Happy hour?
Studies on well-being and time spent on paid and unpaid work

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Abstract

The present thesis focuses on causes and consequences of paid working hours and housework hours among women and men in Sweden and Europe. It consists of four studies.

Study I investigates changes in the division of housework in Swedish couples when they become parents. The study shows that women adjust their housework hours to the number and age of children in the household, whereas men do not. Longer parental leave periods among fathers have the potential to counteract this change towards a more traditional division of housework.

Study II explores the associations between psychological distress and paid working hours, housework hours and total role time in Sweden. The results suggest that women’s psychological distress decreases with increasing paid working hours and housework hours, but that a long total role time is associated with high levels of distress. The gender difference in time spent on housework accounts for 40 per cent of the gender difference in psychological distress.

Study III asks whether hours spent on paid work and housework account for the European gender difference in well-being, and whether the associations between well-being and hours of paid work and housework is influenced by gender attitudes and social comparison. The results indicate that gender differences in time spent on paid work and housework account for a third of the gender difference in well-being. Gender attitudes and social comparison do not to any great extent influence the associations between well-being and paid work and housework, respectively.

Study IV examines possible differences between European family policy models in the associations between well-being and hours of paid work and housework. Some model differences are found, and they are accounted for by experiences of work-family conflict among men, but not among women. For both women and men, work-family conflict appears to suppress positive aspects of paid working hours.
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When I was finishing my bachelor’s degree, I saw that the Swedish Institute for Social Research (SOFI) was looking for research assistants. ‘I’ll never get that job’, I thought, and applied. Imagine my surprise when I got it! Large parts of my first year at SOFI were spent “cleaning” data from the Swedish Level-of-Living Survey 2000 (LNU). This was a very time consuming and laborious but also informative task that gave me and my fellow research assistant headaches as well as a lot of good laughs. It also gave insights into the data that have served me well while working on my thesis. As the first year came to an end, it became clear that applying for postgraduate studies was considered almost inevitable for research assistants at the Level-of-Living project. ‘I’ll never get in’, I thought, and applied. But it went well this time too. Now the work implied a completely different challenge, at times extremely hard and stressful, but at other times enormously instructive and interesting academically, socially and personally. The work was made even more enjoyable by the excellent academic environment and the helpful, nice and fun people at SOFI. I have surely learnt the importance of social support at the workplace for one’s well-being, and the importance of being surrounded by great researchers. I would like to thank my supervisor, Jan O. Jonsson, for his great enthusiasm and ability to keep my spirits up, no matter how confused I was before our meetings. OK, I have been confused after our meetings as well at times, but in a cheerful mood! I would also like to thank my co-supervisor Marie Evertsson for always being present and ready for thorough readings as well as a never-ending stream of questions. By now, the floor between our offices probably suffers from severe repetitive strain injury. Thanks also to Charlotta Magnusson,
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Introduction

The gender differences in time spent on paid and unpaid work are substantial. In Sweden, a relatively gender egalitarian society in many respects, women work part-time to a much higher degree than men do and perform on average two-thirds of the housework in their households. In many other parts of Europe, women are often homemakers or work short part-time. These gender differences in work patterns (i.e., combinations of paid and unpaid work) have consequences for many areas of women’s and men’s lives. From a broad equality perspective, the differences in women’s and men’s labour market attachment and responsibility for unpaid work in the household contribute to gender inequality in acquired social rights and social citizenship (Montanari 2004). Partly as a consequence, these gender differences in work patterns also contribute to gender inequality in freedom to choose between many potential achievements, i.e., gendered agency inequality (Korpi 2000). Going more into detail, gender differences in work patterns have consequences for gender equality in the labour market and in the household. For example, restrictions made on women’s labour market participation by their family responsibilities contribute to income differences between women and men (Noonan 2001; Raley et al. 2006). Gender differences in resources are brought into the heterosexual couple, contributing to unequal power resources between the partners. Each couple’s organization of their family life, such as patterns of paid and unpaid work, is influenced by these differences, e.g., by the way in which relative resources come into play in decision making and bargaining in the couple (Bittman et al. 2003; Brines 1994; Evertsson & Nermo 2007; Geist 2005; Greenstein 2000). The organization of work in the couple, in turn, has consequences for the
woman’s and the man’s future resources and changes in these through decisions on parental leave, care for sick children, future work patterns, etc.

In my thesis, I investigate whether work patterns also have consequences for women’s and men’s well-being and for the gender difference in well-being observed in Sweden and other parts of the world (see, e.g., Frankenhaeuser et al. 1989; Karasek et al. 1987; Mirowsky & Ross 1995; Roxburgh 2004). First, though, I analyse causes of the differences in work patterns among Swedish mothers and fathers. More specifically, the first study describes the changes towards a more traditional division of housework that occur when a couple become parents, and asks whether these changes have anything to do with changes in paid working hours and economic resources and with the length of the father’s parental leave. The second study investigates the associations between psychological distress and paid working hours, housework hours and the total hours spent in these activities combined among Swedish working women and men. In the third study, I ask whether associations between paid working hours, housework hours and well-being differ depending on gender attitudes and social comparison of work patterns across Europe. The last study takes a different approach to the same basic problem, asking instead whether there are any differences between welfare states in the associations between well-being and paid/unpaid working hours among European mothers and fathers.

As a brief background to these studies, the distribution of paid working hours and housework hours among women and men in Sweden and Europe is described below. After this, I shortly discuss issues regarding the measurement of housework hours and well-being. A summary of the four studies concludes this introduction.
Work patterns in Sweden and the rest of Europe

The following figures show the differences in paid working hours and housework hours between women and men in Sweden (Figure 1) and in 18 European countries (Figures 2 and 3). The European countries are categorized according to Korpi’s typology of family policy models, described in more detail in Study IV (Ferrarini 2006; Ferrarini & Sjöberg 2007; Korpi 2000; Korpi & Englund unpublished). Included in the analyses are all women and men in the age range 20-65 years who are either in paid employment or homemakers (i.e., I exclude students, pensioners, people on sick-leave, etc.). The European data are weighted to take into account differences in sample design and population size between countries. Data for Sweden are derived from the Swedish Level-of-Living Survey (LNU) 2000 and for Europe from the European Social Survey (ESS) Round 2 (2004/2005). Sweden is also included in the European data, but I choose to use LNU here, first because it enables a more detailed analysis of housework hours than the European data do (see below), and second because LNU is used in the Swedish studies in the thesis.

Looking first at Sweden, the gender differences in the distribution of paid working hours are obvious (Figure 1). While there are too few homemakers and women who work very short part-time in Sweden for them to show up in the data, nearly a third of the women work intermediate to long part-time (16-35 hours/week), 60 per cent work more or less full-time (36-45 hours/week) and ten per cent work more than full-time on a regular basis. Among men, the part-timers make up six per cent of the sample, while 25 per cent work more than full-time. Gender differences in housework hours are also apparent. A majority of the women spend between six and 15 hours/week on housework (58 per cent), but a large share do more than that, and seven per cent perform housework for more than 25 hours/week. A large majority of the Swedish men spend between one and 10 hours/week on housework (77 per cent) and almost no one does housework for more than 20 hours/week.
Turning to the European data, Figure 2 shows clear differences in paid working hours between women in the four family policy models. In the dual earner model (Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden), nearly two-thirds of the women work full-time or more. Homemakers make up only six per cent of the women here, compared to more than 20 per cent in the other family policy models. Among part-timers, long part-time is more common in the dual earner model than elsewhere. As expected, the distribution of paid working hours among women in the traditional model (Austria, Belgium, France, Germany and the Netherlands) shows that a large share have a paid working time that corresponds to traditional gender ideals. The same is seen in the market-oriented model (Ireland, Switzerland and the United Kingdom), where the picture even
Figure 2. The distribution of weekly paid working hours and housework hours among European women (dual earner, n=1,496; traditional, n=2,139; market-oriented, n=1,336; contradictory, n=1,803).

Source: European Social Survey Round 2 (2004/2005)
appears somewhat more traditional than in the traditional family policy model. About a quarter of the women in these family policy models are homemakers, and about a third work full-time or more. Among the large group of part-timers, relatively many work short part-time (1-15 hours/week). In the contradictory model (the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia), the distribution of women’s working hours appears as a mix between the dual earner and the traditional/market-oriented distributions. Similar to the latter groups of countries, homemakers make up nearly a quarter of the female sample. However, part-time is very uncommon in these countries; only ten per cent of the women work part-time. More than two-thirds of the women here work full-time or more, which is slightly more than in the dual earner model, and a larger group than in any other part of Europe work more than full-time on a regular basis. Hence, the contradictory model displays a polarization among women, who tend to work either full-time or not at all.

The data from ESS does not include the hours spent on housework by the respondent, and therefore, the measure of housework hours is an estimation based on the total number of hours spent in the respondent’s household and the respondent’s share of these hours (for details, see Study III and IV). This makes the measure less precise, and the distribution of housework hours is therefore displayed in less detail for Europe than for Sweden. The variation in housework hours between family policy models is less striking than the variation in paid working hours (Figure 2). Women in the dual earner model do less housework than other European women do, while women in the contradictory model do more. The traditional and market-oriented models fall in between and show almost exactly the same pattern. In the dual earner, traditional and market-oriented models alike, around ten per cent of the women do housework for less than six hours/week. In the contradictory model, this group makes up only five per cent of the women. On the other end of the scale, about 30 per cent of the women in the traditional, market-
oriented and contradictory models do housework for more than 20 hours/week, whereas this group makes up only 12 per cent of the women in the dual earner model.

The variation in paid working time among men is, not surprisingly, smaller than among women. As can be seen in Figure 3, the homemakers and part-timers are few, but somewhat more common in the traditional and market-oriented models than in the dual earner and contradictory models. The proportion of men who work more than full-time on a regular basis also varies between family policy models. This group is smallest in the dual earner model and largest in the contradictory model, where about half of the men usually work more than 45 hours/week.

The group of men who do housework for less than six hours/week is smallest in the dual earner model (46 per cent) and largest in the traditional model (59 per cent). The picture in the market-oriented model is very similar to that in the traditional model. In the contradictory model, a slightly larger share of men than in the dual earner model do the smallest amount of housework, but on the other hand, a somewhat larger share do housework for more than 20 hours/week.

To summarize, the dual earner model shows the least traditional work patterns among both women and men, while the most traditional patterns are seen in the traditional and the market-oriented family policy models. The contradictory model has elements of both these sets of countries. On the one hand, a substantial number of women work full-time and a relatively large group of men do long hours of housework. On the other hand, a large group of women are homemakers and a relatively large group of men do no housework or only a few hours of housework/week. Swedish women and men show work patterns very similar to those in the dual earner model generally and hence display among the least traditional work patterns in Europe.
Figure 3. The distribution of weekly paid working hours and housework hours among European men (dual earner, $n=1,576$; traditional, $n=1,652$; market-oriented, $n=950$; contradictory, $n=1,598$).

Source: European Social Survey Round 2 (2004/2005)
Measuring time spent on housework

All analyses in the following studies are conducted on survey data based on the respondents’ reports in structured interviews regarding the average number of hours they spend on housework on a normal day or week. This type of questionnaire information is often considered less reliable than time diary data, which are based on detailed time diaries filled in by the respondents during one or several days. The lower accuracy of the questionnaire information, in particular regarding housework, has been attributed to, among other things, recall biases, double counting of tasks performed simultaneously and the social desirability of doing much housework. This is expected to lead to more random as well as systematic errors in survey data than in time diary data. Empirically, several studies have found that reported housework hours are longer in survey data compared to time diary data. Furthermore, differences in the size of the gap between the two methods have been found between social groups such as women and men, age groups and educational and socio-economic groups (for a review, see Kan 2008).

Comparing data from British respondents who have given both survey and time diary information on their housework hours, Kan (2008) found that men over-reported their housework hours in survey data more than women did (assuming that time diary data give the most correct estimates). However, there may be differences in misreporting between countries, among other things due to differences in social desirability. Analysing Danish data, Bonke (2005) found that reported housework hours were shorter in survey data than in time diary data, and that women tended to under-report housework hours more than men did. However, the gender difference was small. Kitterød and Lyngstad (2005) found only modest differences in reported housework hours between the two methods and no gender difference in misreporting when analysing Norwegian data. This points to the possibility that social desirability is less of a problem in Scandinavian countries because of the widespread gender egalitarian attitudes and norms. If anything, women may be prone
to under-report their housework hours in surveys compared to time diaries. This would lead to underestimations of gender differences in housework hours and thus conservative tests of the gender differences and their consequences, which is less problematic than the implications of overestimations of gender differences.

**Measuring well-being**

A large part of the thesis aims at accounting for variations in well-being. Several alternative measures of well-being are used in the literature on associations between well-being and paid and unpaid work, including indicators of psychological ill-health (Gähler & Rudolphi 2004), stress (MacDonald et al. 2005) and depression (Bird 1999; Voydanoff & Donnelly 1999). Psychological well-being is sometimes used as a catchall term in studies with multiple outcomes, e.g., self-esteem, pleasure and depression scales and measures of distress and life satisfaction (Baruch & Barnett 1986; Nomaguchi et al. 2005), and in studies that combine several indicators into one (Goldberg & Perry-Jenkins 2004). According to Diener et al. (2003), subjective well-being includes facets such as positive affect, lack of negative affect and life satisfaction, and Ryan and Deci (2001) stated that well-being is not just the absence of mental illness but rather comprises pleasure, happiness or the actualization of human potentials. Hence, whereas well-being has been perceived in positive terms theoretically, it is often measured in negative terms, e.g., by indicators of distress or depression.

In my thesis, I use two well-established indices, one of psychological distress and one of psychological well-being. Hence, the measures reflect both the negative and the positive perception of well-being. The first index is comprised of items indicating lack of well-being, such as the experience of insomnia, nervous trouble and overexertion (see Study II for details). The reliability of a related index (including some but not all of the items I use) has been found to be on par with the reliability of indicators of self-rated health, aches, diseases and functional abilities.
I use this indicator when analysing data from the Swedish Level-of-Living Survey. The second indicator is the WHO-Five Well-being Index, which measures well-being in a positive sense. It is made up of questions such as whether the respondent has felt calm and relaxed, active and vigorous and whether her/his life has been filled with things that interest her/him during the two weeks preceding the interview (see Study III and IV for details). The validity of the index is equal to the validity of well-established depression scales, but it measures more than just absence of depressive symptoms, i.e., also positive aspects such as positive mood (Bech et al. 2003; Löwe et al. 2004). I use this indicator when I analyse data from ESS.

Well-being is a complex and personal phenomenon. Psychological research has found that an individual’s well-being is fairly stable over time, rebounds after major life events and correlates with, e.g., personality traits. This literature suggests that well-being is more strongly related to personality than to external factors such as demographic factors (for a review, see Diener et al. 2003). The explained variance in studies of well-being and paid and unpaid work is generally fairly small, but it is not negligible (see, e.g., Baruch & Barnett 1986; Nomaguchi et al. 2005; Nordenmark 2002). In the thesis, I account for up to 24 per cent of the variance ($R^2=0.242$, Study IV). This is in a model where the WHO-Five Well-being Index is regressed on hours of paid work and housework, work-family conflict, age, social class, working conditions, subjective general health, age of the youngest child and whether or not the respondent is a homemaker, among women in the market-oriented family policy model. The explained variance is most often higher for women than for men, indicating that paid and unpaid work are more strongly related to women’s than to men’s well-being.
Summaries of the four studies

Study I

How children impact on parents’ division of labour: A longitudinal study of changes in housework following the birth of a child

This study analyses the change towards a more traditional division of housework that occurs in couples when they become parents. I look specifically at the importance of changes in paid working hours and economic resources and at the importance of fathers’ parental leave durations for this change in housework among Swedish couples. Longitudinal studies from other countries show that the division of housework in households becomes more traditional when a couple become parents, suggesting that the arrival of a child changes the gender relation in housework (Baxter et al. 2008; Gjerdingen & Center 2005; Sanchez & Thomson 1997). According to these studies, women increase their time on housework upon arrival of a child, whereas men do not change, or even decrease, their time spent on housework. As a consequence, the division of housework becomes more traditional. In Sweden, there are a few cross-sectional studies but no longitudinal studies that explicitly focus on the impact of parenthood on time spent on housework or the division of housework between women and men. Furthermore, the results of existing studies are inconclusive, especially regarding the impact of children on men’s housework hours (cf. Dribe & Stanfors 2007; Evertsson & Nermo 2007). The present study contributes to this literature by studying the impact of parenthood on women’s and men’s housework hours and the division of housework using Swedish, longitudinal data.

Changes in the hours spent on housework and the division of housework following the birth of a child could be related to changes in women’s paid working hours. Swedish mothers often work part-time when they have small children, while fathers continue to work full-time (Statistics Sweden 2006). Another possible explanation is differences
between women’s and men’s parental leave durations. If the father’s leave period is short, the couple may not establish new habits during his leave. However, during the mother’s considerably longer leave period, in which she has more time to do housework than her partner has, new, more traditional habits may be established. These habits may continue after the mother is back in paid work, especially if she starts working part-time. Finally, changes in the woman’s and the man’s relative economic resources may also influence their division of housework, although this has been shown to account for very little of the changes in housework (Baxter et al. 2008; Evertsson & Nermo 2007; Sanchez & Thomson 1997).

OLS regressions with change scores are applied to longitudinal data from the Swedish Level-of-Living Survey 1974, 1981, 1991 and 2000. The results show that women’s hours of housework increase when a couple have children, especially among first-time parents. Men’s hours do not increase, but even decrease among parents who have one additional child. As a result, the division of housework between women and men becomes more traditional when they become parents for the first time or have additional children. However, as the children grow older and leave the household, women’s hours of housework decrease again, and the division of housework becomes somewhat less traditional. Hence, whereas men’s housework hours are more or less insensitive to the presence of children in the household, women appear to adjust their housework time to the number as well as the age of their children.

These changes in the distribution of housework within the couple are only accounted for to a minor extent by changes in women’s and men’s paid working hours and by changes in their absolute and relative economic resources. Even after control for these factors, women’s hours increase by 3-6 hours/week, depending on whether or not they have their first child and the number of children they have during the studied period. Fathers’ hours do not change significantly except among fathers who have another child, among whom housework hours decrease by
about one hour/week. However, a somewhat longer parental leave period may affect fathers’ housework hours positively. Fathers who have taken parental leave for more than 4 weeks to care for their youngest child have increased their housework hours more than have fathers who have taken shorter or no leave. As a consequence, there is a much smaller increase in women’s share of housework in these couples than in couples in which the father has taken shorter or no leave.

Study II

Time spent working. Is there a link between time spent on paid work and housework and the gender difference in psychological distress?

In Study II, I move from examining causes of the gender differences in work patterns, to examining consequences. More specifically, this study examines the connection between the time that women and men spend on paid work and housework and psychological distress, and addresses the question of whether gender differences in time spent on these activities account for the gender difference in psychological distress in Sweden. Studies of the connections between work and well-being have found a negative, albeit curvilinear, association between paid working time and psychological distress, and a positive or insignificant association between time spent on housework and distress (Bird & Fremont 1991; Glass & Fujimoto 1994; Gähler & Rudolphi 2004; Voydanoff & Donnelly 1999). In Sweden, women spend many hours on paid work and men are encouraged to engage in unpaid work in the household. Still, women do on average two-thirds of the housework (Eurostat 2004). Therefore, a relatively large proportion of Swedish women may have long working hours in both paid and unpaid work. According to the role enhancement theory, combining several roles, such as family and worker roles, is beneficial to well-being (see, e.g., Sieber 1974). On the other hand, role strain theory suggests that having multiple roles increases psy-
psychological distress by causing role overload or role conflict (see, e.g., Moen 1992). Hence, the gender difference in psychological distress could be related to the combination of paid and unpaid work and to the long total role time of some women. In addition, role context theories propose that the implications of a specific role depend on the context in which the role is performed, rather than only on the role itself (see, e.g., Moen 1989). This may have consequences for the gender difference in psychological distress, as Swedish women have been found to have poorer working conditions than Swedish men do (le Grand et al. 2001; Lundberg et al. 1994; de Smet et al. 2005).

Study II examines employed and cohabiting women and men who participated in the Swedish Level-of-Living Survey (LNU) in 1991 and 2000. The results show that women’s longer hours spent on housework account for 40 per cent of the gender difference in psychological distress. The results also show some interesting associations between housework hours, paid working hours and psychological distress among women. More hours of either paid work or housework seem to imply less psychological distress, but spending too much time on one role may decrease the beneficial effect of the other. This is mainly caused by the resulting increase in total role time. Among women, then, there is support for the role strain theory, but the negative aspects of combining paid work and housework have more to do with the resulting total role time than with the fact that different types of work are combined. In contrast, men’s level of psychological distress is not associated with hours of paid work or housework.

The division of housework between women and men is unusually uneven in households where women have a long total role time. Women who spend more than 60 hours/week on paid work and housework in total work on average more than full-time in paid work, like their partners, but perform nearly four-fifths of the housework in their households. Thus, an increase in men’s participation in housework would decrease the number of women experiencing a high workload. The study
concludes with the suggestion that the high workload of some women is not best solved by tax reductions for household services, which tend to favour traditional attitudes towards men’s household labour, but rather by efforts to tackle men’s unequal contribution to housework.

**Study III**

*Relatively different? How do gender differences in well-being depend on paid and unpaid work in Europe?*

In Study III, I investigate whether hours spent on paid and unpaid work account for the lower well-being among women as compared to men in Europe, and whether the associations between well-being and hours of paid and unpaid work differ by gender attitudes and social context. Discrepancies between, on the one hand, gender attitudes or preferences and, on the other hand, time spent on paid work and the division of paid and unpaid work have been shown to be associated with lower well-being (Goldberg & Perry-Jenkins 2004; Loscocco & Spitze 2007; Perry-Jenkins 1992). Attitudes towards women’s and men’s paid work and housework may therefore influence how beneficial or detrimental it is to spend time on these activities.

Social comparison of one’s own hours to the number of hours commonly spent among similar others may also influence the association between paid/unpaid work and well-being. Different countries display varying amounts of time commonly used for paid and unpaid work, and in European as well as other countries, significant differences in the common hours spent exist by gender (Aliaga 2006) and parental status (Coltrane 2000). Thus, the associations between work and well-being may vary depending on both location and individual characteristics. According to the theory of social comparison (see, e.g., Festinger 1954; Merton 1957), humans have an intrinsic need to evaluate their own situation, and this can be done through comparison of our own situation to the situation of others who resemble us in central aspects. The situation
in a dominant group, for example the time commonly used for paid and unpaid work, may come to serve as an ideal to which the individual tries to adapt. As a result, this will affect the preferences that the person forms regarding time spent on paid and unpaid work. Spending a shorter or a longer time on a specific type of work than is common in the reference group may result in negative feelings.

A group of 13,425 women and men from 25 European countries are analysed using country fixed-effects models. In the analysis of social comparison, each respondent’s hours of paid work and housework, respectively, are compared to the average hours spent on these activities among respondents with the same sex and family situation in the same country. In the analysis of gender attitudes, the associations between work and well-being among people with different attitudes are analysed.

The results suggest that while men’s well-being appears to be unaffected by hours of paid work and housework, women’s well-being increases with increased paid working hours and decreases with increased housework hours. These associations exist among egalitarian and traditional women alike. Gender differences in time spent on paid work and housework account for a third of the European gender difference in well-being and are thus one reason why women have lower well-being than men do.

Gender attitudes do not appear to modify the associations between paid/unpaid hours and well-being, although they are associated with well-being, negatively among women and positively among men. There is a possibility that women benefit from doing as little housework as possible compared to similar women, and not, as predicted by the theory of social comparison, from spending a common amount of time on housework. However, absolute hours of paid work and housework appear to be more important to women’s well-being than relative hours.
Study IV

Work and well-being in a comparative perspective – the role of family policy

Study IV investigates the associations between work and well-being from a European welfare state perspective. Welfare states, particularly their family policy, influence the division of paid and unpaid work between the state, the market and the family, and between women and men. The policy tends to support either female labour force participation and men’s participation in care work, or the traditional family in which the man has the main responsibility for the family income and the woman has the main responsibility for the unpaid work performed in the home (Ferrarini 2006; Korpi 2000; Montanari 2004; Orloff 1993; Sainsbury 1999). As a consequence, the patterns of paid and unpaid work in the population can be expected to differ depending on the family policy institutions in a country (Drobnič & Treas 2006; Fuwa & Cohen 2007; Gershuny & Sullivan 2003). Based on this, one could assume that different family policies make specific work patterns more or less beneficial to well-being by influencing which combinations of paid and unpaid work are the easiest and most practical to maintain (cf. Sjöberg 2004). Hence, arranging one’s time in accordance with state-supported work patterns may minimize negative aspects of everyday life such as stress, work overload and work-family conflict, and thus enhance well-being. The aim of Study IV is to analyse, first, whether the associations between well-being and paid work and housework, respectively, differ between family policy models and, second, whether any such differences are accounted for by differences in the experience of work-family conflict. The empirical analyses focus on parents, and data from 18 countries participating in the European Social Survey (ESS) Round 2 (2004/2005) are analysed. Countries are categorized according to Korpi’s typology of family policy models (Ferrarini 2006; Ferrarini & Sjöberg 2007; Korpi 2000; Korpi & Englund unpublished).
The associations between well-being and hours of paid work and housework do vary by family policy model, however not always in expected ways. Paid working hours appear to have the potential for a positive effect on women’s well-being, but any such effect is suppressed by the experience of work-family conflict. Work-family conflict increases with increasing paid working hours among women and men in all family policy models, but the increase is particularly pronounced when comparing part-time and full-time working women in the traditional family policy model. When controlling for work-family conflict, a positive association between paid working hours and women’s well-being is clearly seen in the market-oriented model, but it is most pronounced in the traditional family policy model. In both these family policy models, a plausible explanation is that women do not work long hours in the labour market unless they have a reason to do so, e.g., if they have good working conditions, career opportunities, etc. Some aspects of working conditions are controlled for in the analysis. Among men, paid working hours are positively associated with well-being in three out of four models when work-family conflict is controlled for. With this control, there are almost no differences between family policy models in the association between men’s paid working hours and their well-being.

As expected, the traditional family policy model appears to render housework hours more positive for women than other family policy models do, but too long housework hours seem to reduce well-being. In addition, homemakers, who have the most traditional work pattern, do not have higher levels of well-being than working women have. In the market-oriented model, housework hours are associated with low well-being among women. In this family policy model, women and men are particularly dependent upon market resources for their welfare. The fact that women have the main responsibility for housework, which does not generate an income but rather limits the time available for paid work, may be the reason for its negative association with women’s well-being in this family policy model.
I do not find any significant association between work and well-being in the dual earner family policy model. This appears to contradict the results of Study II, where paid working time and housework time were found to be significantly related to women’s psychological distress in Sweden, which has a dual earner family policy model. This may be explained by the fact that different outcomes are studied and that significant associations were found in Study II only when an interaction between paid working time and housework time was taken into account, and no such interaction is included in Study IV. In Study III, I found significant associations between European women’s well-being and paid as well as unpaid working hours without control for work-family conflict. Study III pools data from 25 European countries, and the larger sample makes it easier to find significant results. Also, Study III includes women with and without children, whereas Study IV includes only mothers.

In all family policy models, work-family conflict appears to be one important reason why paid working hours are not more clearly positively associated with women’s and men’s well-being. Yet differences in the experience of work-family conflict only account for family policy model differences among men.
References


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