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Cultural context matters:

An intersectionality perspective on combining work and home domains in Malta, Serbia and the Netherlands

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Why this study?

- Work-home interface (WHI) is about the process of negotiating work and home domains
- Roles people have, expectations are strongly related to work-home interface, thus cultural dimension is relevant
- Not much is known about the cross-cultural differences regarding combining work and home domain



Research question

Whether, and how,

is cultural context related to negotiations between work and home domains

among male and female professionals in Malta, Serbia and the Netherlands?

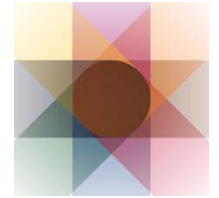


Differences in contexts

- Socio-political context
- Labour participation
 - Malta: 74% men, 41% women
 - Serbia: 52% men, 38% women
 - NL: 80% men, 70% women
- Gender relations
- Provision & use of childcare facilities on national level



Approach



-No single model captures the complexity of intersections in WHI (Byron, 2005)

-Intersectionality framework (Crenshaw, 1989)
appropriate

- Social categories intersect
- No category per se (dis)advantaged
- No category a priori more important than the other

Method

- Interpretative phenomenological approach
- Data collection (semi-structured interviews)
 - Malta & Serbia 2010, NL 2012/13
- Participants
 - 58 interviewees
 - 25 men, 33 women
 - 37 teachers, 12 nurses, 10 doctors
 - 26 Malta, 23 Serbia, 9 the Netherlands
 - Ages, marital status



Results: Main themes

-Work centrality

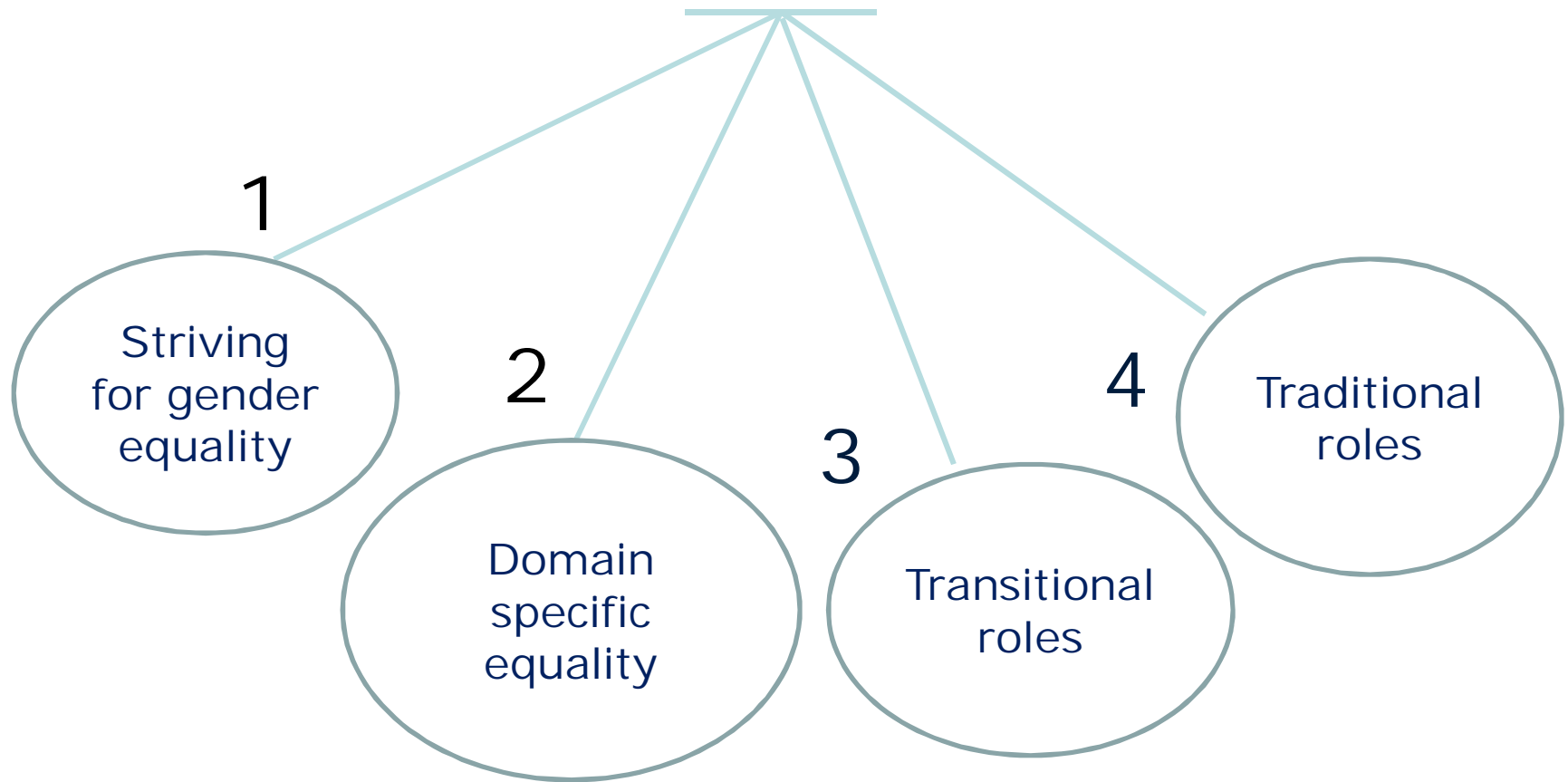
- Pressure to earn and meaning of work
- Societal shifts

-Family values

- Gendered aspects of childcare and employment; elderly care
- Household maintenance and its outsourcing



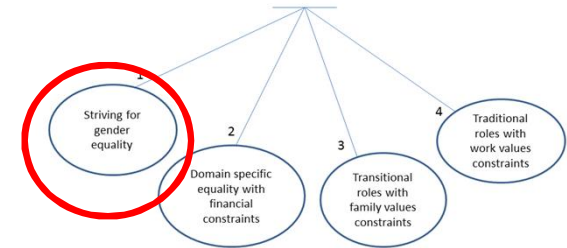
Results: Pendulum of change



Striving for gender equality (1)

Pendulum of change: Groups showing shifts over time

-Who? Dutch participants (<45 yrs)



-Broad options for choosing WHI

'I see my work as very important, but I find my family even more important'. (NL # 8, M, physician & teacher, aged 36-45)

-Childcare attitudes: mix of daycare and parental care

Striving for gender equality (1) cont.

- Childcare and household: shared
- Outsourcing household: possible
- Fragility of gender equality

'Now that the daycare has become so expensive, a woman's whole salary is spent on it, so I expect that there will be more women sitting at home, or work at home...so that the children do not go to daycare.' (NL #4, W, nurse, aged 25-35)

Domain specific equality (2)

-Who? Serbian participants

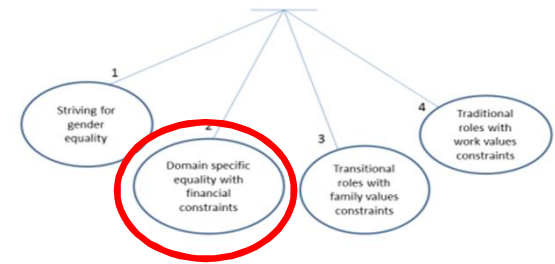
-Necessity of work

'Salary is 450€ wherever we would live, if for example, the worst appartement to rent costs 250€, what is left, 150€, impossible to live on.' (S,#7, M, Dr, aged 25-35)

-Childcare attitudes

'I even think that it is healthier for children (to go to the daycare); I see children who do not go to the daycare, who stay with nannies or grandparents, that they lose a lot, they are insecure, find socialising more difficult.' (S, #19, W, Dr, aged 36-45).

Pendulum of change: Groups showing shifts over time



Domain specific equality (2) cont

-Men: helpers regarding childcare

-Household: women's domain

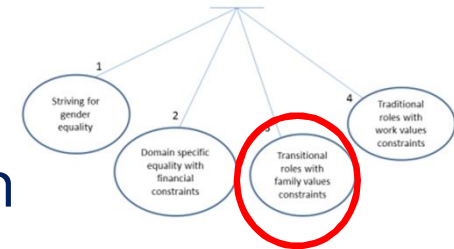
-Outsourcing household chores: restricted

'I would find it best if I could pay someone to do the household things; cleaning, ironing etc; you lose a lot of time on it.'

(S, #2, W, teacher, aged 46-55)

Transitional roles (3)

Pendulum of change: Groups showing shifts over time



-Who? Maltese women, older NL women

-Paid work: active choice, need for 'invisibility' of work

'And I had this little job so I was home for tea. So I took them to school, and I worked, and then by 3 o'clock I was home again.' (NL #1, W, nurse, aged 46-55)

-Childcare attitudes

Transitional roles (3) cont

-Childcare: in their hands

-Elderly care

'They don't take into consideration that I also have a mother and that it is expected of me that I come and help there as well. I also do a part of my voluntary work there when I visit her, and do the laundry and do the groceries...' (NL#1, W, nurse, aged 46-55)

-Outsourcing household: varied according to the values & norms

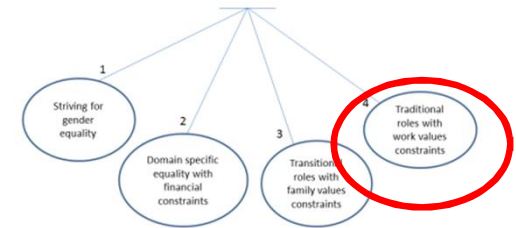
Traditional roles (4)

-Who? Maltese & Dutch men

-Importance of work

'There's also this, this thinking as well that men are almost expected to have an overtime job as well, that's what I think...The expectations which have done on our lifestyle are very high expectations.' (Maltese, #25, M, teacher, aged 36-45)

Pendulum of change: Groups showing shifts over time



Traditional roles (4) cont

- Wishing for more childcare involvement
- Household chores: women the 'bosses'

'If I have to, I do it, if she asks, I do it as well, but it's not something that I really feel like doing. Like, 'hey guys, let me do a bit of vacuuming.' (NL# 3, M, teacher, aged 46-55)

Conclusion

-Cultural context influences options for combining work and home domains

How?

Through:

- differences in values and norms
- financial circumstances



Discussion

- Relevance of findings for different subgroups? This study was based on middle to high SES participants
- Added value of intersectionality
- Challenges of intersectionality

Implications for:



- Research: awareness of context, necessity of mixed-methods research
- Policy: changes over time, no 'one size fits all' approach, long term recommendations

Any questions?

Feedback?

THANK YOU! 😊

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