

# Analysing work-life balance in different professional groups

*(ongoing analysis on previous research and prospection of  
future research)*

Anna Escobedo, Bernard Fusulier and  
Diane-Gabrielle Tremblay

# contents

- The life course perspective
- The professional approach
- Some results from previous case studies conducted in the last decade
- Preliminary conclusions

# Problem Formulation

- The transition to parenthood is a crucial turning point in family and labour trajectories, but the work-family dilemma goes beyond
- Focusing only on this period for evaluating gender impacts and dynamics is narrow (short term): it may generate different outcomes and proposals, than when observing a longer time span (e.g. the Spanish debate focuses on first weeks & few months after month)
- Interest in integrating a life-course perspective when analysing Work-Family Arrangements (WFA) their effects and outcomes (using a Work-Life-Balance approach, WLB)
- There is a social demand for more knowledge by professional groups and organisations facing the need of managing gender and ageing at work and in career development (managing diversity is also important to provide quality).
- Interest in expanding our analytical, prospective and propositional capacities

# How to implement a life course perspective in PL and WLB research?

- Analysing use of leave (or other Work-Family Arrangements) and outcomes on a longer time span (short, mid and long term)
- From cross-sectional to longitudinal data observation
- Gathering retrospective labour trajectories and actor's prospective careers
- From transition to parenthood to WLB: observing later phases, events and transitions in professional and family trajectories, agency and choices
- Focusing on successive care leave schemes (full or part-time leave to deal with illness/accidents and care of older children or adults... career-break schemes..)
- Taking into account generational contexts and effects within historical societal paths

# Analysing WLB through professional groups

- Occupational trajectories take place in professional groups
- Professions have specific structural conditions
- Professional and organisational levels mediate between institutional policies and individual practices
- The organisational mediation has been researched in relation to Parental Leave, but not so much professions: emerging interest (doctors, police, lawyers, academics...) as WLB affects gender balance which affects outputs and services (e.g. researchers, care workers)
- Career development is a central element in professions that links to the life course perspective
- Professional values and norms characterise professional engagement and the specific WLB strategies (e.g. family doctor's ethos of availability)

WLB & gender equality

Influencing factors

Supra-national and state level

- Economic context
- Welfare State regime
- Political/institutional frame (Regulatory framework, working time and time-use policies, availability of related policies (ECEC and other care services in particular) ...)
- Cultural models (Attitudes towards work, gender and caring roles...)

Enterprise/organisation/occupational groups level

- Economic context & structural features (Sector (public – private), contingency factors (size, technology ...), market position...)
- Private policies (Collective agreements, family-friendly policies (time-use policies in particular)...) )
- Social organization (Work methods, managerial discretion, collective agents, employee autonomy ...)
- Cultural models (Organisational culture & subcultures; ethos)

Individual/employee/household level

- Economic situation (Security/insecurity, household income , possibility to externalise chores...)
- Individual characteristics (Education, socio-economic status, sex, parental status, ethnicity...)
- Family organisation and processes (Single/couple, family stage, age and number of children, role of grandparents/siblings, division of household work...)
- Cultural models (Family socialisation, concepts of parenthood and childhood, ideology...)

Reference: Bernard Fusulier

# Professional groups case studies (in the last decade, Fusulier and Tremblay 2013 )

- Canada-Québec (nurses, social workers, police, childcare workers in the social economy, lawyers, now airline stewards...)
- Belgium (nurses, social workers, police, now researchers in Wallonia-Brussels)
- Spain-Catalonia (care workers –in childcare and home help services- in a cooperative, 2016)

Mixed methodologies: questionnaires and qualitative interviews.

# Analysing results from different professional groups in Québec (Tremblay, 2012 and 2013)

- More preoccupation has been found for family life constraints in the Social work sector, than in the social economy and police work
- Less agreement on the fact that managers should not take leave in the social economy vs others. The social economy sector appears to have less difficulty; more support from supervisor and more measures
- The social economy presents also more support from colleagues (79% agree), the police sector follows with 65% who agree, 60% in social work and 58% in nursing.



Still these are public and non-profit sectors (nursing, police, social work, childcare)

Lawyers in **large private Law firms**, more challenges for becoming partner for women:

- billable hours,
- cases given to others during maternity leave,
- difficult to take long leave,
- need to start all over upon returning...

many move to public sector, create a small law group with different standards (to manage working hours and teamwork, etc.)

# Analysing some results in Belgium (Fusulier, 2013)

- Norms emerge in relation to career paths rather than in relation to Parental Leave
- Gendered organisations and professional cultures (also in trade unions) have been clearly observed
- Nurses use formal policies and leaves, but no informal arrangements
- The police is very normative, and uses all formal leaves, but also informal sphere with colleagues in time arrangements
- Social workers in between

More recent focus on research

- Researchers in academic career (Wallonia & Brussels): they perceive can not use leave, they manage care using flexibility (clandestine care)

# Results from Catalan Care Work Cooperative

- 3,248 employees (of whom 900 cooperative members, 92% women)
- WLB means as first requirement conserving a job and the ideal of professional development
- Agency: Cooperative members assumed this responsibility and also the challenge of horizontal mobility within care 0 to 100
- High stressing requirements associated to care work, female-dominated workforce with high family commitments, were compensated by high autonomy , professional development and colleagues support
- Colleagues cooperation and adding informal arrangements to formal schemes (home help as the most difficult setting)

# Preliminary Conclusions

- Professional environments and organisations have a mediating effect
- Professions appear as a significant setting for adopting a life course perspective, to analyse gender and WLB (including leave arrangements)
- It links to the quality of services and the social goal of gender balanced sectors and occupations
- we need to analyse further the professional ethos and how it plays
- The time dimension always appears to be fundamental in the different professional groups (with specific flexible arrangements)
- Interest in better understanding the work family interactions and interferences in different professional contexts.
- Better understanding of professions and specific careers may help to improve institutional design of Parental Leave, Care Leave and career break schemes.
- We suggest to take into account these professional and life course dimensions for policy evaluation.

# References

Escobedo, A.; Condom-Bosch, J.L.; Molina, O. G.(2016) La conciliación trabajo-familia-ciclo vital en un contexto de gestión cooperativa de servicios de atención a las personas . Paper presented at Spanish Sociology Congress, Gijón.

Fusulier, B.; Sanchez, E.; Ballatore, M. (2013) 'Appartenance professionnelle et articulation travail/famille. Comparaison de deux groupes professionnels: les infirmières et les policiers', *Enfances, Familles, Générations*, 18, 94-119

*Fusulier & Tremblay (2013) Appartenances professionnelles et vie familiale : une entrée analytique particulière, Enfances, familles et générations, 18, special issue <http://efg.inrs.ca/index.php/EFG>*

Tremblay, D.G. (2012). Articuler emploi et famille : Le rôle du soutien organisationnel au coeur de trois professions (infirmières, travailleuses sociales et policiers). 284 p. Québec : Presses de l'université du Québec.

Tremblay, Diane-Gabrielle (2013): Can Lawyers take parental leave and if so, with what impacts? The case of Québec. *Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal*. Volume 25, Issue 3 (2013), Page 177-197.