

Discussion Questions

1. Caitlyn Collins notes that “women’s work-family conflict is a national crisis.” Do you agree or disagree and why?
2. In 2013, the UN and the World Economic Forum ranked Sweden as the most gender-egalitarian nation in the world and first for women’s economic opportunities. Its policies are often looked to as a model for others. As you read the details of Sweden’s work-family policy, did anything surprise you? Discuss some of the advantages of the policies, both inside and outside the home.
3. The Swedish welfare system and society generally expect all adults, including mothers, to engage in paid work. Are there any unintended consequences of this system?
4. The German case is particularly useful in illuminating the ways in which policy alone cannot change things for women. How were the experiences of women in East Germany different from those in the West?
5. How does the cultural trope of the *mammoni* (“mama’s boys”) in Italy come into play in discussions about the division of household labor?
6. Collins notes that Italian women were unique in “working the system” to try to resolve their work-family conflict. Did you feel sympathetic toward this strategy? Why or why not?
7. What was the most striking difference in how American women experienced work-family conflict and stress in comparison with the women from Sweden, Germany, and Italy?
8. Throughout the book, many of Collins’s respondents talk about what it means to be a “good mother.” Discuss the similarities and differences in each country.
9. Compare and contrast the practicality and experience of part-time work in Sweden, Germany, Italy, and the United States.
10. If you were to advise an American politician about which policies might improve the situation in the United States, what would you suggest and why?