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## Vrouwelijke pioniers. Vrouwen en mannen met een 'mannelijke' hogere beroepsopleiding aan het begin van hun loopbaan

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## SUMMARY AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

### 1 Introduction

The Dutch government pursues a policy aimed at promoting the self-reliance of girls and women (an aim of the Emancipation Policy Plan, 1985). The main emphasis is hereby placed on the motivation of girls. They are encouraged to include mathematics and science subjects among their examinable subjects (the 'Kies Exact' campagne (a campagne designed to encourage the selection by of 'exact' sciences at school)) and are urged to follow 'masculine' vocational courses (the 'Women wanted for men's work' campagne).

The question is: what becomes of women who opt for non-traditional schooling, and thus for a non-traditional job? Do women who follow 'masculine' courses receive the same jobs, or is their labour market position different from that of their male counterparts? Do women commence their work career differently to men even after completing an essentially 'masculine' school career? These are the questions which were central to the first part of the study described here. There are indications that women with 'masculine' higher vocational training finish up in lower level jobs than their male fellow students. Additional research was conducted to establish whether these indications could be confirmed. The question was formulated as follows:

*Are there differences in first job between female and male graduates of 'masculine' advanced vocational courses?*

In this new study, the (labour market) positions of 741 female and male graduates were registered half a year after graduation ('registration' study, December 1988). The initial jobs of women and men were compared on seven dimensions: self-reliance, responsibility, work time, sort of tenure (temporary, permanent), salary level, secondary working conditions and promotion prospects. It appeared that, despite an equal investment in training, the first jobs of female and male graduates of 'masculine' advanced vocational courses differed on a number of points: wages, self-reliance and responsibility in the job. Men have an 'edge': they receive a higher salary on average and experience a greater level of self-reliance and responsibility in their first job than women. No (significant) difference was found between women and men on the other dimensions.

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The conclusion can thus be drawn that women, despite equal training, begin their work careers differently to their male counterparts. The research problem for the study in hand can be formulated as follows:

*Why are the first jobs of women with 'masculine' advanced vocational training lower than those of men with equal qualifications?*

The research question was elaborated on a theoretical level and tested empirically. An explanatory model was developed in chapter 3. This model is reproduced briefly in section 2. Hypotheses were derived from the various components of the explanatory model. To test these hypotheses research was conducted into both the behaviour of women and men with 'masculine' advanced vocational training and the behaviour of employers involved in selection procedures in the higher 'masculine' sectors of the labour market. The data collection is then discussed in section 3. The testing of the hypotheses is summarised in section 4. In section 5 some policy recommendations are made on the basis of results.

### 2 The Theory

Two viewpoints were important in the search for an explanation for the social inequality between women and men on the labour market. Not only the behaviour of female and male graduates is important in their pursuit of a job, but also that of the employer. An explanation should therefore include aspects from both the supply and the demand sides of the labour market. The existing explanations are characterised by the one-sidedness of their attempts to explain inequality between women and men on the labour market: the accent is placed on either the supply side (the women and men seeking work) or the demand side (the employers). There is scarcely any integration of the various theories and explanations. The search for an explanation was guided by the desire to find a general mechanism which generates the difference between women and men for the whole process of the distribution of jobs.

There indeed seems to be such a general mechanism, which influences both the behaviour of women and men seeking work and the behaviour of employers seeking employees (through expectations concerning employees' behaviour). This mechanism has been elaborated for the explanation of the unequal labour market positions of women and men despite equal investments in training. The mechanism is expressed in the 'life perspective' theory.

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Assuming rationally acting graduates who strive for income, social approval and leisure time, the possible ways to achieve these goals differ for women and men. Men can achieve income and social approval by way of a paid career. Women can also achieve these goals indirectly through the realisation of an unpaid career. This means that women have two ways of achieving these goals (the carrying out of paid work and the bearing of and caring for children) while men only have one (paid work).

In modern preference theories (Stigler & Becker, 1977; Lindenberg, 1984, 1990) preferences are divided into general human goals and instrumental goals aimed at realising those general goals. This approach is extended in the 'life perspective' theory by the influence of future expectations (life perspective) on preferences. Since women have two ways of achieving the general goals, they also have two different future expectations: a 'double' life perspective. This is in contrast to men, who have 'only' one legitimate way to produce income and social approval, and thus have a 'single' life perspective. It is also true that for women with 'masculine' advanced vocational training it is difficult to combine the realisation of both a paid and unpaid career. High expectations of one sort of career will tend to be accompanied by low expectations of the other sort: women expect either to have children or to pursue a (paid) career in the future. On the other hand, men have a much greater chance of combining both sorts of career: they expect both to have children and to pursue a career in the future.

There are differences among women in their possibilities for achieving income and social approval indirectly (through an unpaid career). The 'life perspective' theory asserts that the more capable women are of achieving income and social approval through their partner (as wife and mother), the greater their expectation will be of realising an unpaid career in the future. The actual chances of an unpaid career, and thus also of a paid career, will depend strongly on whether one has a partner with a steady income, whether one lives together with a partner, the labour market chances of the partner, and the own perceived chances on the labour market. The less chance women have at this moment of achieving their goals indirectly (for example, because they have no partner or because their partner's labour market chances are poor), the greater their expectations will be of realising a paid career in the future.

Four aspects of the behaviour on the supply and the demand side of the labour market are important in explaining the observed social inequality between women and men. Following Kortenhoeven et al. (1988), the explanation on the supply side is divided into two steps. In the first step,



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the *preferences* of female and male graduates with 'masculine' advanced vocational training for particular types of jobs are explained. The second step involves the explanation of *search behaviour* (the realisation of the preferences). A similar two-step model has also been developed to explain the employers' behaviour (demand side): in the first step the *preferences* of employers for female and male employees, given a particular type of job, are explained. The second step involves explaining the *recruitment behaviour* of the employers. The explanation is completed by showing how the individual actions of both the supply and the demand sides influence each other and lead to the difference in first jobs between female and male graduates of 'masculine' advanced vocational courses. In this so-called 'transformation' component (see among others Lindenberg, 1982), an indication is given of the circumstances under which the individual actions are 'transformed' into the social phenomenon for which an explanation is sought.

The various elements of the explanatory model are explained on the basis of the general mechanism, the 'life perspective' theory. On the basis of the expected difference in life perspective between women and men, and among women, differences were expected in the preferences for particular types of jobs and search behaviour (the realisation of preferences). It was expected that the more strongly women and men consider the pursuit of a paid career, the greater their preference will be for jobs with a high income and good promotion possibilities. As far as search behaviour is concerned, it was expected that the more graduates of 'masculine' advanced vocational training consider realising a paid career in the future, the more importance they will place on finding and keeping a job, and for this reason the more intensively they will search for a job.

A difference was also expected on the basis of the 'life perspective' theory in the preferences for female and male employees and in the recruitment behaviour of employers. On the basis of a difference in the expected life perspective of women and men, employers were expected to have a greater preference for men than for women. This would be the case especially for higher positions. Furthermore, it was expected that employers would use formal recruitment in any case. In addition, to minimise the chance of making a wrong decision concerning the taking on of personnel, they were expected to collect as much information as they could about the candidates.

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### 3 The Data

The complete study consisted of five smaller studies. Two studies were conducted to test the hypotheses concerning the life perspective and the preferences for particular types of jobs. Research was conducted in June and July 1988 among female and male graduates of HTO (Hoger Technisch Onderwijs = Advanced Technical Education), branch of study architecture, and HEAO (Hoger Economisch en Administratieve Onderwijs = Advanced Economic and Administrative Education) (year group 1988 study). This study was primarily directed at testing the hypotheses concerning differences between women and men, and was therefore unsuitable for testing for differences among women. This was possible however in the 'preferences' study. In this study, 240 female and male senior year students from six different courses within 'masculine' advanced vocational education completed a questionnaire in April 1989. The six courses included four from HTO: Business Studies, Architecture, Chemical Technology, and Informatics, one from HEAO: Business Economics, and one from HAO (Hoger Agrarisch Onderwijs = Advanced Agricultural Education): Dutch Agriculture.

The hypotheses concerning differences in search behaviour between women and men with 'masculine' advanced vocational training were also tested by means of two studies. A number of the female and male respondents from the 'preferences' study kept a log-book for a certain period starting from April 1989, in which they answered questions daily on their search behaviour: the so-called 'log-book' study. The log-book was kept by the (female and male) respondents until they were offered a job. The maximum duration was five months. The hypotheses concerning search behaviour could also be tested using the data collected for the descriptive study in December 1988 (the 'registration' study). This study among 741 female and male graduates from six different courses within advanced vocational education was primarily oriented at registering their first jobs. Besides the questions on characteristics of the first job, this questionnaire also contains questions concerning the search behaviour of the female and male graduates.

Data were also collected to test the hypotheses concerning the relation between preferences, search behaviour and first job (transformation component). To this end a questionnaire was sent at the end of 1989 to the respondents from the 'preference' study (and thus from the 'log-book' study), with questions on their (labour market) position. The questionnaire corresponded in general terms with the questionnaire from the 'registration' study.

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Research was conducted in January and February 1990 to test the hypotheses concerning the behaviour of employers, their preferences with reference to particular types of jobs and their recruitment behaviour: the 'employers' study'. To this end, a new method of studying employers' (selection) behaviour was proposed. Twelve actual selection procedures were reconstructed in this study by means of questionnaires sent to applicants and employers. The applicants' questionnaire consisted largely of questions concerning personal particulars (age, sex, motivation for application, education, life perspective, etc.). Among other things, the employers were asked which candidates (for reasons of privacy numbers were used instead of names) were invited for an interview and which candidate was offered the job in question. By comparing the characteristics of the various applicants who were rejected, invited for an interview and hired, it was possible to determine the preferences of the employers.

## 4 The results

### 4.1 General

The various parts of the explanatory model are discussed successively in this section. First of all, in sub-section 4.2, the expected and observed differences in life perspective between women and men are dealt with. Supply-side behaviour, namely the preferences for particular types of jobs and the search behaviour of the women and men with 'masculine' advanced vocational training, is handled in sub-sections 4.3 and 4.4 respectively. In the following two sub-sections, 4.5 and 4.6, the testing of the hypotheses concerning the behaviour of the employers, namely their preferences for particular types of employees and their manner of recruiting personnel respectively, are discussed. Finally, sub-section 4.7 deals with the transformation of the various behaviours on the individual level into social inequality, despite equal training, on the collective level.

### 4.2 Life perspective

It was possible to test the expectations concerning life perspectives using the '1988 year-group' and 'preferences' studies. In the '1988 year-group' study the female and male graduates of 'masculine' advanced vocational training were confronted with the question of which expectations they had for ten years later concerning job, partner, and children. The results showed that men had a stronger expectation of a full time job in ten years time, while more than a quarter of the female respondents expected a part time job. Differences were also found in the expectations concerning having



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children in ten years time. Men were more inclined to expect this than women. The expectations concerning partners were also different for female and male respondents. Women largely expected to have a working partner, while more than a quarter of the men expected to have a live-in partner in ten years time who takes care of the household. In addition, a positive relation was found for men between these two expectations (job and children): a high expectation of having a full-time job was related to a high expectation of having children. A negative relation was found for women: a high expectation for one 'career' was related to a low expectation for the other. Thus it seems as though many women make a choice between the realisation of a paid career and having children in the future.

The 'preferences' study also examined the perceived chance that certain elements of the life perspective (reaching the top in an organisation, having a partner, having children) will be realised within ten years. Here as well it appeared that men were more likely to expect to have a family and to expect to have a paid job than women. Furthermore, there seemed to be once again a positive relation for men and a negative relation for women between the two expectations. Thus, women displayed a greater variety in life perspective, in contrast to men, who, because of the lack of choices, showed a strong similarity to one another in life perspective.

In the theory, the differences among women are regarded as dependent on the present circumstances. Whether one has a partner, whether one lives together with a partner, the partner's labour market chances and the own perception of women's labour market chances were seen as determinative of this. The results of the 'preferences' study showed that women's life perspective indeed corresponded closely to their present circumstances. The partner's labour market position, operationalised as his educational level, was much less determinative for women's life perspective than other circumstances.

The above results indicate that the more possibilities the present circumstances of women with 'masculine' advanced vocational training offer to gain social approval and income through the partner and the household, the higher the priority will be assigned to family activities as opposed to career activities in their life perspective. Women for whom the present circumstances offer little chance to achieve social approval and income indirectly will be more inclined to expect a paid job in the future.



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### 4.3 Preferences for particular types of jobs

According to the theory, differences in preferences for particular jobs were regarded as being influenced by differences in life perspective. To establish whether this is really the case, firstly the preferences are examined and then their dependence on other factors.

In the theoretical elaboration, jobs sought by women and men with 'masculine' advanced vocational training were distinguished according to the degree of commitment. This indicates the involvement and loyalty required to perform a job: the time, trouble, effort and dedication needed to do the job well. A job with good promotion prospects and a high income requires a lot of time, trouble, effort and a readiness to assign a high priority to the job. The concept of commitment makes the exchange which takes place apparent: the performance of a job requires a great dedication, effort and involvement, and the occupant receives a high income and good promotion prospects in return.

In the '1988 year-group' study it was assumed that women and men would pay special attention to those aspects of advertisements and job descriptions which were for them not self-evident and which they regarded as particularly important. Individuals with a 'masculine' advanced vocational education were asked whether they paid attention, when looking for work, to certain aspects of the job other than the content. Where this was the case, the respondents were asked which aspects they noticed - work time, income or promotion prospects. The female respondents placed more weight on work time than men, because of their preference for part-time work. Men were more inclined than women to pay attention to the aspects income and promotion prospects. Men with 'masculine' advanced vocational training were thus more strongly inclined than their female counterparts to have a preference for jobs requiring a high degree of commitment.

As an extra check of the correctness of this conclusion, the SMART technique (Edwards, 1971, 1977) was used on the data from the 'preferences' study. The results show that male respondents rated promotion prospects and income more highly on average (in terms of importance) than women, while women rated the 'time' element (hours per week, travel time, and regularity of work hours) more highly than men. This confirms the results of the '1988 year-group' study.

Differences in preferences for particular types of jobs were also found among women. The more women expected to pursue a career (and not to

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have children) the more 'masculine' their preference pattern was: they found income and promotion prospects more important in a job. Women whose expectations for the future were more strongly family-oriented instead of career-oriented found income and promotion prospects less important, but attached more importance to the time element.

In contrast to the traditional sociological approach, in which differences in preferences are explained in terms of differences in socialisation, in this study the differences among women are explained on the basis of the present situation and the life perspective. The 'preferences' study showed that not only the present circumstances, but also especially expectations for the future, influenced preferences for particular types of jobs.

#### **4.4 Search behaviour**

A preference for a particular type of job does not automatically mean that a job with the relevant profile will be found. The preferred job must be sought. Information is important in this search, and in order to examine the access to correct information it is necessary to look at the working of networks. In contrast to much network study, the motivation of network members to supply information is central to this study.

A possible way for women and men to receive career information is if this information is supplied as a 'gift'. The 'gift' network consists of family, acquaintances and friends. These are the people in the total network who are assumed to be involved in a 'generalised exchange' (Sahlins, 1976) with the respondent. The providing of career information as a 'gift' gives rise to a certain 'obligation'. To achieve the aim of producing as much 'obligation' as possible, family members and friends will be more inclined to supply information to men than to women. It was expected then that men would receive career information from the 'gift' network more often than women. The female and male log-book respondents answered every day the question whether someone had drawn their attention to a possible job. If so, the relationship with the person in question was also asked. The data from the log-books show that male respondents were made aware of a possible job by members of the 'gift' network during the log-book period more often than female respondents.

The other form of motivation for supplying information was introduced as 'information on request'. It was expected that this information transfer would take place on the basis of a procedure. The members of this 'request' network only inform those graduates who ask for this information

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concerning the labour market. It was expected that men would receive information from the 'request' network more often than women. The 'registration' study displayed the expected difference between women and men, while the female and male log-book respondents received information in almost equal amounts from their 'request' network.

It was also expected that the more strongly women expect to pursue a paid career in the future the more importance they will attach to finding and retaining a job. For this reason they will 'request' career information more often. Such differences were not found. Both the 'registration' and 'log-book' studies failed to show significant differences which could be related to differences among women in life perspective.

Besides the information-network effects mentioned above, the use of formal search activities occupied a central place in the study. Men were expected to engage more often in a formal search. This also applied to women who more strongly expect to pursue a career in the future. No differences were found between women and men, or among women, in formal search activities.

Given the results above, women and men appear to differ little in their search behaviour. Only from their 'gift' network do men receive information more often than women. The fact that men benefit in this way from their 'gift' network may explain why no differences were found in the other search methods.

#### **4.5 Employers' preferences**

The aims held by employers in their selection of personnel are expressed in terms of productivity and return on search and training costs. Both should be high. On the basis of the (expected) life perspective of female and male applicants, it was expected that employers for higher technical positions would generally prefer male employees. As was already mentioned, the employers' preferences were measured using an indirect method. On the basis of twelve personnel advertisements in which an individual with an advanced technical education (field of study informatics) was sought, a questionnaire was sent to both the candidates and the employers.

It was expected that, when the type of job was not taken into account, employers for higher 'masculine' positions would have a stronger preference for male than for female employees. This hypothesis was not supported. While women had, on average, an 8% chance of being hired, the percentage



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for men was 6%. The practically identical preference by employers for female and male applicants remained when the various possible criteria on which employers might base their selections (education, age, motivation, etc.) were held constant.

Besides a general expectation concerning employers' preferences, a hypothesis was formulated which asserted that the more dedication a job requires (higher commitment) the stronger the preference for a male employee will be. The jobs were classified into low and high commitment categories on the basis of the wording of the advertisements. While the average preference for female applicants was higher than that for male applicants for the low commitment jobs, the opposite was true for the high commitment jobs. For the high commitment jobs, where a greater dedication and effort was expected, but where a higher income and better promotion prospects were also offered, it was found that the average preference for male applicants was higher than the average preference for female applicants.

#### **4.6 Recruitment behaviour**

Employers were expected to try to gain as much reliable information about the applicants as possible. This was expected to be especially important for positions requiring a high degree of commitment. Reliable information can be gained from people within the organisation and from people occupying similar positions. The applicants were asked whether they knew people who work for the firm where they were applying or people who worked in similar positions. Knowing people in the same organisation had no effect on the applicants' chances, but knowing people in similar positions did appear to have an effect. When the applicants knew people in similar positions (and thus when the employers have access to more reliable information about them) they had a greater chance of being invited for an interview and of being hired.

The hypothesis that access to reliable information is especially important in high commitment jobs appeared to be supported for the aspect 'knowing people in similar positions'. The hypothesis was not supported as far as knowing people in the organisation is concerned. Access of employers for high commitment jobs to information from people occupying similar positions gave the applicant concerned a greater chance of being hired than those applicants who had no acquaintances in similar positions.



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The above results show that especially in high commitment jobs it is to the candidate's advantage to have access to informal information sources. The more the employer can come to know about a candidate, the greater her/his preference for that candidate. The chance of a wrong decision - hiring a candidate who is unsuitable for the position - is minimised by requesting information about the candidate from as many sources as possible.

### 4.7 Transformation into inequality on the labour market

In the transformation component, the 'transformation' from the individual behaviour of applicants and employers to the difference in first job between women and men with 'masculine' advanced vocational training is dealt with. The various elements of the transformation component are hereby regarded as determinative. First of all, the question was handled of under which circumstances which preferences, those of the graduates or those of the employers, are more pervasive and therefore carry more weight in the final result. Secondly, an attempt was made to answer the question of the relationship between the various elements of search and recruitment behaviour. Finally, the question of whether and under which circumstances statistical discrimination by employers is broken down was addressed.

In the transformation of the preferences, the circumstances were examined under which the preferences of either the graduates or the employers were more pervasive. Labour market conditions, either easy (abundant supply, few jobs), or tight (many jobs, little supply) were regarded as determinative here. It was expected that the tighter the labour market is the more strongly the characteristics of the first job would correspond to the preferences of the graduates. To test this hypothesis, the six different courses within advanced vocational education, according to the labour market segment on which the graduates must compete, were divided into three categories. The preferences for the various elements, promotion prospects and income, were correlated with the characteristics of the first job. It appeared from the correlations that the preferences of the graduates were more fully realised on a tight than on an easy labour market.

It was expected that the employers' preferences would be realised more fully on an easy than on a tight labour market. To test this hypothesis, the employers were asked to indicate whether they experienced difficulties in filling the vacancies for higher technical personnel. Although the results showed a tendency in the expected direction, no clear increase in preference for women was seen. This is in all probability partly a consequence of the limited number of women. From the open question "Do you see the hiring

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of women as a possible solution for the imminent shortage in your segment of the labour market?" it appeared that employers in general do not see the hiring of women as a solution for the shortage of personnel for these positions. In their opinion relatively few women will be available.

It could be predicted on the basis of the theory that the differences in payment between women and men on a tight labour market are smaller than on an easy labour market. Not only the preferences of female and male graduates are the 'cause' of the difference in the latter case. It is a matter of a combination of both the difference in preferences of the women and men and the difference in employers' preferences for female and male employees. This hypothesis was supported on the basis of the 'registration' study.

As far as the relation between search or recruitment behaviour and first job is concerned, it was expected that the female and male graduates who have found a job through formal channels would have a higher income than those who found their job through informal channels. The results gave support for this hypothesis. The results of both the 'registration' and the 'log-book' studies showed that the respondents who used formal channels to find their first job had on average a higher gross monthly wage than those who used informal channels.

The last question in this study is to what degree the difference in first job (operationalised as the difference in pay in the first job) can be explained using the 'life perspective' theory. On the basis of this theory, differences in first job arise mainly because female and male graduates differ in their expectations for the future and because employers, by way of statistical discrimination, assume such differences. There would be no differences in payment if women had clear career-oriented expectations for the future, as a result of which employers would have no reason to apply their statistical discrimination. The payment of women and men would thus scarcely differ when life perspective was held constant. On the basis of the data from the registration study this hypothesis was tested and supported. The more strongly graduates, both women and men, expect to pursue a career in the future the higher their income in their first job.

#### **5 Policy implications**

In the study described here, an attempt was made to explain why female graduates, despite an equal investment in education, obtain lower-level first jobs than their male fellow students. Four aspects on individual level were

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regarded as important for the explanation of social inequality on the labour market between women and men: female and male 'masculine' advanced vocational education graduates' preferences for particular types of jobs and their search behaviour and, on the side of the employers, the preferences, given a particular type of job, for female and male employees and their recruitment behaviour. A mechanism, specified as the 'life perspective' theory, was predicted to influence the various aspects of the explanatory model.

From the various studies it appeared that not all aspects were equally important in the explanation of observed social inequality between women and men. In contrast to the 'common sense' idea that women in 'masculine' professions meet with a great deal of resistance from employers, it appeared from the results of this study that employers' preferences only played a marginal role in the explanation. In general, when the sort of job is not taken into account, no difference in employers' preferences for female and male employees was found. Instead of only taking notice of the sex of the candidates, in general the employers seemed open to the signals sent out by women who wished to pursue a career and to assess them on that basis. When we looked specifically at the high commitment jobs however it did appear that employers had a preference for men. On the basis of the expected shortage of 'humanpower' in the higher 'masculine' segments of the labour market it can be predicted that in the future the differences will also disappear in the high commitment jobs.

The differences in first jobs appeared to be explained to a much greater extent by differences between female and male graduates of masculine advanced vocational education in their preferences for particular types of jobs. For example, the difference in first job between women and men on a tight labour market seemed to be largely reducible to differences in preferences. In turn, the differences in preferences appeared to be largely the result of differences in life perspective, which in their turn could be traced to differences in circumstances (the possibility of achieving income, social approval and leisure time).

Despite a 'masculine' advanced vocational education, women did not have as strong a preference as men for jobs with a high income and good promotion prospects. This study showed however that, in contrast to men, differences exist between women. While the future expectations and preferences for particular types of jobs corresponded closely among men, women showed strong differences on these points. Although women strove on average less for a career than men, there were women in the group



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examined who desired a career just as much as men. Given the results, these women appeared to differ little to men in the realisation of their preferences, at least as far as the first job was concerned.

It did appear that female graduates of 'masculine' advanced vocational schooling had to make a choice between children and career. The costs of choosing for a career appeared to be considerably higher for women than for men. As early as 1949 Simone de Beauvoir wrote about the injustice of women having to choose for either a paid career or having children. This was in sharp contrast to men, who seemed to take it for granted that a career could be pursued in combination with fatherhood. Now, in 1991, more than 40 years later(!), little appears to have changed in this injustice.

Given the results, the social inequality on the labour market appears to be largely reducible to the social inequality between women and men in the making of choices concerning career and children. The question is, what is needed to make the situation of women and men more equal on this point? Is it desirable that in the future everybody, both women and men, should work a forty- or fifty-hour week, or is this only necessary for those who wish to pursue a career? Should women and men be equally able to choose between a paid and an unpaid career? No clearly crystallised idea appears to exist in society concerning these questions<sup>1</sup>. In striving for 'economic self-reliance' the government appears to prefer a combination of both 'careers' for both women and men. The concept of 'economic self-reliance' in the Emancipation Policy Plan (1985) has two components: financial self-reliance (being able to secure one's own material needs through participation in paid work) and self-reliance in personal care (being capable of taking care of oneself through participation in unpaid work)<sup>2</sup>.

To achieve the goal of 'economic self-reliance' the most important task for the government, given the results of this study, seems to be to offer the facilities which allow women the same access to the labour market as men have. A total package of measures is presented in the recommendation by the Emancipatie Raad (a council formed to provide advice to the government on emancipation issues) entitled 'Emancipation policy in macro-economic perspective' (1989). First of all, the still existing financial barriers for women should be removed. Bruijn-Hundt (1988) mentions three sorts of financial hurdles for women who wish to enter the labour market: implicit partner levies, arrangements involving a material difference in entitlements to social security benefits and income-dependent arrangements<sup>3</sup>. Because of the many escape routes, the '1990 measure' only offers a very limited start towards eliminating breadwinners' facilities.



### *Summary*

Besides the complete abolishment of breadwinners' allowances, the individualisation of taxes deserves much attention in the coming years.

In addition, the government should allocate many more resources than now to child minding facilities and parenthood facilities. The serious shortage of child minding facilities is still a major reason for women to (temporarily) cease their labour market activities. This has a negative effect on their earning capacity. Gustaffson (in Emancipatie Raad, 1990) showed that in Sweden, France and the former Federal Republic of Germany an interruption of ten years in the working career leads to a loss of earning capacity of 25%. In establishing parental facilities it is important to guard against the creating of new inequalities between women and men because only women make use of parental leave. Parental leave should therefore be formulated both in terms of maternity and paternity leave.

Besides temporary and permanent withdrawal by women from the labour market after having their first child, the possibility cannot be ruled out that the shortage of the above-mentioned facilities will lead women to choose for voluntary childlessness (Bosman, 1989; Frinking, 1989). As a result of such an increase in the number of women more or less voluntarily choosing not to have children, problems such as the decrease in the number of young people and the increase in the number of older people will loom large in the Netherlands. The shortage of people on the future labour market will increase. The refusal of the government to provide funding for these facilities in the short term will then in all probability result in a continual rise in the long term price to be paid. The Emancipatie Raad (1990) proposes the 'Swedish Model' concerning the regulation of child care and the individualising of incomes (an individualised system of taxes and social security) as an example for the Netherlands. This should dramatically increase the participation of women on the labour market.

The government could also place more emphasis on the differences found in this study among women. By paying less attention in their campaigns to the differences between women and men, and more to the differences among women, the government could make the population more conscious of this. By increasing people's awareness on this point, and thereby also of the fact that there are ambitious women as well as ambitious men, behaviour towards women who wish to pursue a career may be changed. This might influence employers recruiting personnel on an easier labour market. It could also have an effect on the supply of career information to female job-seekers by members of the 'gift' network.

**New research questions**

The question is how the women and men described here will progress further. Existing research would tend to indicate that these women will be confronted with yet many more setbacks in their 'masculine' career. Stacey (1986) found that women who wish to pursue a career and avoid the traditional marriage and family are confronted with three sources of disillusionment: an 'involuntary' life alone, 'involuntary' childlessness and sole parenthood. Parent (1987) also stated in the report 'Ambivalent wish for children: later or not at all' that as the biological fertility limit for women approaches, many former abstainers or delayers decide after all to have children. This is partly because they feel that they do not want to miss out on having children and partly because of disappointment with their working life outside the home. In this connection there is often mention of the appearance on the scene of 'superwomen' who want to do everything perfectly. Wanting to be a perfect mother and housewife as well as a perfectly ambitious woman is likely to lead to stress and personal disillusionment.

The fate of the group of female graduates of 'masculine' advanced vocational courses, consisting of the women who indicated that they wished to assign family activities the highest priority, the women for whom career was most important, and the women who wished to combine child and career, could best be discovered by means of further research. Especially the latter group deserves further attention, both empirical and theoretical.