

Balancing multiple life roles might ignite a conflict between work and family domains. Research findings have shown that this conflict can go in two directions: it is called work-family conflict (WFC) when it is work domain that interferes with family life, and family-work conflict (FWC) when family domain interferes with work. Both of these conflicts are said to be comprised with three dimensions: time-based, strain-based and behavior-based. In the first case, dedicating certain amount of time to perform activities in one role prevents spending time on activities in another. Strain-based dimension means that when we spend energy in one role we might not have enough left to cope with demands in other life areas. Finally, behavior-based conflict may happen when our behaviors are rewarded in one role but unwelcome in others. For example, a more direct leadership style might work in some professions but prove unhelpful in parenting one's children. Although work-family and family-work conflict is not restricted to people with families it often does become salient when there is a need to balance a role of a professional with that of a partner or parent. When two people in the relationship struggle with this "balancing act" it shifts from being an individual problem into a dyadic one, meaning that conflicts of both partners might interact. We already know that both WFC and FWC are associated with our well-being, that is with our experience of stress and with how satisfied we are with our jobs and family lives. We also know that both women and men—perhaps contrary to common opinion—experience work-family and family-work conflict but that sometimes their experiences might differ. Moreover, we know that some of the dimensions of WFC and FWC might be more important for well-being than others but we lack a clear picture of this pattern. This lack of systematic knowledge on how dimensions of WFC and FWC are related to well-being and what the differences are for men and women prevent us from understanding the concept of conflict between life roles in a nuanced way and from designing appropriate means to reduce it. One such way of reducing it is to develop a program with exercises that are designed to manage WFC and FWC, a so-called intervention.

In this project we planned three studies. In the first one we will review existing studies in a systematic way and attempt to establish to what extent each WFC and FWC dimension (time-based, strain-based, and behavior-based) is related to three aspects of well-being: stress, job and family satisfaction. In the second study we will interview 40 couples that are professionally active and that have lived together for at least a year. During this 30-45 minutes long structured interviews we will attempt to find out how they manage their work-family and family-work conflict, what could help and what could be a barrier to them using an intervention to reduce their conflicts, and in particular what could encourage them to use this intervention together. This last aspect is important because so far interventions with couples were found to be on one hand promising but on the other they encountered many challenges which we would like to find solutions to. The last study will be a randomized controlled trial, that is an experiment in which couples (who will have to meet the same criteria as couples in second study) will be randomly allocated to one of four conditions. In the first one, both partners will use the intervention to reduce their work-family and family-work conflict. In the second one, only a man will use the intervention while his female partner will wait. On the contrary, in the third condition it will be a woman who will use the intervention and her male partner will wait. The fourth condition is a control one meaning that none of the partners will use the intervention for now but they will have a chance to do so after the project ends. All participants will fill out questionnaires before the study, right after the intervention and 6 months later to see if the effects are stable over time. It is worth noting that the intervention will be delivered online to increase the accessibility and allow for flexible use. We expect that partners in the first, dyadic condition, will benefit the most from the intervention because not only will they have an opportunity to reduce own conflict but they will be able to discuss the nature of the conflict with their partners, provide and receive feedback and gain better understanding of what WFC and FWC mean for each of them.

With this project we hope to gain a better understanding of how work-family and family-work conflict relates to well-being. We will find out whether multidimensional structure of the conflict between roles matter and how we can reduce this conflict in a way that is effective and beneficial for both partners in a couple.