

## **Work-to-Family Enrichment and Gender Inequalities in Eight European Countries**

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## **Abstract**

All social roles have positive and rewarding as well as negative/problematic aspects. Research on the work–family interface has predominantly focused on conflicting roles. In contrast, this paper extends research on work–family enrichment (WFE), a positive aspect of work, and gender differences in WFE in a cross-national context. Drawing upon social role theory and the culture sensitive theory on work–family enrichment, we examined gender differences in experiences of developmental WFE in a sample of service sector employees in eight European countries. In line with traditional gender roles, women reported more WFE than men. The relationship was moderated by both an objective and subjective measure of gender egalitarianism but in the opposite direction as hypothesized. The gender gap in WFE was larger in more gender-egalitarian countries, where women may be better able to transfer resources from the work domain to benefit their family role than in low egalitarian societies. National differences in labour market factors, family models and the public discourse on work–life balance mainly explain the unanticipated findings.

## **Work-to-Family Enrichment and Gender Inequalities in Eight European Countries**

### **Introduction**

Women's increased labour force participation across Europe, as elsewhere, has been driven by both economic need and the fact that women, like men, seek fulfilment beyond their family roles. Nevertheless, despite some shifts in gender roles in some contexts (e.g., Medved, 2016), employed women, and especially mothers, tend to retain a greater share of domestic and care work than their partners and experience higher levels of conflict between work and family responsibilities (Crompton et al., 2007; Fahlén, 2016). Consequently, there is an extensive body of research that has focused on work–family conflict and work–family balance (e.g., Byron, 2005; Ford et al. 2007; Greenhaus & Allen, 2011). However, there is also evidence that women can benefit from multiple roles (e.g., Barnett, 2004; Ruderman et al., 2002). Yet there has been much less research attention to gender differences in positive work and family relationships. Furthermore, it is increasingly recognised that experiences of the work-family interface are context dependent and that national context, including public policies, norms and values are particularly intersecting with organizational context (e.g., Beham et al., 2012, Lyness & Judiesch, 2014; Ollier-Malaterre et al., 2013; Ruppener & Huffman, 2014, Stavrou et al., 2015). Norms and values concerning gender equality are likely to be particularly significant in their impact on women's capacity to derive positive outcomes from their multiple roles (Powell et al., 2009). This article therefore examines the influence of gender and national gender egalitarianism on employees' work-to-family enrichment in eight European country contexts.

Work–family enrichment (WFE) is defined as “the extent to which experiences of one role improve the quality of life in the other role” (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006, p.73). A substantial body of empirical research has identified its antecedents and consequences (e.g.,

Carlson et al., 2011; Chen et al., 2016; McNall et al., 2009; Shockley & Singla, 2011). These studies have enhanced our understanding of enriching processes between work and family in single countries and cultures. Nevertheless, our knowledge about the influence of diverse national and cultural contexts on WFE remains very limited (Ollier-Malaterre et al., 2013; Powell et al., 2009).

There is a long tradition of focus on gender and beliefs about gender roles in research on work–family conflict and balance, although the evidence of gender differences in the work-family interface is inconsistent (e.g., Byron, 2005; Eby et al., 2005; Ford et al., 2007, Shockley & Singla, 2011). However, cross-cultural/national research on these areas is limited (see Rajadhyaksha et al., 2015 for a recent overview). In a study of dual-earner couples in 23 European countries, Steiber (2009) found women to report higher levels of time- and strain-based work-to-family conflict than men. A study of managers in 36 countries yielded significant moderating effects of gender egalitarianism as a cultural dimension on supervisors' assessments of man and women's work–life balance (Lyness & Judiesch, 2014). Despite this empirical evidence from research on work–family conflict and balance, there is little, if any cross-national/cultural research on WFE, gender and societal gender role beliefs (Rajadhyaksha et al., 2015). Although there is theoretical reasoning to support the view that cultural values and beliefs about men and women's roles in society may influence individuals' experiences of WFE (Powell et al., 2009), no cross-national/cultural comparative study on WFE has been found in the literature.

The present study addresses this shortcoming in the literature. Drawing upon social role theory (Eagly & Wood, 2012) and the culture-sensitive theory of WFE (Powell et al., 2009), gender differences in the experience of work-to-family enrichment among service sector employees in eight European countries are examined. Further, the study investigates whether societal differences in gender egalitarianism (GE) moderate the relationship between employee gender and work-to-family enrichment. The eight European countries in the sample

– Finland, Sweden, United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Germany, Portugal, Hungary, and Bulgaria – not only represent different welfare regimes with varying statutory supports for work–family integration (Kovacheva et al., 2011), but also vary in levels of gender equality and egalitarian beliefs about the division of work between men and women. By using both an objective measure of gender (in)equality (UN, 2010) and a subjective measure of gender traditionalism from the European Social Survey (Duncan et al., 2010), this study makes several contributions to the work–family literature and organizational practice.

First, to enhance gender equality in the work place, it is important to understand gender differences in WFE, given the well-documented importance of WFE for employee well-being and satisfaction (Carlson et al., 2014; Chen et al., 2016; Russo, 2015; Shockley & Singla, 2011; Stoddard & Madsen, 2007). To date, the role of gender and gender differences in WFE is not very well understood and findings are inconclusive, both in national as well as in internationally comparative research (Eby et al., 2005; -Shockley, & Singla, 2011; Rajadhyaksah et al., 2015). By using a trans-European sample, our study aims at elucidating this relationship.

Second, our study applies a novel, culture-sensitive approach for examining WFE in an international context. Culture is a complex and often contested concept, and national culture can be defined and operationalised in a number of ways. Drawing on Powell et al.’s (2009) typology of cross-cultural work–family research, the present study is the first to take a “culture-as-dimensions” approach to WFE, testing theory about the influence of one dimension of national culture, namely gender egalitarianism, on WFE. Studying gender egalitarianism at the societal level is important, as it can shape gender differences at the individual level. Taking such interactions into account may help explain previous inconsistent findings about gender and the work–family interface.

A third contribution of our study is to emphasize the implications of our findings for multinational companies operating in countries that differ with respect to gender

egalitarianism. Enhancing HR managers' knowledge on the complex interactions between societal gender egalitarianism, workers' gender, and WFE can increase their abilities to design appropriate HR policies in order to create enriching work environments in different institutional and cultural contexts.

### **Work–Family Enrichment**

WFE is conceptualized as a bi-directional construct: resource gains generated in one role improve the quality of life or performance in the other role and vice versa. Improvements in quality of life occur directly, through the transfer of resources from one role to the other, or indirectly, through the experience of positive affect in the respective role. These two mechanisms are referred to as the instrumental and the affective path in WFE theory (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006).

WFE differs from other positive linkages between work and family such as positive spillover and facilitation (Masuda et al., 2012; Wayne, 2009). Positive spillover refers to the transfer of moods, skills, values and behaviours between domains, but in contrast to WFE, it does not consider improvement of the quality of life in the other role. The main difference between work–family facilitation and enrichment lies in the different levels of analysis. Whereas facilitation focuses on improvements in system functioning, enrichment refers to improvements of individuals' quality of life in the respective role (Wayne, 2009).

Carlson et al. (2006) describe three different dimensions of WFE. First, work–family development refers to the transfer of knowledge and skills between roles. Second, work–family affect refers to moods and emotions generated in one role which influence performance in the other role. Again, these dimensions are bi-directional. The third dimension proposed by Carlson et al. (2006) has different labels for the two directions of resource transfer. Work-to-family capital refers to performance improvements in the family role due to psychological resources, such as self-esteem and accomplishment acquired at work. Family-

to-work efficiency refers to efficiency gains at work (better time management, focus) because of involvement in the family role. Although the majority of studies use aggregate measures of overall WFE (e.g., Bhargava & Baral, 2009; Carlson et al., 2011; Chen et al., 2016; Daniel & Sonnentag, 2016; Marques et al. 2015; Siu et al., 2011), a recent study by Nicklin and McNall (2013) provides evidence that the different dimensions of enrichment may have distinct antecedents and consequences. The present study focuses on developmental WFE and the transfer of resources along the instrumental pathway between work and family domain. We specifically focus on the developmental aspect of WFE because it is the most tangible dimension of WFE by which the quality of life or individual performance in the other domain is improved (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Resources that are transferred between life domains may include skills, abilities, knowledge and behaviors. For example, conflict resolution skills learned in a training at work may also enable employees to resolve conflicts more effectively within their families (Carlson et al. 2006).

### **Work–Family Enrichment and Gender**

Whereas gender differences have long been a focus in research on work–family conflict (Eby et al., 2005), the role of gender in the experience of WFE is much less understood. Although there is theoretical reasoning and some empirical evidence from research on work–family facilitation that men and women may experience WFE differently (Van Steenbergen et al., 2007), gender has been the focus in only few studies examining WFE. These studies mainly examined gender as a moderator of the relationships between antecedents (e.g., social support at work, job characteristics) and WFE or WFE and attitudinal outcomes, such as job/family satisfaction, commitment and turnover intentions (Baral & Bhargava, 2011; Chen et al., 2016; Marques et al., 2015; Shockley & Singla, 2011; Tang et al., 2012). Only Baral and Bhargava (2011) tested differences in mean levels of WFE and found no significant gender differences for both directions of WFE.

According to social role theory (Eagly & Wood, 2012), gender role expectations arise because people observe men and women in certain roles in society. Moreover, they infer that men and women possess corresponding attributes that make them well suited to perform their prescribed gender roles. Socialization processes facilitate conformity to prescribed gender roles. Traditional gender role expectations encourage women to identify more with their family and caregiver role, and men to focus more on paid work outside the home (McDaniel, 2008). Despite trends towards less traditional gender roles, women continue to be considered primarily responsible for care-giving and men primarily conceived as breadwinners in many societies (Crompton et al., 2007; Kovacheva et al., 2011). These expectations remain crucial to gender identities (Schober, 2013). Although most employed women in Europe make an essential contribution to family income, women, especially mothers, often perceive the need to justify their employment activities in order to conform to notions of the ideal mother or caregiver (Christopher, 2012; Herman & Lewis, 2012). Because of these gender role expectations, women may be more motivated than men to transfer whatever resource they can generate in the work role to benefit their families (Powell et al., 2009). In addition, their higher involvement in family activities may provide them with more opportunities to transfer knowledge and skills to the family domain and stimulate enrichment in this life domain. Consequently, it is hypothesized:

*Hypothesis 1: Women experience significantly higher levels of WFE than men.*

### **Work–Family Enrichment and Gender Egalitarianism**

There are however differences in the ways in which gender roles are ascribed or challenged in European societies. Greenhaus and Powell's (2006) theory on WFE was originally developed in the United States and neglected national and cultural differences. In a later article, Powell et al. (2009) recognized that cultural values can influence employees' experiences of WFE and extended their theoretical framework to propose a culture-sensitive approach. They



proposed the cultural dimensions of individualism/collectivism, humane orientation, and specificity/diffusion to moderate the relationships between resources generated in one domain and the experience of enrichment in the other domain. Important to this study is their reasoning on societal gender egalitarianism. Powell et al. (2009) suggest that GE at the societal level is one important factor which may influence experiences of WFE of men and women differently.

GE is concerned with the societal/cultural norms and values regarding men and women's roles in society. It reflects the degree to which a society minimizes gender differences through the promotion of gender equality. Low GE societies are characterized by beliefs about a traditional male breadwinner, female carer social model while in gender-egalitarian societies traditional gender roles are less emphasized and more equal involvement of men and women in work and family roles is encouraged (Emrich et al., 2004).

Although WFE is increasingly examined in countries other than the United States (e.g., Baral & Bhargava, 2010; Chen et al., 2016; Daniel & Sonnentag, 2016; Lee et al., 2011; Marques et al., 2015; Siu et al., 2011), comparative studies on WFE appear to be lacking. There is theoretical reasoning about the impact of national gender egalitarianism on men's and women's WFE. In their culture-sensitive theory on WFE, Powell et al. (2009) argue that gender differences in WFE along the instrumental path (the direct transfer of resources such as skills, knowledge, social capital from one role to another) should be less pronounced in more gender-egalitarian cultures, as these cultures put less emphasis on traditional gender roles. Also McDaniel (2008) suggests that in more gender-egalitarian cultures, the differentiation in gender roles and expected priorities by gender are emphasized less than in low egalitarian cultures. Consequently, it is hypothesized:

*Hypothesis 2: Gender differences in developmental WFE are moderated by gender egalitarianism, such that gender differences are smaller in more gender-egalitarian countries.*

### Study Context

The eight European countries in this study represent five different welfare regimes, providing different levels of statutory support for work–life integration (Esping-Andersen, 1999; Kovacheva et al., 2011). Table 1 presents an overview of welfare regimes, GE indices, and WFE raw means for the eight countries (for details on the measurement of WFE and the gender indices see the section on measures).

TABLE 1 HERE

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The Nordic countries in this study, Finland and Sweden, belong to the “social democratic” or “universalistic” welfare state regime, which is characterized by extensive public work–family policies and high levels of social security (Esping-Andersen, 1999). The state fosters equal and full-time employment opportunities for both men and women, but at the same time accommodates the needs of working parents (Kvist et al., 2012). The Nordic countries are often referred to as gender-egalitarian societies with a broad and long-lasting public discourse on gender equality. This is also reflected in both GE measures used in this study. The Nordic countries have low GII scores, indicating the high levels of objective gender equality in these countries, paired with the lowest scores on the gender traditionalism scale.

The “liberal” welfare regime of the United Kingdom is characterized by minimal state support for work–family integration, despite recent policy developments. Whereas in the social democratic regime of Finland and Sweden family wellbeing is conceived as a shared responsibility of the state and the family, in the UK, the market is the main provider of work–life support. Both public childcare provision and social protection of workers are low, relative to other European countries and flexibility of employment is high (Kovacheva et al., 2011; Lewis, 2012). Recent workplace surveys reveal that the belief that work and family concerns are an individual issue has increased among UK employers (Van Wanrooy et al., 2013).

Germany and the Netherlands represent the “corporatist” or “conservative” welfare regime in the sample. This regime promotes a modified male breadwinner model with one partner (usually the man) working full-time and the other partner caring for family members while working part-time (Kovacheva et al., 2011). In both countries part-time work is common, but it is exceptionally widespread in the Netherlands (Visser, 2002). The two countries also differ with respect to the GE indices. The Netherlands have the highest objective gender equality in the sample. Germany scores higher on both GE measures, indicating a more traditional view on the division of labour between men and women. Despite recent changes in the statutory parental leave policy, which aims at encouraging mothers to return to work earlier and getting fathers more involved in care-giving, the unique income tax system in Germany still highly favours the traditional gender distribution of paid and unpaid work (Kovacheva et al., 2011).

The “sub-protective” or “Mediterranean” welfare regime of Portugal is characterized by low social security and high familialism. Statutory support for work–family integration is limited and families continue to be the main care-providers. Despite some recent changes in governmental family policies (e.g., extended parental leave, increased working time flexibility), take up of these policies is low due to the economic necessity for two full-time incomes (Kovacheva et al., 2011). Most women work full-time, but men’s participation in household tasks and care-giving remains low. Men hold the most powerful positions in societies, whereas women shoulder the double burden (Aboim & Vasconcelos, 2012). Both GE measures reflect these inequalities. Portugal’s has an average GII score, which may reflect high female employment rates, but is the most traditional of all the Western European countries in the sample.

Hungary and Bulgaria represent the “post-socialist” welfare regime which, after 20 years of reforms, has moved from generous state-level support of a one-party system to a welfare regime which resembles a mix of universalistic but also individualistic elements. The

state is still considered responsible for providing support for work–life integration, but also the family plays an important role. Both post-socialist countries provide long statutory maternity and parental leaves but with no serious concerns for gender equality. Childrearing is considered a mother’s responsibility. In the least economically affluent countries in the sample, a public discourse on gender equality is still missing (Kovacheva et al., 2011). This is reflected in the exceptional scores on both GE measures.

## **Method**

### ***Sample and Procedure***

Data were collected within a larger research project on quality of work and life in Europe. Study participants were employees in eight European countries working in one of four different types of service sector organizations (financial services, information and communication technology (ICT), healthcare, and retail). We selected the service sector because of its persistently growing size and importance for economic development in Europe (Mustilli & Pelkmans, 2012). According to official statistics, employment in the service sector increased from 69.1% in 2005 to 73.1% in 2014 in the European Union (Eurostat, 2016). The four industries represent large shares of the labor force in all participating countries and employ diverse employees. This enabled us to collect a diversified sample including male and female, professional and non-professional workers, as well as private and public sector employees. Data were collected by means of online surveys and paper and pencil questionnaires. Bilingual researchers familiar with the local culture of each country translated the English master questionnaire into the national languages of the participating countries using Brislin’s (1986) back-translation method. Minor linguistic adaptations were made after small-scale pilot studies in each country. Response rates in the 32 organizations ranged from 20% to 79%.

TABLE 2 HERE

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The composition of the sample of 7,126 service sector workers is presented in Table 2. Country samples vary between 633 study participants in Sweden and 1,332 employees in Portugal. Sixty-two per cent of the sample was female and 61.8 % of the study participants worked in professional jobs. The average age of respondents was 40.2 years

### *Measures*

Developmental WFE was assessed with three items on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) (Carlson et al., 2006). –An example item is “My involvement in my work helps me to gain knowledge and this helps me to be a better family member”. Cronbach’s alpha for the scale was .93.

Following recommendations of Taras et al. (2009) to overcome the limitations of self-reported cultural values and to assess the construct more broadly, both the 2008 Gender Inequality Index (GII) of the United Nations and the Gender Traditionalism scale (GT) of Round 4 of the European Social Survey 2008 (ESS4) were used in statistical analysis, the closest measurements to the year of data collection in the eight European countries in 2007 and 2008. The GII is a composite measure of objective indicators reflecting gender inequality in reproductive health, female empowerment and labour force participation (UN, 2010). It is the most recent indicator for gender inequality of the United Nations and replaces the former Gender Developmental Index and the Gender Empowerment Measure (Klasen & Schüler, 2011). Whereas reproductive health is a less salient issue in European countries, empowerment is more important, and labour force participation in particular is a decisive issue in Europe. Female employment has constantly increased in many European countries in the past (Mau & Verwiebe, 2010). However, the composition of female employment varies across welfare state regimes, and so do outcomes and attainments of working women (Drobnič & León, 2014; Mandel, 2009).

The GT scale of the European Social Survey is a subjective indicator and assesses individuals' support of a traditional gender ideology and their beliefs about a traditional division of labour between men and women (Duncan et al., 2010). Aggregated country scores consist of two items from the ESS 4 which were rated on a 5-point scale: "When jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women" and "A women should be prepared to cut down on paid work for the sake of her family". Items were reverse coded for statistical analysis, with higher scores indicating less gender egalitarian values. Both the Cronbach's alpha and the Spearman-Brown coefficient for the scale were .63. The high correlation between both GE measures ( $r = .81, p < .01$ ) indicates that the measures assess similar concepts.

Gender was dummy-coded with 1 = female and 0 = male. Age, professional status (dummy-coded with 1 = professional and 0 = non-professional), number of children, working hours, job demands were included as control variables at the individual level in all models. Job demands were measured with four items on a 4-point scale (1 = never; 4 = always) (Sanne et al., 2005). Family-supportive organizational culture was included as a company-level control variable and assessed with 3 items on a 5-point Likert scale (Dijkers et al., 2004). Higher scores reflect a more family-supportive organizational culture. Cronbach's alphas for the scales were .74 and .85 respectively.

### ***Analytical strategy***

The sample comprises 7,126 employees in 32 service organizations in eight European countries. For this kind of nested data structure, hierarchical linear modelling (HLM) is recommended (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002). In a first step, baseline models without any predictors were estimated and intraclass correlation coefficients (ICC) for nestedness within organizations and within countries calculated. Nine percent of variance for WFE was located at the company level and five percent at the country level. Although the bulk of variance is

located at the individual level, hierarchical linear models are estimated, since HLM will yield more correct standard errors than ordinary least square regression (Gelman & Hill, 2007).

The data structure requires the estimation of hierarchical 3-level models. However, a small number of higher-level units can lead to computational problems and parameter estimates may be biased downwards in multilevel models (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002). Textbooks often recommend a minimum number of 10 to 50 units at the upper level, depending on the number of group-level predictors and whether the focus is on fixed regression predictors or the distribution of random effects (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002). Statistical models contain only one country-level predictor (GII or GT) and one cross-level interaction (gender x GII/GT) at a time to account for the fact that there are limited degrees of freedom at the country level. In addition, the focus is mainly on fixed effects rather than parameters to describe the distribution of random effects. Consequently, 3-level hierarchical linear models with employees as level 1, companies as level 2, and countries as level 3 units are estimated.

With this state-of-the-art methodological approach the complex data structure in this cross-national comparative study can be fully exploited. However, to counteract potential problems associated with a limited number of cases at level 3 and to strengthen the analysis of country-level predictors (GII/GT, gender x GII/GT), Bryan and Jenkins' (2016) recommendations are followed and multilevel analysis is supplemented with an alternative approach. The authors propose a two-step regression analysis in case of multilevel country data with large sample sizes of individuals within countries and low numbers of countries. In a first step, gender effects on WFE were estimated separately for each country. In a second step, GII/GT was regressed on these gender coefficients which correspond to the cross-level interaction gender x GII/GT, the effect that is of main concern in Hypothesis 2. The step-2 regression allows a straightforward visualization of the cross-level interaction effect which facilitates the validation of statistical results.

To enhance model estimation and the interpretation of results, the cross-level interactions terms, gender and level-2 variables were country-mean centered, level-1 variables were company-mean centered, and level-3 variables were grand-mean centered prior to multilevel analysis (Enders & Tofighi, 2007).

## Results

The means, standard deviations, and correlations of the individual-level variables are shown in Table 3.

TABLE 3 HERE

Table 4 reports unstandardized regression coefficients, standard errors, variance components, and deviances for the random slope models predicting WFE. Since the power to detect interaction effects is low in samples with few countries, findings at the 10% significance level are also reported in this section. Although the slope variances were non-significant in our models, we estimated the hypothesized cross-level interactions following recommendations of LaHuis and Ferguson (2009). They strongly recommend not using the significance of slope variance as a prerequisite for testing cross-level interactions but to test these interaction effects nonetheless.

TABLE 4 HERE

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In support of Hypothesis 1, being female ( $b = .101, p < .05$ ) was significantly and positively related to WFE. Effect sizes of the gender regression coefficients and p-values vary slightly across the three models in Table 4 but they portray a consistent picture. Some of the control variables yielded significant effects in all models with regression coefficients varying slightly across the three models. Professional status ( $b = .149, p < .01$ ) and organizational work–family culture ( $b = .361, p < .01$ ) were positively related to WFE, indicating that professionals and employees in organizations with supportive work-family culture experience



more WFE. Job demands ( $b = -.114, p < .01$ ), on the other hand, were negatively related to WFE.<sup>1</sup>

To test Hypothesis 2, the interaction terms of gender and both measures of GE were added in separate models. Model 2 yielded a significant interaction term for the GII ( $b = -.999, p < .05$ ). Also the interaction term including the subjective measure of Gender Traditionalism was significantly related to WFE ( $b = -.145$ ), although only at the 10% significance level (Model 3). To examine the direction of the moderating effects, plots for both interaction effects are provided.

FIGURE 1 HERE

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Figure 1. Interaction and Scatter Plots for Gender Inequality Index and Gender Traditionalism

Graphs A and B in Figure 1 show the plot of the significant interaction effects for the GII and GT. Contrary to prediction, it seems that gender differences in WFE are larger in more gender-egalitarian countries.

Following the two-step regression analysis approach recommended by Bryan and Jenkins (2016), the gender slope coefficients of the within-country OLS regressions with WFE as the dependent variable are plotted in Graphs C and D. A positive gender slope refers to higher WFE for women. Age, number of children, professional status, job demands, working hours and industry were included as control variables in OLS regressions. Graphs C and D show the scatterplots and the OLS regression lines with the GII and GT, respectively, on the x-axis and the gender slopes on the y-axis. These graphs confirm the HLM analysis pattern. Gender differences in WFE tend to be larger in the more gender-egalitarian countries with a low GII index, such as the Netherlands, Sweden but also Germany (Graph C). The low

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<sup>1</sup> We also ran all models including dummy-variables for the four service sector industries. Since type of industry did not have any significant main, moderating or mediating effect on the dependent variable and the cross-level interactions also remained stable in effect size and p-value, we did not include type of industry in our final models. We thereby follow suggestions of Spector & Brannick (2011) on the inclusion of additional controls.

gender-egalitarian countries can be found at the lower end of the regression line, with no gender differences in WFE among the Bulgarian study participants. Hungary is the only country with a small but negative association between employee gender and WFE, indicating that Hungarian men experience slightly more WFE than Hungarian women. A similar picture emerges in Graph D with the subjective measure of gender traditionalism as the moderator. Similar to the plot for the GII, gender differences in WFE are larger in more gender egalitarian countries (low gender traditionalism) and disappear at high levels of gender traditionalism. Graph D provides additional support for the overall pattern in the study sample, showing that gender differences in WFE are larger in more gender egalitarian than in low gender-egalitarian countries.

### **Discussion**

In an effort to enhance our understanding of inconsistent findings on gender and the work–family interface, and address gaps in the work-family literature, this study examined gender differences in the experience of developmental WFE among European service sector employees and the moderating effect of national gender egalitarianism on this relationship. Our results provide evidence for the argument that multiple role engagement is beneficial for women and families, particularly in a supportive gender-egalitarian societal climate. As hypothesized, a positive association between female gender and higher levels of developmental WFE was found in the pooled sample. The high salience of the family role to women’s identity appears to motivate or enable them more than men to transfer resources generated at work to the family domain, resulting in higher levels of WFE. Further, study results show that societal context in terms of gender egalitarianism interacts with gender at the individual level. Drawing upon Powell et al.’s (2009) culture-sensitive theory on WFE, it was hypothesized that gender differences in WFE along the instrumental path may be less pronounced in more gender-egalitarian societies, since these countries place less emphasis on

traditional gender roles, and men and women are more equally involved in work and care giving than elsewhere. The study yielded a significant interaction effect for both GE measures but in the opposite direction to that predicted. It appears that the gender gap in WFE is larger in more gender-egalitarian societies. The gap was largest in the Netherlands, followed by Germany, Sweden and the UK, all countries with high to medium levels of objective and subjective gender egalitarianism. Smaller differences in WFE between men and women were found in the less gender egalitarian countries, Portugal, Bulgaria and Hungary. Only Finland deviates to some extent from this pattern, with medium to high GE scores and a rather small gender gap in WFE.

At first glance, these findings seem surprising. However, a closer look at national differences in (women's) employment patterns, variations in welfare regimes, and the public discourse on work–life issues provide explanations. To begin with, men's levels of WFE do not deteriorate with increasing gender equality at the societal level as indicated by the interaction plots in Figure 1. However, in countries with greater objective and subjective gender equality, women's WFE is higher than that of men and of women in less egalitarian and more traditional countries. Powell et al. (2009) argue that because of gender role expectations, women may be more motivated than men to transfer whatever resources they can generate in the work role to benefit their families. This may be true both in more as well as in less gender egalitarian countries. Nevertheless, our findings indicate that it is only if a society actively promotes gender equality (as is the case particularly in the Nordic countries and the Netherlands), that women are better able to transfer resources generated at work to the family domain, thereby resulting in higher levels of WFE.

The eight European countries in our sample differ significantly in the prevalence of part-time employment and the discourses on work–life balance, gender equality and quality of life. It is striking that gender differences in WFE are largest in the Netherlands and Germany, but also in Sweden and the UK, countries in which part-time work is very common, especially

among women with young children (Cousins & Tang, 2004; Kovacheva et al., 2011). Hence, the observed impact of gender equality at the societal level may be associated with greater availability of part-time work in high-GE countries. These part-time jobs are largely taken up by women, leading to the prevalence of one and a half earner families in these countries (Den Dulk & Yerkes, 2016; Drange & Egeland, 2014; Yerkes & Visser, 2005). Working part-time may allow women to spend more time with family members, thereby providing more opportunities to transfer resources between the domains and facilitating higher levels of WFE. For men in one and a half earner families, there may be more pressure to act as the main breadwinner. This may be especially the case in the UK, where very long working hours are still common in many organizations (Lyonette, 2015), thus limiting the opportunities for men to experience WFE. Finland differs from other Nordic countries despite high levels of GE at the societal level. Part-time employment is considerably lower in Finland than in the other Nordic countries (Drange & Egeland, 2014), which may also at least partially explain the lower levels of WFE for Finland in our analysis. Thus availability of part-time work and prevalence of the one and a half rather than dual earner family model appear to explain the findings.

Another explanation may lie in the gendered nature of labour markets. In Sweden, labour markets are highly gender segregated and women, especially mothers, often concentrate in female-typed jobs in the public sector (Mandel, 2009). It could be that these jobs provide more opportunities for enrichment (e.g., development of interpersonal skills and knowledge). Future research could examine whether characteristics of female-dominated occupations in public sector employment feature work resources which stimulate the experience of WFE.

In countries of the Mediterranean regime and in post-communist countries, there is less gender segregation across employment sectors and women typically work full-time (European Commission, 2009). Thus, men and women are more similar in terms of

employment arrangements as well as job demands, which may contribute to a smaller gender gap in WFE. In addition, an extensive public discourse on work–life balance and how to achieve enrichment in both spheres does not exist in these countries and part-time work opportunities are limited (Nilsen et al., 2012). This sets them apart from the other countries in our sample. Irrespective of women’s own working time arrangements, living in a country with a high proportion of part-time working women may be associated with a gender-sensitive perception of the work–family interface. Part-time workers give priority to non-market activities around which the part-time job must be fitted. In such a societal climate, women are encouraged and thus more likely to transfer job resources into the family domain.

Although none of our explanations alone may fully explain the findings of the present study, it contributes to the international literature on WFE by pointing out the complexity of the relationships between cultural context, welfare regime, gender and WFE. Our results challenge the assumption that more gender equitable countries will provide more equal opportunities for WFE for everyone. Further, our findings indicate that time available to spend with family (which is determined by both organizational as well as national context) might be a crucial factor needing to be addressed in theorising enrichment processes.

To conclude, our findings clearly demonstrate that the culture-sensitive theory of enrichment is not sufficiently nuanced yet to be able to predict gender differences in WFE cross-culturally. Moreover, other cross-national research has identified important differences between countries within welfare-regime clusters (Den Dulk et al., 2012), which is illustrated by the Finnish, Hungarian and Bulgarian findings in the present study. This indicates the limitations of cross-national comparisons based solely on welfare state regimes. Cultural and national complexities require additional theorizing, taking account of labour market differences, national debates and discourses and other factors, as well as empirical verification.

### **Study Limitations and Future Research Suggestions**

This study has several limitations which need to be taken into account when interpreting the results. Our analysis is based on cross-sectional, self-reported data which introduces the possibility of common method bias. Although our findings are largely consistent with our theoretical reasoning, rival explanations for significant findings cannot be ruled out (Stone-Romero & Rosopa, 2008). The generalizability of our findings to other populations of employees may be limited, since the focus of the study was on service sector workers. Although, the eight European countries in our study represent five different welfare state regimes and both measures of GE have sufficient variation, future research will certainly benefit from the inclusion of more diverse samples and a broader array of countries from more diverse geographic and cultural regions. Finally, our study did not capture all dimensions of enrichment (Carlson et al., 2006). The study was part of a larger research project on quality of life in Europe. Due to restrictions regarding questionnaire length, we chose developmental WFE, since it had the best fit with the overall aim of the research project. Nevertheless, future studies may benefit from examining all dimensions as well as both directions of WFE.

### **Practical Implications**

Despite national variations, overall the present study supports the findings that women tend to report higher levels of WFE than men. It seems that the high salience of the family role for women and the greater amount of time available to spend with family, provides them with more opportunities to transfer knowledge and skills into the family domain and experience WFE. This has important policy implications for organizations, especially as our findings indicate that employees in organizations with supportive cultures reported more WFE. In order to enhance gender equality in the workplace, organizations may promote work-family programmes among male employees, and create organizational cultures which encourage men

to assume responsibility for care work. This may help them to equally reap the benefits of multiple role engagement. Since time for family seems to be an important factor in facilitating WFE, human resource managers may particularly consider practices that discourage employees from working excessive hours and encourage and make it more acceptable for men to work reduced hours or condensed work weeks. Raising awareness of the benefits of WFE for organizations through training and developmental activities and increasing knowledge about what types of jobs are conducive to WFE would further be helpful in this respect.

Above all, our study informs human resource managers in international companies about the complexity of cultural influences on WFE. Results clearly indicate that it is important to enhance opportunities in WFE through above mentioned programs including in gender-egalitarian countries, since it can not be assumed that companies in these countries provide more equal opportunities for WFE for everyone. Since explanations and processes for facilitating WFE differ across countries, international HR managers may find it useful to tailor their work–family programs carefully to the specific cultural and institutional context rather than simply duplicating programs across cultures and countries. Raising awareness of cross-cultural differences and increasing cross-cultural competences among managerial staff will clearly support multinationals' efforts in creating enriching work environments for all employees.

### **Conclusions**

Our study contributes to the scarce body of cross-national/cultural comparative research on WFE by examining the impact of gender egalitarianism at the societal level on gender differences in WFE at the individual level. The findings clearly show that female employees experience more developmental WFE than male employees in our trans-European dataset. Further our study revealed that the gender gap is larger in more gender-egalitarian societies. In order to enhance gender equality in European workplaces, human resource managers may

carefully craft work–family programs and supportive organizational that encourage both men and women to assume more caring responsibilities and consequently achieve similar levels of enrichment derived from multiple role engagement.

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Table 1

*Welfare State Regimes, Gender Equality, and Work-to-Family Enrichment (WFE)*

	SE	FI	UK	NL	DE	PT	HU	BU
Welfare state regime	Social democratic	Social democratic	Liberal	Corporatist	Corporatist	Sub-protective	Post-socialist	Post-socialist
GII	0.21	0.25	0.36	0.17	0.24	0.31	0.38	0.40
GT	1.92	2.09	2.57	2.25	2.62	2.87	3.06	3.13
WFE (all)	3.27	3.35	2.99	3.22	2.82	3.36	2.79	3.25
WFE (men)	3.22	3.24	2.90	2.99	2.73	3.33	2.79	3.22
WFE (women)	3.31	3.37	3.05	3.33	2.89	3.38	2.78	3.26

*Notes:*  $N = 7,126$ . Abbreviations for countries are as follows: Sweden (SE); Finland (FI); United Kingdom (UK); Netherlands (NL); Germany (DE); Portugal (PT); Hungary (HU); Bulgaria (BU). GII = Gender Inequality Index; GT = Gender Traditionalism. Lower GII and GT scores indicate more gender equality.

Higher WFE scores (raw means) indicate more WFE.

Table 2

*Study Sample*

Percentage	SE	FI	UK	NL	DE	PT	HU	BU	TOTAL
Men	37.8	18.7	41.1	31.8	40.9	46.3	51.9	24.8	37.7
Women	62.2	81.3	58.9	68.2	59.1	53.7	48.1	75.2	62.3
Age (mean)	44.2	39.7	42.0	40.1	42.3	37.7	38.7	38.6	40.2
No of children (mean)	0.94	0.71	0.70	0.88	0.69	0.82	0.91	0.88	0.81
Professionals	62.6	47.1	52.6	51.8	69.5	68.5	82.3	50.8	61.8
Industry									
Retail	16.1	13.2	24.1	29.1	13.0	27.4	20.6	30.4	21.8
ICT	31.1	46.2	31.8	21.8	43.9	22.1	43.1	22.4	32.6
Healthcare	22.6	17.4	20.7	30.8	26.1	11.5	15.0	25.3	20.8
Finance	30.0	23.3	23.4	18.3	16.9	16.9	21.3	21.9	24.8
<i>N</i>	633	795	762	984	1165	1332	807	648	7,126

*Note.* Abbreviations for countries: Sweden (SE); Finland (FI); United Kingdom (UK); Netherlands (NL); Germany (DE); Portugal (PT); Hungary (HU); Bulgaria (BU).

Table 3

*Pearson's Correlation Coefficients among Level 1 Variables (All Countries)*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Female	.62	.49	---						
2 Age	40.23	10.48	.00	---					
3 Number of children	.81	1.06	-.02*	.18**	---				
4 Professional	.62	.49	-.20**	.05**	.06**	---			
5 Working hours	35.92	7.58	-.21**	-.05**	-.05**	.19**	---		
6 Job demands	2.63	.57	.05**	.09**	.04**	.05**	.09**	(.74)	
7 WFE	3.13	.98	.08**	.00	.02	.03**	-.02	-.04**	(.93)

*Note.*  $N = 7,126$ ; \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ . Cronbach's alphas appear along the diagonal in parentheses.

Table 4  
*HLM – Predicting WFE with Gender and Gender Egalitarianism*

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	b	SE	b	SE	b	SE
<b>Individual level</b>						
Female	.101*	(.037)	.110**	(.032)	.104**	(.036)
Age	.003**	(.001)	.003**	(.001)	.003**	(.001)
No of children	.008	(.011)	.007	(.011)	.008	(.011)
Professional	.149**	(.028)	.151**	(.028)	.150**	(.028)
Working hours	-.001	(.002)	-.001	(.002)	-.001	(.002)
Job demands	-.114**	(.022)	-.114**	(.022)	-.114**	(.022)
<b>Company level</b>						
WF culture	.361**	(.113)	.354**	(.114)	.358**	(.113)
<b>Country Level</b>						
GII			-.795	(1.090)		
GT					-.189	(.196)
<b>Interactions</b>						
Female x GII			-.999*	(.419)		
Female x GT					-.145†	(.084)
<i>Intercept</i>	3.138**	(.082)	3.142**	(.085)	3.134**	(.086)
<i>Var (residual)</i>	.863**		.863**		.863**	
<i>Var (intercept level 2)</i>	.045		.049		.045	
<i>Var (slope level 2)</i>	.002		.000		.000	
<i>Var (intercept level 3)</i>	.030**		.031**		.030**	
<i>Var (slope level 3)</i>	.013		.008		.012	
<i>Deviance</i>	18,666.36		18,658.52		18,667.09	

Note.  $N = 7,126$ ; † $p < .10$ ; \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ . Gender: 0 = male; 1 = female.

GII = Gender Inequality Index;

GT = Gender Traditionalism.