THESIS SYNOPSIS

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Work-Family Conflict of Hungarian Manager Fathers

titled Ph.D. dissertation

Supervisor:

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Content

1. Research Topic and Literature Review

1.1 Relevance of the Topic

In the centre of the dissertation stands work-family balance, an issue which started to attract researchers' attention in the 1960s, and is now one of the most popular research topics. The value of balancing work and family has become widespread in most European societies and embedded as a norm in EU documents and discourse on gender equality and family well-being (Hobson – Fahlén, 2009). Work-family balance, however, is often regarded as an issue for women, even if the discourse about it is formulated in a gender-neutral way (Lewis, 2007). The reason for this is that the uninterrupted full-time working model of men is still often taken for granted (Burke, 2000). On the other hand, there are increasing expectations that men should take part in home and child care duties, especially in the Nordic countries, but in Western societies generally. Consequently, men who are required to face the difficulties of harmonizing work and life (just as working women do) are no longer rarities (Eräranta – Moisander, 2011; Halrynjo, 2009; Duyvendak – Stavenuiter, 2004). Empirical findings confirm the proposition that men today are experiencing greater conflict with their work and family roles than ever before (Ladge et al., 2014). Especially after they become fathers, men too can find it difficult to 'have it all': that is, to have a satisfying job and the time to sustain good relationships in their communities, as well as with their children and partners (O'Brien et al, 2007). In men's lives, the risk is divorce and the loss of an important part of their social networks as a consequence of working long hours, neglecting familial responsibilities and being 'weekend fathers'. These factors create tension in their domestic relationships and also prevent them from gaining personally valuable experiences as fathers through more involved engagement and closer relationships with their children. For children, a family with a good work-family balance is an important component of a harmonious family environment (Eräranta – Moisander, 2011).

Harmonizing work and family in the lives of fathers can be even more difficult if they have demanding, time and energy-consuming jobs; for example, if they occupy managerial positions. Empirical results show that men in managerial positions are often subject to a high level of conflict (Allard et al, 2007). Competition-driven pressure to be responsive and flexible has forced organizations to downsize and reduce hierarchical levels, adding complexity to managers' jobs (Mayo et al., 2011). Therefore managers not only face longer working hours, but a high level of responsibility (Szalma, 2014). In addition, leaders are important in times of organizational change, especially in new fields and types of change such as promoting the work-family balance in companies. Managers are in position to help or hinder the development of a family-supportive organizational culture, and they can be role models for other employees (Allard et al., 2007; Holter, 2007). Still, there is currently a lack of studies that focus on managerial men and the work-family balance (Mayo et al., 2011), particularly in Central and Eastern European countries.

Besides the individual consequences of the lack of balance such as poorer physiological and psychological health and diminished family functioning (Burke, 2000), the topic of work-family

balance has gained importance from the state and an organizational viewpoint as well, since helping individuals to manage a career and a family can increase both birth rates and employment rates. From a business perspective, disharmony in one's life or dissatisfaction with work can cause a deterioration in performance, burnout, accidents and higher levels of fluctuation and absenteeism. These effects may cause significant losses, a fact which increases the interest of companies in the issue of work-family balance (OECD, 2008; Nagy, 2008; Kelly et al., 2010).

1.2 Research Questions and Literature Review

The purpose of this thesis is to analyse the conflicts between work commitments and the family life of Hungarian fathers in managerial positions. For this a case study was undertaken by the Hungarian subsidiary of a Scandinavian multinational service sector company, wherein 43 personal interviews were made with manager fathers and an additional 15 interviews with manager mothers as a control group. This research intends to enrich the Hungarian literature about the work-family interface and to fill the research gap about men. The novelty of this research is that it combines different aspects of work-family conflict, covering time-, strain- and behaviour-related problems with a focus on the special sample of manager fathers. The aim is to explore a broad scope of work-family conflict mechanisms through this case. In addition, it is designed to merge the concept of work-family conflict with masculinities studies and management literature by shedding light on the complex interrelations that exist between managerial position, fatherhood and work-family interactions. For this study of the organizational context individual work-family behaviours and acts are embedded in, it is indispensable to understand why certain work-family balance strategies work, while others fail. This work draws attention to the role of the company in employees' work-family balance and thus may be a useful source of information to managers, both as employees trying to harmonize their own work and family lives, and as leaders through their influence on corporate culture. The research is designed around three main research questions, which are the following:

1. How do manager fathers perceive and experience the conflicts between their work and family life?

- *What are the sources of these conflicts?*
- *What are the consequences?*
- *What are the strategies they use to balance work and family life?*

The relationship of work and family can be described by the term work-family interface, which includes every practice and experience of how life spheres come together (Tammelin, 2009). This includes various approaches, such as segmentation hypothesis, compensation hypothesis, spillover, positive interactions, border theory or the widely known work-life balance term. From the numerous concepts the dissertation is focusing primarily on conflict theory that has been the most widely used concept in work-family studies since the 1980s (Grzywacz.–Marks 2000).

Work-family conflict theory is based on two approaches: scarcity and role stress theory. Scarcity theory assumes that the relation of work and family can be understood as a zero sum game, since personal resources of time, energy and attention are finite, which can be easily depleted when individuals participate in multiple roles (Grzywacz.–Marks 2000). Therefore, the devotion of greater resources to one role inevitable necessitates the devotion of lesser resources to the other role (Greenhaus – Powell, 2003). Role stress theory assumes that if a given set of social roles impose conflicting role expectations and pressures towards a person, this can create psychological conflict and role overload for that individual. A key element of a role conflict is the simultaneous occurrence of role pressures that hinder compliance with competing role expectations. In their influential paper, Greenhaus and Beutell (1985:77) define work-family conflict as "a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect. That is, participation in the work (family) role is made more difficult by virtue of participation in the family (work) role".

Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) have posited the existence of three major forms of work-family conflict: time-, strain-, and behaviour-based conflict. Time-based conflict refers to overlapping schedules and pressures between work and family roles, due to which it may be impossible to be both physically as well as psychologically present within both roles. Strain-based conflict occurs when work- and family-related stressors arise that produce mental and emotional strain, due to which the demands of other life spheres are difficult to fulfil. Behaviour-based conflict refers to the different behavioural expectations related to work and family domains and the inability to adjust one's behaviour according to these expectations within each life sphere. Most of the empirical studies that use Greenhaus and Beutell's (1985) conflict definition focus on the time-and strain-based items and the findings for behaviour-based conflict are scarce, thus somewhat vague in comparison to the other two types (Rantanen, 2008).

Based on Greenhaus and Beutell's (1985) definition, there is also a relative consensus that work-family conflicts are bi-directional. Accordingly, work can interfere with family (work-to-family conflict) and family with work (family-to-work conflict). This idea of two-dimensionality conflict assumes that work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict have different sources as well as consequences (Frone, 2003). Empirical findings, however, show some reciprocal relationship between the constructs, meaning that if one experiences either of the conflict directions, one is also likely to experience the other, although it seems that the correlation remains at a modest level. Consequently, there is both overlap and unique variance between the directions of work-family conflict (Tammelin, 2009; Rantanen, 2008).

Consequently the first research question concerns the general perception of work-family conflict, and has a focus on different aspects of the phenomenon such as sources and consequences of conflict, as well as adaptive strategies. Regarding the latter the concept of boundary management style is used. This refers to the "general approach an individual uses to demarcate boundaries and regulate

attending to work and family roles", or namely, whether individuals are used to separating or integrating work and family domains (Kossek – Lautsch, 2012:8).

2. How does the organization influence manager fathers' perceptions about work-family conflicts?

- *To what extent is flexibility stigma and a compulsion for visibility present?*
- *How entitled are manager fathers to make claims for an appropriate work-family balance, and what are their agency and capability options within the company?*

To exceed analysis at the individual level, the relation between managers and companies will be analysed as well. The high performance organizations which now exist, especially in globalized working life, are increasing their expectations towards employees regarding time, energy and commitment. The constant and fast-paced change of organizations, the more demanding intensified working practices and environments result in feelings of pressure, a lack of time and general 'busyness' (Lewis et al., 2007). In service sector professional jobs, the knowledge each worker possesses is the main resource or capital of a company. This, in turn, requires a certain type of work organization that is able to give employees a great degree of autonomy so they can use their knowledge in both a creative and an efficient way (Kvande 2009). All of these changes have resulted in the emergence of a new, flexible time regime which promises greater autonomy, in sharp contrast to the traditional, industrial Fordist style of time management with its standardized working hours and fixed time schedules which draws a clear boundary between work and free time (Kvande 2009; Tausig – Fenwick 2001).

Companies functioning in the high-paced post-Fordist environment are often labelled *greedy organisations* (Coser, 1974) which seek exclusive and undivided loyalty from their employees. Greedy organisations are able to generate commitment from employees in three ways: firstly, they make significant demands on their members' time and energy. Secondly, they offer a position of status by creating an aura of exclusivity around the institution and by putting pressure on individual members to weaken their ties outside the organization. Thirdly, they build close links with the social identity of their members through the elements of this exclusivity (Burchielli et al., 2008). The secret behind greedy organizations is the hidden mechanisms: in a boundless time culture, work is internalized, always present in the mind of workers without the need for the employer to control the employee. The disciplinary processes of empowerment and individualization make professional and managerial employees themselves the driving force behind a culture of long working hours (Williams et al., 2013). As a result, how to harmonize work and family can appear to be a personal responsibility, an individual's 'choice', while the role of the organizational system is not emphasized, even if choices are socially embedded (Lewis et al., 2007).

Research findings suggest, however, that a high-performance environment requires that companies support the work-family balance and family-friendly initiatives for their employees (Van Echtelt et al., 2009). The most typical family-friendly arrangements that companies offer are usually

based on flexibility. Flexible initiatives primarily include flexible working hours such as flextime, flex leave, part-time options or flexible working locations (through telecommuting) (Allard et al. 2007). Flexibility may also have unexpected side effects, since without clear boundaries between work and private life work can easily continue at the expense of family life in the case that employees work even longer hours than they would without such arrangements (Kvande, 2009; Tammelin, 2009; Kelly et al., 2010). The other problem with flexible and family-friendly opportunities is that although they are seen as an indicator of an organization's responsiveness to employees' work-family concerns, they often exist only on paper for public relations reasons, and real usage rates are low (Williams et al., 2013). Low usage rates stem in part from fears of *flexibility stigma* and career penalties, since the use of flexibility policies might result in wage penalties, lower performance evaluations and fewer promotions (Williams et al., 2013; Erin – Blair-Loy, 2014). Moreover, the use of these arrangements is more costly for men. Even using modest work-family policies, such as taking a few days of sick leave to care for an ill child, can trigger penalties for fathers (Erin – Blair-Loy, 2014). The reason for this is that having a managerial position requires men to be irreplaceable at work (Kvande 2009; Halrynjo – Lyng 2013).

Hobson and her co-authors (2009; 2011) use Sen's (2008) agency and capabilities framework to gain more complex understanding of work-family balance than simply analysing at the individual level. This approach exceeds the individual level by including the institutions, rules, and informal norms collectively held by others, and by analysing how these influence the individual's access to resources as well as the perception about their own freedom to choose. Hobson and her co-authors (Hobson et al., 2011) do not intend to define what the ideal work-family balance is. Instead, the capabilities paradigm focuses on the "possibilities for converting resources into substantive freedoms to make choices and the constraints (institutional and societal/normative) that lead toward work-life imbalance and its consequences" (Hobson et al., 2011:171).

Conversion factors (social rights; gender equality norms), *situated agency* (resources and assets) and *workplace organizational culture* determine how institutional resources are converted into agency, since these three elements together lead to a so-called *sense of entitlement* to make claims for work-family balance, and therefore to higher agency freedom (Hobson et al., 2011). Those with more individual resources (namely, situated agency) are more likely to have a greater capability to make claims on work-family balance, especially when conversion factors are also suitable, such as when work-family balance arrangements or gender equality ideologies are embedded in policy and practice. The level of workplace firm is the place where claims for work-family balance are made and granted or denied. A workplace organizational culture that reflects sensitivity to employees' work-family balance can be seen as a site for converting policies into work-family balance claims. At the same time, organizational culture can also affect how and to what extent employees face potential penalties and risks to work-family balance claims, including job loss and discriminatory treatment in pay and promotion (Hobson et al., 2011). Consequently the aim of second research question is to specify those

formal and informal constraints, norms, and resources that influence managers' ability to claim a work-family balance in the framework of capabilities paradigm (Hobson et al., 2011; Sen, 2008).

3. Research Question: to what extent do the discourses on involved fathering and managerial masculinity act as ideals to men, and how do these ideals affect work-family conflict?

Empirical results from the United States (Ladge et al., 2014) as well as Sweden (Allard et al., 2011) showed that those men who are more family oriented and those living in dual-earner couples are more likely to experience work-family conflicts than men in traditional male breadwinner families. Similarly, according to international comparative studies (Van der Lippe et al., 2006; Geszler, 2014), male employees in Northern- and Western-European countries face more work-family conflict than working men in post-socialist nations although the formers put considerable emphasis on the issue of work-life balance.

This paradox can be understood as emancipation in western and especially northern countries expects both parents to be active in labour force as well as at home resulting in conflict between the work and family domains (Ladge et al., 2014; Allard et al., 2007). In the post-socialist countries however the conservative expectations are supporting the traditional division of paid an unpaid labour, where the man is the breadwinner of the family, while the woman is responsible for the care and household tasks (Van der Lippe et al., 2006). The traditional male breadwinner model is also completely in accordance with the employer's expectations, the ideal employee model, which considers work as the main element of men's life. In this interpretation being a good father, unlike being a good mother, is not seen as culturally incompatible with being a good employee. It is rather the contrary, where being a good provider is seen as an integral part of being a good father (Williams et al., 2013). Moreover, the breadwinner role cannot be simply associated with the economic needs of the family, but as the literature on managerial masculinity states, managerial positions are also associated with social and symbolic power that binds the masculine identity to business (Bowman, 2007).

It is not the case however in those situations where not the traditional breadwinner model is followed. Man as the breadwinner ideal is contested by the ideal of the *involved father*, who is committed to care and family responsibilities (Williams et al., 2013). The rise of the nurturing father ideal is not something to be understood in the frame of ideal employee, since the expectations towards men are different. While the ideal employee expects men to focus primarily on their work neglecting the care responsibilities, the ideal of involved fathering expects fathers to take active role in their child's nurturing and care. These contrary expectations might help to understand why men now report greater levels of work-family conflict than before (Williams et al., 2013; Kvande, 2009).

Moreover men in managerial and professional positions are found to face even higher level of conflict (Allard et al, 2007). Ford and Collinson (2011) concludes that the ideal employee model, the taken for granted, uninterrupted, long working hours career model is even stronger in these positions (Burke, 2000). Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) defines this phenomenon as behaviour-based work-

family conflict referring to the different behavioural expectations attached to work and family domains and the inability to adjust one's behaviour to these expectations within each life sphere.

Therefore the third research question focuses on the different interpretations of masculinities and their influence on manager fathers' work-family balance, assuming that the gap between the ideal manager and involved father might serve as significant conflict source. Hungarian fathers in general are found (Takács, 2008; Pongrácz, 2001; Harcsa, 2014) to stand far from the involved father ideal experienced in Nordic countries, since among others their assistance in parental leave is remarkably low (Hobson et al., 2011). There is however a slow increase in fathers' time spent with children (Pongrácz and Molnár, 2011; Harcsa, 2014) which together with the existing breadwinner role expectations might create double pressure on Hungarian fathers (Spéder, 2011).

2. Research Metodology

I have chosen to use a case study method, expecting that the carefully selected context might be the best to observe the above-mentioned mechanisms. Case studies can serve several purposes, such as theory building, exploring, theory testing or confirming findings from other studies, although they are usually believed to serve for hypotheses generation at the early stages of research (Bryman, 1989). In this dissertation the primary goal is to evaluate and potentially confirm the findings of other studies since I intend to analyse how the mechanisms described in the literature review are valid in the case of the presently described sample. Accordingly, the study is similar to the 'explanatory type' described in Yin's (2003) categorization of case studies. Besides the exploratory and descriptive type of research, explanatory research analyses the presumed linkages in real-life interventions that are too complex for survey or experimental strategies. This research involves an *interview-based case study*. According to Bryman (1989), in this type of case study the chief emphasis is on undertaking unstructured or semi-structured interviews in 1–5 organizations. Observation may occur, but in non-participant way with the researcher being very much on the periphery of interaction, and is undertaken in a somewhat unstrategic manner in the periods between interviews or at meal-times.

A large-sized service sector company in Scandinavian ownership was chosen for analysis. The Scandinavian origin of the company is important in the sense that Nordic societies are well-known for their longstanding policy legacy of promoting gender equality and work-family balance in the workplace (O'Brien et al, 2007). The reasons for investigating a large, service sector company are the following: 1) the existence of a post-Fordist time regime (resulting in the blurring of borders between work and home) is more typical of multinational, knowledge based companies (Kvande 2009; Lewis et al., 2007; Allard et al., 2007); 2) these high-commitment corporations are more often regarded as greedy organizations, which might be creating work-family conflict (Burchielli et al., 2008); 3) there is a greater chance that formal work-family and family friendly initiatives will exist at large-sized, multinational companies (Van Echtelt et al., 2009); 4) it is also relevant that in Hungary management is dominated by men (Nagy, 2007), therefore presumably even if the schedules of the potential interviewees are tight and the chance of refusing to participate in the research is high, it will not be a problem identifying other interviewees for analysis. To sum up, the phenomena I would like to analyse such as blurring borders, work-life balance and family friendly initiatives, flexibility stigma and visibility are more likely to be found in this environment.

Within this company the sample consists of managers from group manager level to C level positions (namely, lower level managers to top-level managers), who are already fathers. Female managers are also included in the sample as a control group using the same selection parameters (lower level management to C level management, already mothers). Only Hungarian managers were interviewed, so excluded from the sample are those few foreign managers who were working in the Hungarian subsidiary. Managers from abroad might have been differently socialized and have a different cultural background and therefore might perceive the work-family balance issue differently

to Hungarian managers. The total sampling approach was used; namely, access to all potential interviewees who met the sampling parameters. The reasons for choosing managers as the sample population are the following: 1) work-family and family friendly arrangements are generally more available to individuals in this position (Primecz et al., 2014); 2) managers have been found to face a higher level of work-family conflict (Allard et al, 2007; Geszler, 2014); 3) managers are in a position to promote or hinder work-family programs, and can act as role models for other employees (Allard et al., 2007; Holter, 2007); 4) and the discrepancy between the ideal employee and involved fatherhood may be the greatest in this position (Greenhaus – Beutell, 1985).

Managerial interviews are semi-structured interviews that are analysed with the use of NVivo10 software. The interview analysis was undertaken according to *theory-oriented qualitative content analysis* (Mayring, 2014) which offers a system of general principles about the subject that can be examined, and is also regarded as the cumulative experience of others in the same field. As Mayring (2014) states, there are various forms of qualitative content analysis. This author differentiates four main types with sub-categories: reduction, explication, structuring and mixed forms. He highlights the fact that qualitative content analysis does not need to be limited to only a single form, but several procedures can be combined, depending on the aim of the research. The research described in this thesis is a mixed, alternative form of the structuring type of qualitative content analysis. Structuring is a deductive category assignment that is designed to establish a system of categorization before coding of the text is undertaken using theory, former studies and research findings. The goal is to extract a certain structure from the material under study by assigning textual components systematically to categories. The reason that this research cannot be labelled as solely structuring is that inductive category assignment was also used, besides the deductive approach. This means that most of the coding categories were pre-defined based on theories and previous research, just as occurs with the structuring style; on the other hand, some additional categories were also established based on the text through an inductive process. Through this combination the advantages of both theoretical considerations and a material-driven approach are obtained. This mixed version of structuring is labelled *content structuring* or *theme analysis* by Mayring (2014).

Content structuring involved the following steps: the semi-structured interviews were recorded on tape and then transcribed in typed form. The transcripts were input into to NVivo software along with the contents of the Excel table which included the demographic data about respondents. Category creation involved narrower categories ('child nodes') embedded in broader categories ('parent nodes'). Through this approach the advantages of both broader, more generalized categories and narrower, detailed categories can be used and seen in a structured way. The coding units were sentences or mostly short paragraphs of interview transcripts because it was necessary to understand the context in which the words were spoken. After coding the first 10 interviews, the categories and coding guideline were revised before the final work-through of material. The final step involved analysis of these categories by summarizing the content, checking category frequencies and interpreting contingencies.

3. Results

2.1 Relevance of Managerial and Male Focus

From a gender viewpoint, the research draws attention first of all to the importance of including men in work-family analyses. Moreover, the findings justify the 'within-gender' concept (Cinamon – Rich, 2002; Martinengo, 2007) and support the proposition that there are significant differences between men and in terms of how they perceive their work and family harmonization. Although the sample was very homogenous according to demographic characteristics, men evaluated and defined their work-life balance in different ways, had various strategies and preferences regarding flexibility and boundary management and distinct notions and experiences about fatherhood. Interestingly, there was less difference between men and women in the sample than within genders, confirming Hochschild's (2001) finding that men and women have similar experiences when it comes to harmonizing work and family. Both men and women primarily perceive that conflict runs in the work-to-family direction; while the demands of the home domain can be more easily excluded from work. In the case of men, this was expected based on previous empirical results (Burchell et al., 2007); women, however, are usually found to experience more family-to-work conflict (Greenhaus – Parasuraman, 1999; Hill et al., 2004). The contradiction can be explained by the fact that female managers have adapted to male working norms. In addition workplace can serve as 'haven' (Hochschild, 2001) when rules, responsibilities and feedbacks are clear, while domestic life is often unmanageable and unstructured compared.

Although several previous studies (Van der Lippe et al., 2006; Ladge et al., 2014) found that men in post-socialist countries face less work-family conflict than Nordic or Western societies due to conservative gender attitudes and the traditional division of paid and unpaid labour, the consequences of work-family conflict concern Hungarian men as well. The results are in line with former studies (Ladge et al., 2014; Allard et al., 2007) stating that primarily those men are concerned with work-family conflict who live in dual-earner households. Consequently, a more egalitarian division of labour implies similar challenges for men and women in terms of the harmonization of work and family life, although men's contribution to household chores still lags behind women's share, who are burdened with the 'second shift' (Hochschild – Machung, 1989). Even a traditional division of labour does not guarantee a lack of conflict situations in men's lives, even if corporate wives (Kanter, 1977) provide a significant amount of both emotional and instrumental social support for their husband's careers (Kossek et al., 2012; Aycan – Eskin, 2005; Neff – Karney, 2005) often by sacrificing their own career progress.

Moreover, choosing managers as a sample also proved to be relevant: the interviews, together with the Employee Engagement Survey, confirm the findings (Allard et al, 2007; Mayo et al., 2011; Szalma, 2014; Geszler, 2014) that managers are even more exposed to the danger of work-family conflict than other occupational groups. Although they have more access to organizational family-friendly and work-life balance programs, and have more work-related autonomy (Van Echtelt et al.,

2009; Hobson – Fahlén, 2009), it is exactly this freedom and flexibility that puts the responsibility for work and family balance on their shoulders. Therefore, not only longer working hours and greater emotional and mental pressure, but primarily the greater level of responsibility characterizes their jobs in a post-Fordist working environment.

2.2 Time Squeeze and Job Stress as the Most Significant Conflict Sources

In the conservative Hungarian context it is remarkable that men in the sample recognised the importance of work-life balance in their own lives and did not treat it as an issue relevant only to women. The majority of men perceived that there existed certain problems deriving from work and family demands. Although most of them had mixed feelings and reported about temporary or less serious problems they could cope with, one group of men expressed complete dissatisfaction regarding their current work-life balance. Manager fathers in this sample experienced time-based conflict most frequently and considered time squeeze the most serious problem in work and family harmonization. Strain-based conflict was also a frequently identified phenomenon, although the severity differed among interviewees. Time-based and strain-based conflicts are connected in the sense that a feeling of general busyness and a time squeeze, typical of the post-Fordist time regime (Lewis et al., 2007; Kvande, 2009), as well as a lack of time for relaxing activities are partly the causes of stress. On the other hand, having a managerial position involves a higher level of job stress, as certain studies indicate (Mayo et al., 2011; Szalma, 2014), especially at the top level of management. As a consequence of job stress, it not rare that men in the sample feel impatient and frustrated, often projecting their negative feelings onto family members.

2.3 Managerial Masculinity and Involved Fatherhood: Double Pressure but Enhancing Roles

The least frequent type of conflict identified was behaviour-based conflict, although I find this component the most original element of the research in the sense that previous Hungarian studies mainly have a time focus (Nagy, 2008; Tóth, 2007; Primecz et al., 2014; Sebők, 2015), or occasionally, a focus on strain (Utasi, 2011; Blaskó, 2006) and even international research often neglects investigation of behaviour-based conflict (Rantanen, 2008). Behaviour-based conflict is also connected to the other two conflict types, since it is primarily due to manager fathers' feelings of a lack of time of that they cannot fulfil both their roles as provider and involved father which results in tension and a sense of guilt. On the one hand they have to prove themselves to be committed employees, as in the ideal employee concept (Acker, 2006), but also present and available for their children in terms of emotions, care and attention, like an involved father (Wall – Arnold, 2007; Johansson – Klinth, 2008). Hungarian fathers in general are found (Takács, 2008; Pongrácz, 2001; Harcsa, 2014) to be far from the ideal of the involved father experienced in Nordic countries (Hobson et al., 2011). On the other hand, there has been a slow increase in the time fathers spend with children (Pongrácz – Molnár, 2011; Harcsa, 2014) and an understanding of the need for quality time (Takács, 2013) which together with expectations about the need to fulfil the role of breadwinner role create dual

pressure on Hungarian fathers (Spéder, 2011). As Spéder (2011) and Pongárcz and Molnár (2011) conclude, expectations towards Hungarian men cannot be simply labelled either traditional or modern since are mixed. Fatherhood implies responsibility in terms of both material aspects, like providing financial security and safety, and post-modern elements, like showing good examples and transmitting values. Emotional and caring tasks, however, like being available for a child, devoting time and attention, but above all, love, were even more frequently mentioned than material elements. On the other hand, through their increased responsibility fathers become even more 'trusted workers' (Williams et al., 2013), since they do not dare to risk their jobs as key elements of their role as providers. This fact is even more valid during periods of crisis when insecurity and economic factors motivate couples to accept traditional attitudes and the division of labour (Szalma – Takács, 2013) and 'pragmatic realism' (Ladge et al., 2014) which can dominate the desire to be caring and nurturing fathers. Thus economic reasons can still legitimize the absence of the father from family domain, which explains why behaviour-based conflict is the least frequent among the conflict types. Findings indicate that having a more child-oriented attitude, however, does not involve more active participation in chores, similarly to the results of previous international research (Johansson – Klinth, 2008; Rehel, 2013). Household tasks and the less visible, routine components of child care are still the wife's responsibilities, although some men in the sample admit that this is not a gender-equal way of dividing up tasks. In the case of dual-earner couples, and especially with female managers, the help of grandparents and paid service support the logistics of managing child care and the household.

The interviewees' sense of responsibility for their families is strong, as it is also for the colleagues and teams they lead, since they are often seen as "greedy children" as well. Both manager men and women feel committed to the company and their work, and thereby greedy organizations can create links with the social identity of managers (Coser, 1974; Burchielli et al., 2008). The respondents' managerial masculinity is constructed by power-related elements (Collinson – Hearn, 1996) like control and competition, but also cooperation, fratriarchy (Hearn, 1992) and solidarity between colleagues. The disadvantages of the centrality of control in a managerial position appeared with those men who felt trapped regarding their boundary management styles. It is they who are afraid of lagging behind and missing something, and who always try to make themselves available to monitor every process, even during holidays, and to be irreplaceable at work (Halrynjo – Lyng, 2013). Consequently, they do not feel that they are in a position to refuse a task, or to draw the lines between work and home, even if they claim to. Thus they are chasing control in their work which they lack in terms of the balance and boundaries between work and family. When talking, however, about the relationship between managerial and father roles most of the men highlighted the similarities between the two domains; moreover, many of them raised examples of work-family enrichment and positive spillover. Accordingly, fatherhood can bring emotions, care and attention into leadership; a finding that confirms that involved fathering is beneficial to organizations (Ladge et al., 2014; Allard et al., 2007), while managing and organizing skills are also useful in parenting, although in the literature less is said about the positive effects of work on family life. Switching between the behaviours or attitude

used at home and work rarely creates a problem, however, primarily because managers in the sample do not significantly identify either with managerial masculinity or with involved fatherhood: their style of managing involves more cooperation and emotion, while their fathering is less involved than in it is Nordic or Western societies.

2.4 High Control Over Boundaries as a Key to Balance

Different individual adaptive strategies are preferred for managing work-family contradictions: based on the concept of boundary management style (Kossek and Lautsch, 2012) some choose to integrate home and work with the help of flexibility, work autonomy and information technology, while others prefer to separate the two domains. Both can work well when managers feel in control over their preferred boundary management style and do not perceive restrictions from the company. In accordance with Mellner's (et al., 2014) statement, having control over a boundary management strategy is more important for reducing work–family conflict than whether an individual prefers to segment or integrate the domains. Between the two extremes of integrators and separators can be found those alternators who do not see their employee and family roles and identities as separate, but who try to segment at the level of tasks, especially when it comes to excluding work-related tasks from home. Finally, some of the integrators do not perceive that they have control over borders, which results in frustration and work-family conflict. This lack of control can be explained by poor prioritization and organizing skills, but first of all, by the fear of lagging behind (Halrynjo – Lyng, 2013). This shows well the danger in blurred borders and the ostensible freedom derived from flexibility: the lack of clear limits puts great pressure and responsibility on employees, who become the driving force of endless work and blame themselves for not having control over the boundaries between work and home, while the role of the corporation remains invisible.

2.5 Limited Organizational Support, Unchallenged Working Norms and Low Level of Agency

The company's representation of family-friendly attitudes in its online communication means that it belongs to the minority of medium and large-sized firms which put emphasis on work-life balance on their website (Géring, 2014). By work-life balance workplace support, almost all managers in the sample regardless of gender referred to flexible working hours and use of a home office. These employee-driven flexible arrangements do not only target women, like at many other companies (Tóth, 2007; Primecz et al., 2014) but men benefit from them as well. Consequently, the use of flexible working hours and a home office is de-gendered, but there are power asymmetries connected to the levels of management and departments. Higher level managers seem to have more autonomy – and shoulder higher levels of stress and responsibilities, like Hobson and Fahlén (2009) assume in their research – while employees from certain departments, like customer service or property management, perceive they have limited access to these flexibility-enhancing opportunities. In addition, opportunities for flexibility are often overwritten by an inefficient meeting culture, extreme workloads and a lack of empowerment. Consequently, visibility and personal presence are required

primarily due to the culture of meetings, even if the technology is available for online meetings. Employees do not perceive flexibility stigma in the sense that no one is marginalized for using a home office and flexible working hours, but the scope of usage might be limited due to the above-mentioned reasons.

Based on the agency and capabilities framework (Sen, 2008; Hobson et al., 2011), the sense of entitlement of men to claim a work-family balance is low if we take into consideration the fact that none of them took advantage of parental leave or part-time options to help satisfy family demands. Consequently, the agency of manager fathers does not truly challenge deeply held convictions about how work should be carried out, the cultural values of devotion to work, or the inevitability of unrestricted working hours (Lewis et al, 2007; Williams et al., 2013). Thus conversion factors, namely traditional gender norms (Takács, 2008, 2013; Pongrácz, 2001; Nagy, 2008), the deep-rooted ideal employee model (Acker, 2006) and the compulsion of visibility (Allard et al., 2007; Van Dyne et al., 2007; Halrynjo – Lyng, 2013) strongly determine the capabilities of Hungarian managers. Nonetheless, in the Hungarian context and compared to previous research (Nagy, 2008; Tóth, 2007; Primecz et al., 2014; Hobson et al., 2011) it is not negligible that manager fathers in the sample at least use some amount of flexibility to meet family demands, and that their use does not seriously impair their careers. Thus workplace organizational culture gives at least minimal room for manoeuvre in the form of home office and flexibility. This might be explained by the influence of having a Scandinavian leadership and parent company, a situation that was strongly praised by the interviewees due to its human-centeredness, informal ways of communicating and democratic values. Scandinavian societies are examples due to their long policy legacy of promoting gender equality and work-family balance (O'Brien et al, 2007) that might be influencing the corporate culture of subsidiaries as well. According to Utasi (2001), a democratic structure, like the Scandinavians employ, enhances the protection of employee rights, is less hierarchical, and generates a higher level of job security and trust. The inclusion of these aspects is especially crucial in the Hungarian working environment where the supervisor-subordinate relation is more hierarchical (Utasi, 2001), managerial control is closely intertwined with formal and informal work-family practices (Kispéter, 2012) and economic uncertainty is high (Hobson et al., 2011).

The situated agency of managers offers the greatest freedom for action, since most of them consider the organizational framework as a given and think only in terms of the opportunity to make individual changes. While men in previous research are not reported to want to change anything to create a better work-family balance (Nagy, 2008; Tóth, 2007), manager fathers from this sample had taken concrete steps to satisfy family demands. Just as Primecz (et al., 2014) concludes in her research, these activities remain at the individual level, and, according to Kvande (2009), as long as the take up of family-friendly policies remains an individual and optional choice, convictions about how work should be done will not be challenged. There are, however, those few but powerful leaders within the company who take into consideration their own influence on subordinates' work-family balance. These high-level managers make concrete changes regarding the norms of flexibility and try

to mediate clear messages about expectations. This activity is very important since it offers guidelines in a boundless flexible environment and can act to alleviate the fear of employees by showing that it is acceptable to prioritise personal time demands over work (Hobson et al., 2011), thus might be an example to follow. Consequently, as many other researchers (Ladge et al., 2014; Rantanen et al., 2011; Primecz et al., 2014; Hobson et al., 2014; Allard et al., 2007; Holter, 2007) have already proven, informal relations are as important as formal work-life balance policies and managers have significant influence as role-models when it comes to mediating family-friendly values. Consequently, until Hungarian workplace and family policies do not offer collective and standardised work-family provisions and forms of leave (such as, for example the father quota in Nordic societies), informal relations and good examples remain crucial for creating majority practice.

2.6 Limitations and Future Directions of Research

The main limitation of the research comes from its case study method, since as a single case, findings naturally cannot be generalized to the whole population. On the other hand, as an example it enriches the existing empirical findings and contributes to the insufficient material on Hungarian men and work-life balance and might serve as a basis for future researches in hypothesis formulation, defining theoretical concepts or making comparison. Moreover it draws attention to the complexity of the topic and show why a single work-life balance question in a quantitative survey might be lacking or misleading even if it produce representative results. Another limitation is that the interview method captures only the discourse, what the interviewees perceive, feel and think and what they willing to share. Therefore especially in the part about parental involvement it can be only grabbed how men evaluate their fathering contribution, while the real behaviour and practice could be better measured by a time diary or shadowing, these methods however would have exceeded the capacity of this research. Moreover the research does not cover longitudinal data, therefore it is difficult to predict, whether perceiving balance at the moment means long lasting harmony or a temporary state of work-family balance. Given the often retrospective nature of interviews however, patterns and tendencies can be caught.

As possible future research plans it would be important to expand the number of those studies where not only individuals but couples are interviewed covering the crossover effect as well, namely the transference of emotions and experiences to others, for instance family members. Although this dissertation intended to include the partner dimension by asking questions about, of course it is not the same as when the partner is directly asked. Another interesting part of work-life balance researches is the agency and capability options of those cases when the position or the nature of the job does not allow employees to use flexibility in harmonizing work and family life. Since there is a greater focus on flexibility, work-life balance provisions and white collar occupations, blue collar workers or employees in less privileged position from work autonomy viewpoint are often neglected in work-family researches.

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5. List of Publications

Publications in Hungarian

Refereed Journal Articles

Geszler Nikolett [2014]: Sources of Work-Family Conflict of European Men. Szociológia Szemle, 24. (2): 65-89

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Geszler Nikolett – Ördög Zita [2011]: Income of Leaders – Main Findings of an International Research. In: Wimmer Ágnes – Novák Zsuzsanna – Bartus Tamás – Jenes Barbara (eds.): Közgáz Diáktudós. Business Models, Economic and Social Effects. Selection from the Works of Scientific Students' Associations. Budapest, Alinea Kiadó: 127-142.

Conference Presentation

Geszler Nikolett [2013]: Manager Men. Budapest, Joint Jubilee Conference of Hungarian Sociological Association and the Hungarian Academy of Sciences Institute for Sociology.

Publications in English

Refereed Journal Articles

Geszler, Nikolett [in press]: Behaviour-based Conflict in the Life of Hungarian Manager Fathers. Intersections, East European Journal of Society and Politics, Special Issue „Work-life balance/imbalance: individual, organizational and social experiences"

Book chapters

Lengyel, György – Geszler, Nikolett – Ördög, Zita [2014]: Income and Influence. Hungarian, Polish and German business leaders compared. In: Bluhm, Katharina – Martens, Bernd – Trappmann, Vera (eds.): Business Leaders and New Varieties of Capitalism in Post-Communist Europe. Routledge, London: 205-219.

Conference Presentation

Geszler Nikolett [2016]: Time-based Work-Family conflict in the Life of Hungarian Manager Fathers. Łódź, 1st Internetional Conference „Women and Men Facing Everyday Challenges. Work and Life Demands in the Context of Gender"

Geszler, Nikolett [2015]: Work-Family Conflict of Hungarian Male Managers: Time-Based Conflict. Prague, 12th Conference of the European Sociological Association.