previously

shown in Table 2, we can see that the professionals group, comprising higher and lower professionals, report higher levels of work-life conflict, consistent with hypothesis 1. Subsequent models add time demands (from work and home); then flexibility of scheduling/timing of paid work; then stresses from home and work.

Table 3: Linear Regression Models – Work-Life Conflict (employees in all countries)

	Class differences		Class differences & time demands		Class differences & time demands & flexibility		Class differences with time demands, flexibility & stress	
	1		2		3		4	
	b	Sig.	b	Sig.	b	Sig.	b	Sig.
(Constant)	2.52	0.00	1.58	0.00	1.34	0.00	0.54	0.00
Professional	0.33	0.00	0.25	0.00	0.23	0.00	0.18	0.00
Female			0.17	0.00	0.18	0.00	0.14	0.00
Partner			0.04	0.18	0.06	0.02	0.06	0.02
<i>Ref: no children</i>								
Child <6			0.09	0.00	0.08	0.01	0.01	0.71
Child 6-17			0.05	0.08	0.04	0.15	0.00	1.00
Lone parent			0.10	0.08	0.10	0.07	0.08	0.13
H/work hrs/week			0.00	0.10	0.00	0.02	0.00	0.95
Paid wk hrs/wk			0.02	0.00	0.02	0.00	0.01	0.00
Start/finish time (1-4)					0.00	0.75	-0.01	0.13
Unsocial hrs (1-5)					0.18	0.00	0.15	0.00
Job pressure (1-5)							0.26	0.00
H/work stressful (1-5)							0.08	0.00
Egalitarian attitudes (1-5)							0.05	0.00
Adjusted R Square	0.39		.106		.164		.253	
N	5496		5496		5496		5496	

Notes: *** p <.001 ** p < 0.01 * p < 0.05 ~ p < 0.1

Work-life conflict index coded 1 (never) to 5 (always), see text for further details

What happens to these class differences when we account for time availability (Model 2)? We find a significant effect of the presence of children on work-life conflict, particularly children under six. The effect of being an (employed) lone parent also increases work-life conflict. Increasing paid work hours has a significant positive effect on work life conflict, though weekly housework hours has no effect, at least after accounting for paid work. All of these findings are consistent with previous research (Dex and Bond, 2005; Crompton and Lyonette, 2006; Van der Lippe *et al.*

2006; Scherer and Steiber, 2007) and hypothesis 2. However, while there is a significant effect for paid work hours and caring responsibilities, we find that class differences are reduced but are still significant.

Considering how working time is allocated, in Model 3 we add start/finish times, and the effect of working unsocial hours. Working unsocial hours (weekend, overtime etc) increases work-life conflict, though the effect of flexibility of schedule is negligible, possibly due to opposite/countervailing effects (Fagan, 2003). Overall we find that while working unsocial hours increases work-life conflict, this has little impact on class differences.

Model 4 adds variables capturing the stress of both paid and unpaid work. Here we find that job pressure – measured as a combination of ‘working hard’, ‘not having enough time to finish work’ and ‘finding work stressful’ (see Methodology section for further details on measurement) substantially increases work-life conflict. Finding housework stressful also increases work-life conflict, and those with more egalitarian attitudes report more work-life conflict. As professionals report more work pressure, find housework more stressful, on average, and have more egalitarian attitudes, taking account of these factors reduces class differentials further. This is an important part of why professionals experience more work-life conflict than non-professionals: they have more stressful jobs. These findings, particularly the results for job pressure, support hypothesis 3. However, note that the difference between professionals and non-professionals does not disappear (Model 4).⁷

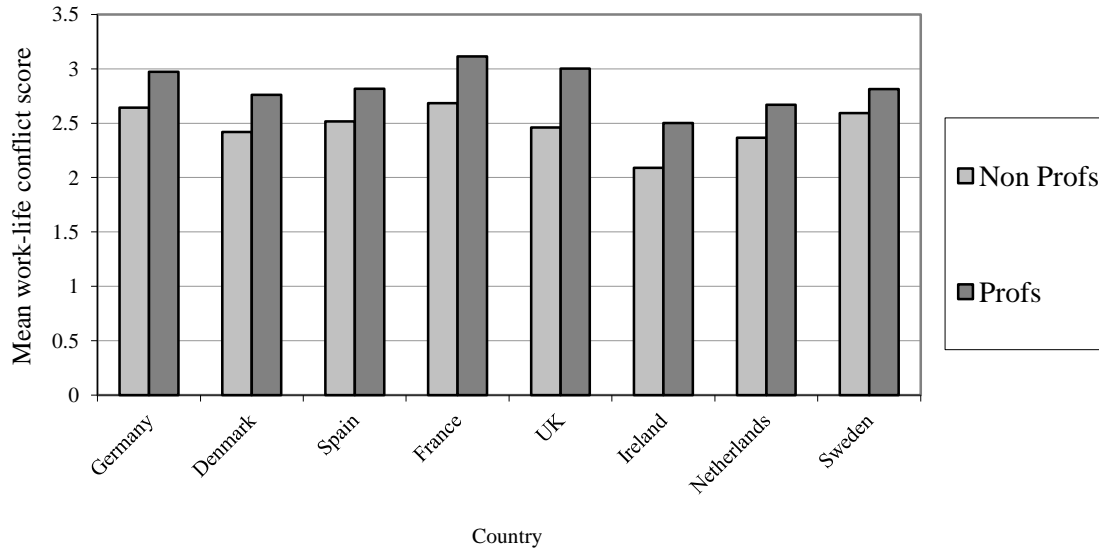
Work-life Conflict by Social Class: Country Variation

Next, we explore whether the relationship between work-life conflict and social class varies by country. As Figure 1 shows, in all of the countries under study, professionals report higher levels of work-life conflict. The differentials in mean work-life conflict score between the professionals and non-professionals group is particularly marked in the UK, Ireland and France, though overall the pattern is

⁷ When we replicate the analysis using an alternative 4-item index which includes the question ‘*How often do you find that your partner or family gets fed up with the pressure of your job*’, we find no difference in the pattern of class effects.

remarkably consistent, given policy and labour market variation in these countries. The difference in means is lowest in Sweden.

Figure 1: Country variation in work life conflict (mean scores) by class



Model 5 in Table 4, which simply estimates the mean effect of being a professional for the pooled sample, is a variant of model 1 (Table 3), and is presented for comparison with the other models.⁸ In model 6 the effect of class by country is introduced using interaction terms. Germany is the reference category, and here professionals experience more work-life conflict. The ‘main effects’ for country indicate that, compared to Germany, work-life conflict is lower in Britain, the Netherlands, Spain and particularly in Ireland. More interesting for us is whether the difference between professionals and non-professionals varies by country. Here the significant interaction coefficient for Britain indicates that the gap between professionals and other classes is greater in Britain than in other countries. Other countries do not differ significantly from Germany in this regard, lending general support to the ‘no country difference’ hypothesis (4a).

⁸ The only difference being the exclusion of the housework stress variable as there were some problems with missing cases, particularly for Spain. The sample size is now greater than in Table 3.

Table 4: Linear Regression Models – Work-Life Conflict All Employees

	Class differences		Class differences & country		Class differences with country & time demands		Class differences with country, time demands & flexibility		Class differences with country, time, flex. & job pressure	
	5		6		7		8		9	
	b	Sig.	b	Sig.	b	Sig.	b	Sig.	b	Sig.
(Constant)	2.50	0.00	2.70	0.00	1.76	0.00	1.52	0.00	0.84	0.00
Professional	0.34	0.00	0.32	0.00	0.25	0.00	0.24	0.00	0.21	0.00
Denmark			-0.26	0.00	-0.26	0.00	-0.25	0.00	-0.27	0.00
Sweden			-0.10	0.04	-0.11	0.02	-0.11	0.02	-0.11	0.01
UK			-0.23	0.00	-0.18	0.00	-0.20	0.00	-0.22	0.00
Netherlands			-0.30	0.00	-0.20	0.00	-0.14	0.01	-0.10	0.05
France			-0.02	0.73	0.01	0.83	0.07	0.15	0.09	0.06
Spain			-0.17	0.00	-0.23	0.00	-0.17	0.00	-0.15	0.00
Ireland			-0.62	0.00	-0.62	0.00	-0.59	0.00	-0.58	0.00
Professional*Denmark			0.02	0.82	0.03	0.70	0.01	0.94	0.01	0.90
Professional*Sweden			-0.07	0.32	-0.09	0.19	-0.08	0.25	-0.15	0.02
Professional*UK			0.21	0.01	0.17	0.03	0.17	0.02	0.09	0.18
Professional*NL			-0.01	0.90	-0.04	0.64	-0.06	0.41	-0.11	0.14
Professional*fran			0.05	0.55	0.07	0.35	0.06	0.38	0.06	0.39
Professional*spain			-0.10	0.26	-0.04	0.68	-0.04	0.67	-0.10	0.22
Professional*ireland			0.08	0.29	0.12	0.10	0.15	0.04	0.10	0.18
Female					0.18	0.00	0.19	0.00	0.18	0.00
Partner					0.01	0.70	0.05	0.07	0.04	0.13
Child <6					0.11	0.00	0.09	0.00	0.07	0.01
Child 6-17					0.06	0.05	0.04	0.14	0.03	0.21
Lone parent					0.07	0.20	0.09	0.12	0.09	0.11
H/work hrs/week					0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Paid wk hrs/wk					0.02	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.00
Start/finish time (1-4)							-0.01	0.18	-0.03	0.00
Unsocial hrs (1-5)							0.18	0.00	0.16	0.00
Job pressure (1-5)									0.29	0.00
Egalitarian attitudes (1-5)									0.06	0.00
Adjusted R Square	0.04		0.09		0.15		0.21		0.27	
N	5982		5982		5982		5982		5982	

Notes: *** p <.001 ** p < 0.01 * p < 0.05 ~ p < 0.1
Work-life conflict index coded 1 (never) to 5 (always), see text for further details. Housework stress excluded because of missing cases for Spain.

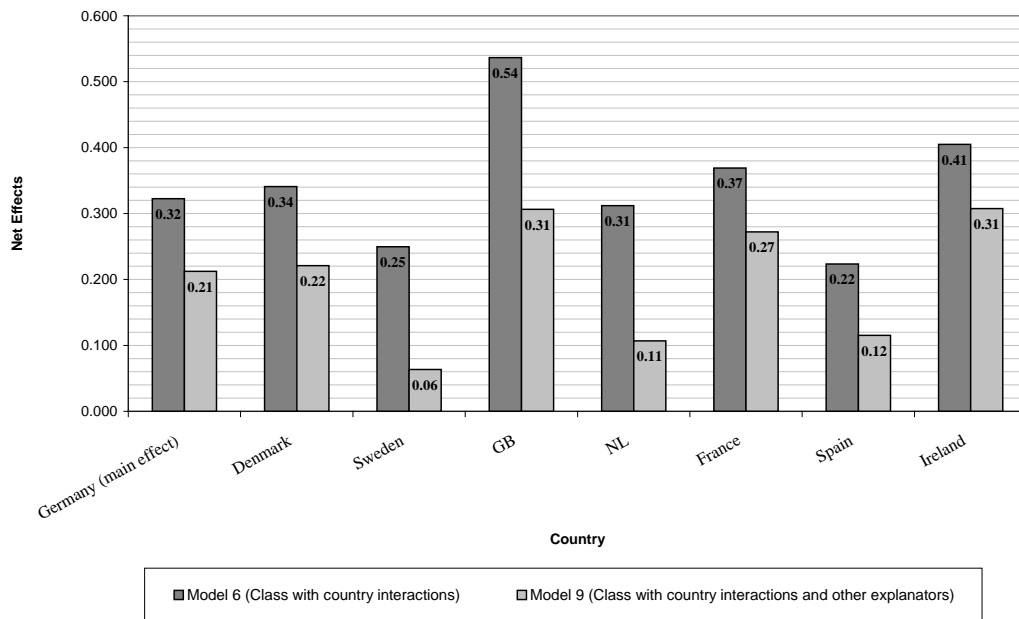
What happens when we account for differences in time demands, both from home and from work (Model 7)? Like in the pooled model we find having children, particularly young children, and paid working hours and unsocial hours all increase work-life conflict, and this reduces the difference between professionals and non-professionals. The gap between professionals and non-professionals is once again greatly reduced. The higher gap in Britain between professionals and non-professionals is reduced when we add working hours, suggesting some of the larger difference in Britain is due to long working hours among professionals (supporting hypothesis 7 for Britain).

In the final model (9), once we account for job pressure, which has a very strong impact on work-life conflict, we find that the professional/non-professional gap in work-life conflict is reduced even further, and country variation is now negligible, with the exception of Sweden.

Two points to note on specific country differences. When we add the scheduling of paid work, working unsocial hours and working-time flexibility (Model 8), we find that in both Britain and Ireland, differences between professionals and non-professionals are greater than in Germany, but when account for work pressure (Model 9). Britain and Ireland do not now differ from other countries in terms of class differences in work-life conflict. Professionals may have particularly high job pressure scores in these countries. Secondly, the difference between professionals and non-professionals is significantly lower in Sweden than in Germany.

Figure 2 below details the country variations in the *net* effect of the professional class compared to other classes, calculated from Models 6 and 9 in Table 4. The dark bar is the net effect of professional versus non-professionals by country; the light bar shows how this effect changes once we account for time demands and job pressure.

Figure 2: Net effect of professional class versus other classes by country



In all countries the difference between professionals and non-professionals is greatly reduced when we account for time demands, family commitments and job pressure. However it is also very clear from Figure 2 that differences between professionals and non-professionals remain. These are statistically significant in all countries but Sweden – a country with comparatively low levels of class inequality. The fact that overall country variation is modest gives, on balance, more support to the ‘no country difference’ hypothesis, than those predicting country variations.

Why do we find less difference between professionals and non-professionals in Sweden (and to a lesser extent the Netherlands and Spain)? In general, consistent with hypotheses 5, 6 and 7 – it would be fair to characterise Sweden and the Netherlands as countries with low class inequality, high female participation and low overall working hours, any of these could help us understand less difference between professionals and non-professionals in the experience of work-life conflict. In fact when we estimate the models separately by gender, we find the effect in Sweden and Netherlands is almost entirely driven by females, supporting hypothesis 6, that in countries with high support for caring, there are less differences between

professionals and non-professionals for women.⁹ We suspect rather different factors account for the Spanish experience, perhaps related to high work-life conflict among manual workers than lower work-life conflict among professionals.

7. Discussion

We find that in the pooled model of eight countries, work-life conflict is highest among professional workers, often thought of as the privileged in the occupational distribution. Part of this is explained by the fact that professionals work longer hours and experience more work pressure than other social classes. However, the class differential in the pooled model is maintained: even after accounting for differences in time availability and differences in the pressure of job and home life, professionals report higher work-life conflict, while routine non-manual workers and both skilled and unskilled manual workers report less work-life conflict. This pattern is remarkably consistent across countries, though in Sweden, class differences are no longer significant when we account for family situation, working time and work pressure.

In terms of the debates on time-use and inequality, the first thing to note is that in all the countries under study professionals report more work-life conflict than other classes. In the Sweden class differences are almost completely accounted for by differences in objective work conditions/working hours and in family situation. In other countries too, much but not all of the class differences in work-life conflict are explained by the fact that professional and managerial workers work longer hours, more unsocial hours and are under more pressure in their jobs.

Hammermesh and Lee (2007) have argued that high-earning (professional) workers suffer more from time pressure (in this case work-life conflict) because they (1) choose to work more hours (they value money more than time) and (2) have more money to spend in their leisure time, and thus value it more. With this data it is difficult to adjudicate whether higher and lower professionals place a higher value on

⁹ Of note in these gender-specific models is that the overall differences between professionals and non-professionals is generally greater for women; paid working hours increases men's work-life conflict more than women's; children increase women's work-life conflict more than men's. Results not presented but available from the authors.

leisure, relative to others, as they have more money to spend in their leisure time, which makes it more interesting and desirable.

We can however consider, at least to some extent, whether professionals *choose* to work more hours. Evidence from the European Social Survey suggests this is not the case. If we look at answers to the question ‘*How many hours, if any, would you choose to work, bearing in mind that your earnings would go up or down according to how many hours you work?*’, and compare it to respondent’s actual working hours, we find that answers vary by social class.¹⁰ Over 60% of higher professionals and 50% of lower professionals report wanting to work less than their current hours. This compares to 35% of routine non-manual workers and 45% of skilled and unskilled manual workers. This contradicts the idea that higher professionals choose to work more – the majority, though not all would like to work less.

So why don’t professionals simply work less? One possibility is that jobs are a “package”. Workers might welcome the opportunity to vary their working hours in response to changes in their preferred time allocations, but in practice working hours are more often fixed than flexible, part of a “package deal” associated with a particular job (Lundberg, 1985; McGinnity and McManus, 2007). Even those who can formally reduce hours - like parents of young children in all of the countries studied - may find that the nature of their job means this is much more difficult in practice. In this regard it would also be interesting to investigate Gershuny’s proposition that professional workers find their jobs more intrinsically interesting and thus are prepared to invest more time and effort into it.

Or they may feel this disadvantages their career prospects if they do reduce hours – and many professional jobs are part of a well-defined career path. Previous research indicates that there may be a penalty in terms of promotion prospects for part-time work, so those reducing hours may face a trade-off between a reduction in *current* work-life conflict and the quality of future employment. In addition, as many professional jobs are task-based, there are fluctuations in workload which require

¹⁰ Less than current hours is taken as two or hours or more less than current hours; more than current hours is taken as two hours more greater than current hours to adjust for minor fluctuations in usual working hours.

overtime. Job autonomy over time and tasks, which makes these jobs count as privileged in social class theory (e.g. Goldthorpe, 2000) makes them more likely to be associated with long hours and spillover.

Taking a longer-term perspective, there may be a lifecycle effect. Highly educated individuals secure challenging and demanding jobs, and it is only at the stage in their lives when they have children that the time squeeze really comes but they're already on a career track. Professionals may not only have high expectations of leisure, like Hammermesh and Lee (2007) argue, they might also have higher expectations of parenting. Bianchi *et al.*, (2006), in their study of parenting and time pressure in the US, point to the role of subjective expectations in adding to time pressure. Working parents, particularly mothers, feel a time squeeze because they feel they *should* be spending more time with children – even though mothers are spending as much time interacting with children as they were 40 years ago (Bianchi *et al.*, 2006). If this pressure is felt more keenly by professionals than other mothers/parents, this will contribute to class differences in perceived work-life conflict, though could hardly be described as 'yuppie kvetch'.

What are the policy implications of our findings? Hammermesh and Lee (2007) argue that less public concern should be given to being time poor – and by implication given our findings, work-life conflict - if it is experienced by the privileged, a 'yuppie' condition. However, arguably welfare states have recently shifted focus from targeted subsidies to reduce inequality to 'welfare as social investment' as the new solution to the problem of balancing economic growth and social justice (Taylor-Gooby, 2008). Modern welfare states require an increasing proportion of the population in paid work to both enhance competitiveness and reduce poverty, so the state needs to facilitate women working. Investment in research and in human capital is designed to improve the 'value-added' in employment and has become prominent in policy debate. But while more paid work is done, the investments in research and development and in education and training to achieve a high value, high productivity environment are much more limited. If the argument is that European economies/welfare states need highly skilled labour, and they can't afford to lose highly-skilled female labour, the problem of work-life balance and how it is achieved among professionals is

particularly important. There may indeed be a coincidence of interest between the preoccupations of the professional class and the needs of the welfare state.

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