Changes in the Work-Family Field in the Netherlands 1945-2003

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1. Introduction[2]

The divisions of tasks – work and care – between partners reflect a strong cultural tradition in the Netherlands. During the late process of industrialisation, the relatively prosperous Netherlands avoided factory work of women with young children. In the twentieth century Dutch (nuclear) family life went through considerable changes. These changes are for a large part due to changes in the lives of women. In the early twentieth century most women had to work to make ends meet, especially in the lower classes. Therefore, if a woman did not need to work, it became a status symbol. In 1919 Dutch government regulated a working week of 45 hours, and a maximum of 8 hours labour per day. In 1924, due to high unemployment women working in government jobs had to quit their job after marriage. Female clerics were fired when they got married. Most of the private sector companies followed the government example. This meant a financial burden for a lot of families, which was somewhat relieved by the introduction of the child benefit (or family allowance) in 1939 (Hooghiemstra & Pool 2003). Homework however, was accepted and many Dutch women used this situation as a possibility to combine care taking of the children with the wish for an own income (Leyersdorff 1977).

2. 1945-1959

After the Second World War, the breadwinner model became the dominant model for Dutch families, where men are supposed to earn enough for the whole family. The male breadwinner model and the continuing presence of mothers in the upbringing of their children has been valued more strongly than in other industrialised nations. In the fifties there was an almost complete agreement about the duties of the mother in the care-taking of children. These duties contained continuous care-taking of the children at all times. Until 1957 marital law described married women as incompetent actors, with a duty to obey their husbands (In ‘t Veld-Langeveld 1969). In a well known Dutch magazine for women (Margriet), a working woman with a husband who does the housework is advised to behave as follows: *‘show yourself as weak, so that your husband can take the lead. Let him know he is the breadwinner and the protector of the family. If you don’t show weakness, in a few years you will become a „kenau“ with a pathetic husband, who does exactly what you tell him to do’* (Brinkgreve & Korzec 1978). The societal and legal right to work was lacking to almost all women with children in the fifties. Typically for the Dutch, this restrictive moral did have informal exemptions. Married women who 'had to' earn a living next to that of the male breadwinner, were unofficially allowed to work, even in governmental services.

The need for a labour force to fulfil the growing number of jobs that were seen as 'female' service jobs, led to a new consensus. Mothers with school going children became accepted outsiders at the workplace. This moral was reflected in the criteria to combine work with parenting. Childcare

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[2] For this overview of more then 40 years of changes in the work-family field, we used the following key studies: Hooghiemstra & Pool (2003); Niphuis-Nell (1997); Portegijs, Boelens & Keuzekamp (2002); Pot-Buter (1993); SCP (1998). Other, more specific references are mentioned in the text.

was only available in emergency situations or was made available when employers were in desperate need of employees. The adoption of working hours was in the same circumstances seen as an exception. Because of this exceptional position of women in the labour force, women were stigmatised as less involved employees. Women with 'family obligations' were to arrange their own flexibility if they wanted (or had) to work outside the home.

For women with small children working outside the home was so deviant these women had to defend their actions towards themselves and their relatives. Despite the fact women had different ideals, different life situations, and different adaptation strategies, it appeared from Moree's (1992) research all women put the accent on the fulfilment of duty. Motherhood was a priority to all mothers, and working, for them, was an extra help that was considered to be beneficial to the children. In order to remain a 'good mother' and a 'good housewife', these women compensated their absence with conscious and intense attention for the children while they were present. Women could ask their husbands for help in the caretaking and household, but had no right to expect that help.

The growth of the number of women working outside the house did not occur until the mid-fifties, and even that was unexpected, because the idealisation of the family life in a male breadwinner-housewife model was at its height in the mid-fifties. In this same period however, the Dutch welfare state started to expand by an increased number of laws, and more and more governmental facilities.

3. The 1960's

In 1960, 16 percent of the female population was engaged in paid employment, while amongst the Dutch men, this percentage was 57. The difference between men and women in labour participation is mainly caused by the low participation rate of married women. Only 6.8 percent of married women worked outside the home, from which 2.5 percent worked in the company of the husband. This percentage of married women working in their husbands companies declined since 1947. The number of married women who were working elsewhere rose however between 1947 and 1960 (In t Veld-Langeveld 1969). During the sixties the working times where further reduced to 40 hours a week, which meant a free Saturday and more holidays for most men. In theory this implies more moments available for man, woman, and their children to spent time together without work or household tasks.

During the fifties and sixties technological changes made the extensive tasks in the house less time consuming: like the refrigerator, increase in the use of gas and electricity for cooking, the vacuum cleaner, the sowing machine, and most notably the washing machine. Next to these technological changes, the expanding welfare state with a booming economy caused a shortage of labour. The growing services industries in the sixties created the need for extra labour force, and the number of home working women with children increased. Some of the socio-economic and cultural changes going on in the Netherlands were later pointed out as the triggers for the second feminist wave in the Netherlands. First of all there was the increased pressure on married women to take up on paid employment, because of the tension on the labour market. Another important change was a strong growth in number of divorce rates. Next to that, there were changing attitudes towards sexuality (the sexual revolution) and towards education of girls (the equal chance approach). The changing attitude towards sexuality occurred mainly between 1965 and 1970. In 1965, 79 percent of the Dutch population opposes to sexual intercourse between people that want to get married. In 1970, only 40 percent of the Dutch population feels that way. In those days it became increasingly clear women were required to fulfil contradictory roles: girls formally got the same education as boys, but at the same time they were required to be a housewife and mother, while the boys were earning a living (Oudijk 1983).

Broadly speaking the second feminist wave started with the article of Joke Smit called 'Het onbehagen van de vrouw' (woman's discontent) in the Netherlands in 1967. In this article, Smit pointed to the difference in position between house wives and working men. With the appearance of this article, a group of women started to take initiative in changing the existing situation. These women, who called themselves 'women 2000', later became the action group 'Man Vrouw Maatschappij (MVM)' (Man Woman Society). One year later, in 1969 a second action group called 'Dolle Mina' came into being. In the beginning of the seventies, these two action groups became a broad socio-political movement in the Netherlands (Oudijk 1983). The main reason to ground the MVM-group was the impossibility to combine motherhood with paid employment. The main goal on the long run was to diminish the role difference between men and women, by making those roles exchangeable. The women's movement towards the end of the sixties played a big part in expressing the desire of women, mainly highly educated at first, to combine working life with having children.

4. The 1970s

In the seventies (and eighties) the societal moral with respect to mothers working outside the home became less clear. The right for every individual to self-fulfilment and freedom of choice increasingly became a general accepted value. Opinions about the value of the mother being constantly near the child started to diverge, and opinions about the irreplaceability of the mother as the main parent also started to differ. The strong connection of a mother with its child in the first years became more important, whereby the intensity and quality of the attention became more important than physical presence of the mother. In the seventies and eighties, female professional employment slowly became a right. In 1974 this right was transformed (under pressure of the women's movement) in the establishment of official emancipation policy. The right to have a job next to the role of motherhood was represented in the form of part-time work. Childcare became an issue on the political agenda.

The percentage of women who work in paid employment rose from 30% in 1971 to 38% in 1981. This growth was even stronger for married women. Their participation rose in the same period from 17% to 33%. The economic (oil-)crisis has not made women stay home more although employment opportunities declined. It must be noticed, however, 31% of working women in 1981 worked in part-time jobs of less that 25 hours a week. Where in the sixties the majority of working women were active in the industrial sectors, in the seventies the majority (51%) were active in the public sector, and 35% of the women worked in the professional and commercial services. For Dutch women in the seventies the increase in paid labour participation has only for a small part led to a decrease in household labour. This means the total burden of work has grown for women between 1975 and 1980, while for men the burden of work has lessened. This double burden accounts mainly for women with children. In total it is still men who work most hours in paid labour. Although women start participating in both home work as well as in paid work, they adjust their hours in paid work to the hours needed for care taking.

In the seventies a general belief occurred in the malleability of ones own biography, whereby personal ideals could be fulfilled. Compared to the fifties and sixties, there was a huge variety on views about how these ideals could be fulfilled. Working outside the home was not something that had to be defended anymore by women. Values such as independence, equality and personal growth through work gained foothold among, mainly highly educated, women. At the same time these women realised the choice they had to make. On the one hand, they wanted to be a good employee by adapting to the existing rules at work. On the other hand, they wanted to plead for their exceptional position because of the unequal caring tasks at home that differentiated these women from other employees. The search for a new balance between women's rights and their duties was reflected

more differentiated self-image. Where importance of motherhood became more relative, financial independence as a result of professional work gained importance (Morée 1992).

From 1972-1973 onwards, the feminist movement spread and diversified. Various movements called themselves autonomous, which meant that they wanted to work without men, without hierarchy and without commitment to a political party or union. The main movements were the radical feminist movement, the feminist socialist movement and the lesbian movement. 1975 has been officially announced as the Year of the Woman. The national committee of the Year of the Woman was installed with 1 million euro to spent on emancipation projects. During 1975 the labour party (PvdA) founded a women's organization called 'Rooie Vrouwen'. In 1977 the emancipation committee installed a secretary of state to stimulate and coordinate the emancipation policy of the government. In addition the government launched their first "emancipation memorandum", which focussed on enabling equal changes for men and women. For men this meant more attention has to be given to the personal life, while women should participate more in society.

A start was made with the emancipation of the position of married women in terms of social security and tax regulations. Still however, there were a number of arrangements that formed a constrain for married women to earn their own living. From the seventies onward the number of high educated women grew enormously. At university the number of girls studying rose from 21%in 1971 to 33% in 1981. Between 1975 and 1979 the general attitude of the population had started to follow the feminist thoughts and grew much more emancipated. This was measured by a so called 'emancipation scale', which measures the opinions on the division of roles between men and women. The goals of the feminist movement however, goes further than the strive for role equality. The main issues the feminist movement was trying to achieve were the equal division of paid and unpaid work, so both men and women can participate equally in society, positive discrimination of women in sectors where they were underrepresented, individualization of social security and tax regulations, and finally enough affordable child care facilities. Among the Dutch population, the general attitude has become more emancipated with regard to the division of roles between men and women. Women are considered to have the right to be in paid employment outside the house, but for many people the care for the family and children should remain a priority (Oudijk 1983).

5. The 1980s

In the eighties the concept of the equal division of labour entered the Dutch society, whereby not only childcare, but also changes in the organisation of work, general working time and income policy became negotiable. These changes reflect the changing thoughts about combining professional work and parenting. The idea that the right to work for women had also its effects on the rights and duties of men, employers and government started to enter policy plans. Despite these loosening norms on the combination of motherhood and work, there were still some hidden restrictions. For example, a different view on parenting meant only a slight decrease of the duties of the mother. Raising children still meant intensive parenting and the mother remained primarily responsible for the success of the upbringing. The caring duties of the father were merely theoretical and not very concrete, while people hardly spoke of the negative effects of a shortage of fatherly attention in the upbringing of the children. The reigning model of the family still contained two children and a mother who was present at home in the first years of the children, and a working father. Therefore usage of child care arrangements remained ambivalent.

Although there was a lot of talk about females right to work in the eighties, there was still little concrete action. Child care remained a less accessible service than planned. The limited working time reduction in the beginning of the eighties stranded and became discredited. Financial stimuli to

combine working life with parenting remained limited in comparison with other measures that stimulated the breadwinner model. From 1985 onwards, policy plans incorporated the idea of preparing girls to a working life so they could maintain themselves financially. For boys however, there was no plan to prepare them for increasing care tasks, because it was felt that it was inappropriate to interfere in peoples private sphere. During the eighties more and more women kept working after the birth of their first child. Women increasingly joined the labour market, although almost all worked part time while men kept working full time. The increase in labour market participation of women made men do a little more household tasks, although the majority is still done by women. In the eighties, the main focus of the emancipation policy of the government was the increasing labour market participation of women, and the economical independence. New and unique in the world was the official acknowledgement of the female union FNV as a full member of the trade union federation in 1981. Besides supporting of the female union members, the female union was also concerned with the position of the housewife, the place of unpaid labour in society and the labour circumstances and conditions of women working at home. All women who were active in unpaid home employment could join the union.

Komter (1985) examines the relationship between 60 married couples, by way of open interviews. Her research question is as follows; What is the nature of power relations between married women and men, and what is the connection between the power relation, the social class and the working outside the home of women? Within marriage relationships, both manifest and latent power relations appear to be present, which mainly result in the maintenance of the status quo. Men are more satisfied with this status quo than women are. The wishes of women about family issues are less likely to become fulfilled than those of men. This suggests that even within the family male dominance prevails and women are less successful in their striving for greater equality. Komter's research illustrates a more equal division of the rights, the duties and the responsibilities within the family is a necessary (but not a sufficient) condition for greater societal equality between the sexes. The inequality of power in the private sphere and in the public sphere are mutually presuming and maintaining. The explanation for the persistence of power inequality in the private sphere has to be sought in 'invisible power mechanisms' that can be seen as underlying structures of power inequality. These underlying structures form the basis for the existence of manifest and latent power. These mechanisms form both the expression of existing power inequality and the justification and confirmation of the inequality. Therefore they can be considered both cause and effect of power inequality. The mechanism works as follows: 1) there is a difference; 2) this difference is hierarchal; and 3) differences are necessary. The continuous profiling of the differences in the sexes and the normative justification of these differences produce 'inevitable and natural truths' of the difference. This process forms the essence of the persistence of power inequality between men and women. In the relation between married men and women appears to be an invisible structure of appreciation, perception and meaning about the day-to-day reality that maintains and justifies power inequality. General cultural images about differences between the sexes enter the structure of inequality within marital relations and this in turn influences the general cultural image of power inequality. In this way, power inequality within the private sphere maintains the power inequality in the public sphere and vice versa.

Van Doorne-Huiskes and Bedaux-De Jonge (1986) focus in their study on the position of male personnel in comparison with female personnel at a Dutch university. The factors responsible for keeping the status quo of the differences between male and female employees were analysed. In order to gain more insights into the background of the situation in which male and female personnel find themselves, this follow-up study has been undertaken among 61 employees of the University of Utrecht. From this research it appears the main differences between men and women are to be found

in the higher-level jobs (both in the scientific and the non-scientific field). Among the higher-level scientific personnel, men are more often called head teacher, while women are named head employee. In general, men are younger, employed for a shorter time period and work full time. Most women work part-time. These differences become even more apparent among higher-level non-scientific employees. Here male employees are also younger than female employees, and have served only half the number of years that women have. Both men and women work fulltime, but all of these women are not-married and have no children, whilst men are almost all married and they all have children. In the lower-level jobs, these differences decline, but still, most women are not married and do not have children, while most men are married and have children. The main reasons for the maintenance of the status quo in the differences among the positions of men and women are to be found among the higher-level jobs. Because women in higher-level scientific jobs work more part-time, their career path grows less fast. Thereby women place more emphasis on the educational and service aspect of their function while men concentrate more on the publication aspect and the organizational decision-making. Among the higher-level jobs in the non-scientific field there are hardly any career prospects for female employees, while this is more open for male employees. It can be concluded that the costs of making a career at the university, are higher for women than for men. To begin with there are certain role expectations that confront women with choices men do not have to face. Women can solve these problems by either choosing to not have a marriage, partner or children, or they choose to combine these elements. The trade-off that occurs when combining the role expectations leads to fewer chances for a professional career for women than for men. From an organizational perspective it appears that more women than men work in positions that have constrained career opportunities. There still is a traditional segregation in the type of work men and women do. Women tend to be more drawn to caring jobs, while men are more active in management and policy making jobs. Finally it is a general trait of civil service employment that there is very little assistance in career planning.

Van Vonderen and Zeeuwen (1987) researched the role change of working mothers with the birth of the first child by conducting a longitudinal research between 1984 and 1987 among 122 working mothers. It is presumed within most families mothers are mainly responsible for the household and the children, and that professional work competes with these family and household tasks. This research explores reactions of these mothers to the extra burden of paid work (with a minimum of 15 hours a week) and care taking of children. Questions in these are: what kinds of women take upon this extra burden? What kind of partners do they have? Which problems do they expect and how do they anticipate to these? What problems are experiences when combining work and family? Do these women find solutions to these problems, and if so, what are these solutions? The main conclusions from the research show most women are capable of combining paid work with care taking of a baby, and often the partner appears to be supportive. In order to prevent a role conflict between the mother role and the working role, women consciously abandoned the traditional ideal of task division between men and women. Also in practice, mothers work and fathers care somewhat more that usual. The double task of working and caring is not considered a (physical or psychological) burden, because there is sufficient assistance in combining these two. The main source of assistance comes from the partner, the employer or a good child minder at home. Most women are well prepared for the double role before they give birth to their first child. Before giving birth women already have some ideas of how to arrange childcare when they are working (a nanny or the partner). Another often mentioned source of preparation were other working mothers who shared their experiences. After giving birth, women start to work less hours and sometimes men do too. There are few employers who do not tolerate part-time work. All in all, women do not experience the double role as a double burden but rather as an extra burden, which makes the change of an overburdening small. The fact that in most

families the problem of combining work and family is seen as a family issue rather that a women's issue, means a lot to these women.

6. The nineties[3]

The increasing attention for the combination of work and family in the 1990s is mainly due to changes in society: the increasing labour market participation of women with children since 1970, the increasing demand for childcare, the changing workforce, which was no longer dominated by the male single earner but more and more characterised by diversity of employees and changing attitudes and opinions towards the combination of work and caring tasks (Niphuis-Nell 1997). Since 1992 the emancipation policy of the government is focussed on the combination of work and care, and the division of these tasks in the family. In the Netherlands there is a substantial body of research on the division of paid and unpaid labour between men and women (e.g. Keuzenkamp & Hooghiemstra 2000; Knijn & Wel 2001; De Jong & De Olde 1994; Van der Lippe 1993). Research is not only conducted by social scientist from different disciplines, but also government agencies (SCP, CBS) collected data on a regular basis regarding the division of paid and unpaid work between men and women, and other related issues in the last 25 years (e.g. SCP 2000; Portegijs, Boelens & Keuzenkamp 2002).

In terms of social policy since the late 1980s, Dutch government sets two important goals. First of all, more women should become independent in an economic sense. Secondly, a more equal division of paid work and care between women and men should be realised. As is targeted by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, at least 60 percent of women between 15 and 65 years of age should be economically independent in 2010. In 2000, this only held true for 38 percent of all women, while 70 percent of all men could be defined as economically independent. Almost half of the women work in welfare work, health care, or trade. Nearly half of the men work in industry, trade, or business service. Very little women are working in boards of directors or as university professors. There is still an unaccounted wage gap of 7% between men and women. And women are over-represented in the lowest-income groups (Portegijs, Boelens & Keuzenkamp 2002). In the Netherlands, the number of women in important and visible positions is very low. This is true for the private as well as the public sector. Although every now and then this issue shows up in the media, it seems not many people in the Netherlands are really worried about this small representation of women in higher positions, even not women themselves. From a certain point of view, one could speak of waste of human (female) capital in the Netherlands, and of a waste of public money invested in education.

The nineties saw an increase in the use of childcare facilities. In 1990 6% of the children aged 0-3 made use of child care, in 1999 this figure went up to 17%. Nearly two thirds of the population thinks it is not good for babies to spent several days a week in a day care centre, for toddlers one third of the population thinks this is not good (Portegijs, Boelens & Keuzenkamp 2002). Although childcare in the Netherlands is strongly extended during the last decade, a shortage still exists. Childcare is also expensive. As a consequence, specifically lower educated women make little use of formal childcare. They try to get informal help, from parents, sisters, friends or neighbours. In the national debate on childcare, a major point of discussion is whether it is harmful for children to spend a large number of days in a day care centre. Dutch parents feel quite uncertain about this issue. Hence, the increasing labour market participation of women has not led to a large degree of externalisation and

[3] Some parts of the text in this and the following paragraphs are derived from Van Doorne-Huiskes et al (2003). This is a literature review of work-family reserach in the Netherlands 1998-2003, and is part of the EC research project TRANSITIONS (website http://www.workliferesearch.org/transitions).

commercialisation of care in the Netherlands. Instead, a shortening of working hours has been promoted.

It is important to note that the Dutch government has improved the position of part-timers in several ways. For example, in 1993, the working hours threshold in the minimum wage regulation was removed. Since the end of 1996, employers have been obliged to treat part-timers and full-timers equally with regard to conditions of employment, such as holiday pay and entitlements, overtime payment, bonuses and training. Moreover, Dutch people have been given the right to either reduce or increase their working hours when it does not interfere with business needs.

Heiligers (1992) measures the willingness for labour participation of women, and the various meanings of work in women's plans for the future. The data are gathered by semi-structured interviews with intermediaries who work with groups of women on the one hand, and by a survey among women between their 20's and their 50's. Finally the deeper lying meaning of work was found by conducting 19 biographical interviews with women. The object of the study is to answer the main question why women make different choices towards paid labour. Three possible explanatory factors that influence women's decision are being examined. Firstly, generational differences are considered. Generation differences are related to the shift in gender identities. There appears to be a shift in caring opinions between three generations. The generation between 1950 and 1965 is severely influenced by the moral standards of motherhood. These women were not allowed to take a job next to their family tasks if there was no financial necessity. The generation of '65-'75 grows up in a period of economic prosperity. In this period the ideals of mothering and gendered work division are rejected. This means that women lose their certainty of the mothering perspective on the one hand, and on the other they cannot really prepare for an alternative. Most women do want a job, but not at the expense of their caring tasks. In the youngest generation of '75-'85, the ideas of women's emancipation are spread over several societal fields. Fulltime caretakers are a clear minority. These differences in caring do however not explain the different future plans. These differences are found in the different experiences with employment. The differences in former employment have a clear influence on the decision. Secondly the analysis of the differences in social origin is referred the discussion about the 'habitus'. The difference in social origin is clearly found in the region where the research took place. This research supports the earlier found 'habitus' difference, which states the following: 'within every social class we can find the difference between culturally and economically orientated people. In general agricultural people are one of the most economically orientated groups, which means that in their choices and opinions they prefer education as far as is needed or prescribed. More culturally orientated people want to invest in education because thy want to explore their capacities as far as possible. Finally differences in social support are linked to the rational-choice approach. The differences in the claims for support in order to manage the double-track responsibilities are considered to be the result of rational choice, based on costs and benefits. The costs and benefits are evaluated over the job and the care taking. It appears that women do not force a break through in the division of labour and care between the sexes. The optimal form of participation that women can manage is a double track. Even for a smooth career in a double track position, these women need more support.

Van der Lippe (1993) examines the division of tasks between men and women. Her main research questions are: To what extend does the participation of partners in household and paid work vary, with differences between partners and differences between households (especially considering differences in age, educational level, wage, norms and the presence of children)?; and How can we explain the division of paid work and housework among partners from the differences between partners and differences between households? For answering these questions, quantitative research has been undertaken among men and women in 395 households. The results show once there are

small children, women engage much less in paid labour and both partners spend more time on household labour in general. Because both partners work more in the household, the proportion of household tasks between the partners remains the same. With the increase of the number of children in a family, the woman engages more in the strict household tasks. The more wage women can earn on the labour market, the more they will engage in paid labour, and the more time men spend in the household. This also works the other way around. The more men can earn on the labour market, the more time women spend in the household. When the norms around the household are more modern, men engage more in housework, and women engage less in the strict household tasks. They remain as active however in more general household tasks. The surrounding norms have no influence on the participation of men in paid labour. In 1993 it appears to be still unacceptable that men work less that full time. In general one can say economic factors (such as wage) and sociological factors (such as the normative context) are mutually complementing in explaining the division of labour between partners.

De Jong & De Olde (1994) focus on the preferences of parents with young children about the division of labour and whether these preferences were realized in practice. In their sample 50% of couples are having a traditional division of labour (men having a full-time job, woman not working); 37% are one-and-a-half-earners (men fulltime, woman part-time job); 13% “trendsetters” (both partners having a large part-time job). Of the young parents, a majority (70%) said they had realized their preferred division of tasks after the birth of their first child. The research showed, however, a traditional division of labour is more easily realized than a more equal division. Half of the couples were satisfied with the division of labour. In particular those with a more equal division had less intentions to change, while one-and-a-half-earners and single earners more often wanted to change towards a less traditional division of tasks. In addition, once a couple had chosen a traditional division of labour it proofed to be difficult to change this division later on. Very few couples with children in the Netherlands prefer the situation in which both partner are having a fulltime job.

Schaapman’s research (1995) is an assignment from the ministry of social affairs and employment, and fits within the policy program for emancipation. Part of this program, called ‘Met het oog op 1995 [With an eye of 1995]’, is meant to force a breakthrough of the image forming in terms of masculinity and femininity. What is meant with this ‘image forming’ is the implicit or explicit, conscious or unconscious making of a subordinating difference between men and women, by ascribing them different qualities, in behaviour, in images, in feelings, value judgments and expectations. With this image forming, norms are being conserved and reproduced in relation to men and women, and to masculinity and femininity. Examples are norms regarding motherhood, marriage, breadwinner ship and sexuality. This image forming appears to be a severely constraining factor in reaching equality between men and women. The main conclusions from this report can be summarized as follows. As in previous reports, this report states that emancipation policy in general concentrates to heavily on the areas women have in relation to men, without considering the problematic nature of the societal order in itself. There appears to be an important relation between gender and power that is anchored in various levels of society. At the symbolical level this relation is found in language, meaning, ideals, etc., at the structural level this relation between gender and power is found in various sub-terrains such as the labour market, politics or education. In the individual level the relation has consequences for the identity and the behaviour of real persons. With the anchoring of this relation it becomes a ‘natural’ given situation that is very hard to change. In this new approach that considers the existing societal order itself as problematic, it is no longer the position of the woman that forms the core of the emancipation policy. By revealing the relationship between gender and power at these various levels, the complexity of the whole gender issue becomes clear. Thereby it suggests the rethinking of the

societal order. And thirdly it clarifies the need to incorporate the gender-power approach in all other policy areas.

In her research on working mothers Groenendijk (1999) distinguishes four groups among women's meaning of work and care and it's relation to the strive for promotion. First, for women who have a positive judgement (administrative employees, hair dressers and nurses), the caring for children has a positive meaning from which mothers experience pleasure. The positive meaning of both work and care is realized when both work and care can be varied evenly. Work should be a small part-time job, in which promotion is not desired, because making promotion would mean either another working environment or a full time job with probable extra education. Second, for women who have a moderate positive judgement on work and care (teachers, nurses, physiotherapists, analysts, socio-cultural workers), work means certain societal status and a provider of identity. Working in general is more important to these women that the work as such, and the care of children is experienced as a logical consequence of having children. Making promotion is not seen as something to enjoy but rather as something that is energy and time consuming. Meanwhile, the care taking will deteriorate, because it is dependent on the women's effort. Third, for women who have a moderate negative judgement (teachers, nurses, physiotherapists, analysts, socio-cultural workers), the meaning of working and caring is to be seen in their combination. Combining work with care prevents a person from becoming a workaholic and combining care with work prevents a person from becoming entangled in care. For these women, making promotion would bring their precious combination of work and care out of balance. And fourth, for women who judge negatively (doctors, project-managers, researchers), the combination of work and care is a 'tour de force'. These women already have a demanding job with a lot of overtime work. They receive little understanding at work and lack practical and emotional support from their partner. Making promotion with all the extra engagements is a scary thought to these mothers.

7. From 2000 on: going forwards or backwards?

Dutch women get their first child relatively late; the average age when they get their first child is 29 (highest in Europe). Consequently, working parents with young children are becoming older on average and as a result have an increased chance to have elderly parents who need care. In these so-called rush-hour families, people combine paid work, care for young children, and care for elderly parents. The fact that women get their children relatively late is related to the increase in educational level of women but also towards the availability of work-family policies. The Netherlands is one of the countries in which the number of dual-earner families has increased rapidly over the last decade. In particular the labour market participation of women with a partner and children has nearly doubled since 1990 until 57% in 2001. Although, fewer women withdraw from the labour market after the birth of their first child, they often reduce their working hours when becoming a mother. Part-time work is, in fact, an important strategy in combining work van caring responsibilities in the Netherlands. In 2001 63% of the women worked part time, for men the percentage is 12. The higher educated women work less part time then lower educated women (Hooghiemstra & Pool, 2003).

The majority of men and women chooses a traditional division of tasks, and most people are quite satisfied with this (unequal) division. The traditional breadwinner model, and the more recent one-and-a-half earners model are the most common and most wanted, although research also shows women with children would like to work more hours if their situation was different (Hooghiemstra & Pool 2003). An interesting study from Jansen (Jansen 2002), shows the influence of value orientations on decisions such as having children. In the Netherlands, it appears that partners are mostly looking for consensus while negotiating in their households about children or task division. Parental values

(the importance attached to children), are important in the decision of having children and in the numbers of hours that women work in paid employment.

Research on the acceptance of work-family issues reveals the following. Remery, Schippers & Van Doorne-Huiskes (2002) found, in a survey among 870 organisations in the profit-sector and the non profit-sector, that work-family arrangements have become rather common in Dutch organisations. Many organisations offer at least one arrangement in the field of flexible working hours, childcare or leave. For many employers the supply of work-family arrangements is something they can not "avoid". They know and accept that the reconciliation of work and care has become an issue for an increasing number of workers. Large organisations offer more arrangements than smaller ones. Explicit and extended cost-benefit analyses are seldom made among employers, partly because of the "inevitability" of work-family arrangements. That does not imply that employers do not have any idea about costs and benefits. Usually their ideas about costs are more specific than their ideas about benefits. Talking about costs many employers point the risk of discontinuity of work. According to employers this risk is involved with part-time work and with leave. Costs related to childcare arrangements do not seem to be a major problem; it is "just" a matter of money. According to employers the most important benefit from offering work-family arrangements is the increase in workers' satisfaction. This is also the major reason for offering these arrangements. Only few organisations wish to distinguish themselves as frontrunners with the supply of work-family arrangements. Employers prefer to be frontrunners on other issues: training opportunities, career perspectives for employees, using all available human capital and being a learning organisation. Den Dulk (2001) found in her international research on work-family arrangements, that compared with Italy, Sweden and United Kingdom, in the Netherlands medium-sized and large organisations are most actively involved in childcare. Dutch employers are also actively involved in the development of flexible work arrangements. Besides the existing legal and unpaid leave arrangements, Dutch employers are not very much in favour of further development of leaves. Work-family arrangements are more often found in the public sector and in large organisations.

In modern society, an employer can not just impose a set of standard labour conditions on employees. (S)he will have to reckon with employees' preferences and opinions. Employees' preferences for different types of rewards will depend on age, sex, family situation, education and socio-economic position. Some workers may prefer additional leave or childcare facilities, while others prefer long holidays, a higher monthly wage or a more extended pension scheme. Van den Brekel and Tijdens (2000) analysed workers' interest in a system of flexible employee benefits. They found that employees who have a heavy workload and are not able to take up all the days off they are entitled to, appreciate the possibility to sell days for extra money. They also found that the permission to work part-time and to have flexible working schemes was more relevant for parents who need to combine paid work and care, than a system of flexible employee benefits. The latter turned out not to offer much extra freedom of movement for parents of young children, given possibilities for part-time and flexible working.

Organisations are rapidly changing. Developments in organisations get much attention in Dutch sociological, economic and psychological research. De Korte and Bolweg (1994) analysed the so-called new employee. Their main conclusion is that new employees often are part of a two-earner couple today. New employees value opportunities to combine work and a private life in a balanced way. New employees find training possibilities extremely important and are looking for a challenging environment, interesting work, independency and autonomy. Flexible working and employability are relevant themes in Dutch literature on organisations. Sometimes these themes are related to work-life issues and current changes in family life (Ester, *et al.,* 2001). Van Doorne-Huiskes (2001) addresses the fact that people, women and men, increasingly wish or need to combine paid work with care. Do

labour organisations respond to these changes in family and social life, and if so, in what ways? Part-time work is an important means in the Netherlands, to combine paid work and care. But what other measures are taken by employers to help reconciling paid work and care? Work and private life, a challenge for people who wish to change organisational culture, as Boelens and Van Ieren (1999) wrote. Their approach is based on *Rethinking Life and Work*, a project carried out by the Ford Foundation in United States.

Traditional aspects in so-called psychological contracts between employers and employees are certainty, continuity and loyalty. In "new" psychological contracts, it is suggested that employers value employability and mobility, while employees seek to broaden their competences, in order to have good perspectives elsewhere. Huiskamp and Schalk (2002) analysed psychological contracts among 1350 employees in 27 organisations in the Netherlands. They found significant differences in psychological contracts between firms. New types of agreements between employers and employees are developing about the length of the working week, schedules of working hours, efforts, training opportunities, competences and performance. Employees, generally speaking, appeared to be satisfied with the "old" values as certainty and continuity. They feel, however, that their needs for more modern labour conditions are not (yet) entirely fulfilled by their employers.

Research on the assessment by employers of the Adaptation of Working Hours Act (2002) shows that employers in general have no severe objections against working part-time, as long as people work in jobs without managerial responsibilities. Employers report some advantages of part-time work: more flexibility in the availability of personnel; a means to be an attractive employer for some categories of employees; and – interesting from a perspective of organisational change – looking for creative solutions to meet peoples' wishes to reduce their working hours: more teleworking, more meetings by telephone instead of physical presence, more autonomy for teams in determining the working time patterns of their members. Replacement problems, specifically in small firms, are seen as the major disadvantage of part-time working. Employers report also problems with organising meetings, when many employees work part-time. Complicating as well is or could be an increase of the managerial span of control, when many people in a department have part-time contracts.

Without doubt, an important condition for the rather part-time-friendly culture in the Netherlands is the lack of economic pressure to earn two full-time incomes in many households. The popularity of the one-and-a-half earner family in which the men is working fulltime and the woman part-time, however, does not challenges the persistent economic and social inequality between men and women in the Netherlands. In addition, women still do the major share of unpaid work regarding care for children and household work. Recently, discussions on fatherhood are quite popular in the media. The government and other non-profit organizations are encouraging fathers to spend more time with their children. There is a growing body of literature by men of thirty-something (re) claiming their role as parent. Despite this increase in attention, there is on average no significant increase in the amount of care given by fathers during the nineties.

At the moment a life course perspective is being discussed in the Netherlands. In January 2002, Dutch government published two reports on this issue: "*Explorations on the Life Course Perspective*" (Ministry of Social Affairs 2002). The analysis assumes that life courses of men and women are more diverse and less predictable now than they were in previous days. The so-called standard biography, gender specific and existing till far in the twentieth century, was – roughly speaking – characterised by three stages: (1) youth and education; (2) paid work by men, care at home by women; (3) retirement for men, continuing care for women. Following the Explorations, modern life courses would be better qualified by five phases:(1) youth till 15 years of age; (2) young adults (between 16 – 30 years); (3) the phase of the so-called "rush hour" (30 - 60 years); (4) the phase of active old age (60 – 80); (5) the eldest phase of life.

Considering the fact the number of dual earners couples increased rapidly, people now more often face the necessity of combining different activities: paid work, care, extra training and other investments in their careers. This combination of tasks is especially dominant in the third phase of life. This may lead to time pressure, feelings of stress and strain. To avoid overloading, the governmental report on Life Course stipulates the need for extension of childcare facilities and for a broader utilisation of the whole life course. This means that people in the third phase will get better opportunities to take leaves, by saving time. These leaves should be compensated by active labour force participation in a later phase of the life course. These types of time saving arrangements, either by collective or by private assurances, are currently discussed in the Socio-Economic Council, an important advisory board for Dutch government, consisting or employers, union representatives and independent members.

In May 2003, after long negotiations a new government – a coalition between Christian Democrats and liberals – is installed in the Netherlands. In their so-called Agreement on Outlines, the theme of reconciliation of work and employment is not explicitly addressed. But the necessity of a structural increase of labour force participation is stipulated, mainly by indicating the costs of ageing, in particular the costs of pensions and social security in the near future. To enlarge the number of working people, more facilities need to be developed to extend the use of the life course for work and other activities (care and extra training for instance). The Agreement on Outlines of the new government announces a so-called life course arrangement. This arrangement will be worked out in due course. Up till now the government is lacking the initiatives taken during the nineties for advancing the reconciliation of work and family life. During the recent economic recession, the government is too much relying on the employers to, for instance, take care of financing a large part of the child care facilities. Child care will become more expensive, which will have consequences for the participation of women on the labour market. It becomes less attractive, in financial terms, to work in middle and lower paid jobs. In this regard contemporary social policy can be seen as a step backwards.

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