THE UNIVERSITY OF HERTFORDSHIRE

BUSINESS SCHOOL

WORKING PAPER SERIES

The Working Paper series is intended for rapid dissemination of research results, work-in-progress, innovative teaching methods, etc., at the pre-publication stage. Comments are welcomed and should be addressed to the individual author(s). It should be remembered that papers in this series are often provisional and comments and/or citation should take account of this.

For further information about this, and other papers in the series, please contact:

University of Hertfordshire Business School

College Lane

Hatfield

Hertfordshire

AL10 9AB

United Kingdom

Working Time Flexibility and Family Life in the UK, the Netherlands and Sweden

Christine Cousins and Ning Tang
HRSMT Dept. Business School, University of Hertfordshire

Abstract

This paper focuses on working time flexibility and family life in the UK, the Netherlands and Sweden based on comparable survey findings carried out in Spring 2001. In addition, a more detailed analysis of the UK survey findings is presented. The paper considers working time arrangements in the three countries, the part-time workforce and the experience of conflict between work and family life.

The UK is found to be distinctive in the greater dispersion of working hours and in the specific gendered division of working time. The UK is also distinctive in the long hours that fathers work, in the high proportions of parents who wish to reduce their working hours in order to spend more time with their families (or conversely chose to work part-time hours in order to meet domestic commitments), in the extent to which long working hours impact on family life and finally, in the association between work flexibility and lack of employment protection for some female part-time workers.

Dr Christine Cousins
Email c.r.cousins@herts.ac.uk

Dr Ning Tang
Email n.tang@herts.ac.uk

Working Time Flexibility and Family Life in the UK, the Netherlands and Sweden

Christine Cousins and Ning Tang, University of Hertfordshire

INTRODUCTION

This paper presents findings from a current EU Framework 5 project, 'Households, Work and Flexibility' with eight participating countries in west and central east European countries.[1] The aim of this project is to understand comparatively how work flexibility affects individuals and their households and particularly their ability to combine family and work. The main research instrument used has been a national survey of around 1000 households in each of the eight countries based on a comparable questionnaire. This paper presents the survey findings from the three west European countries (the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK)[2] as well as a more detailed analysis of the UK national survey.

The 'Households, Work and Flexibility' (HWF) project addresses several issues at the forefront of current policy and academic debate in Europe. The first of these concerns policies to promote flexible employment in Europe as a means to increase the competitiveness of national economies. Whilst the promotion of a flexible labour market has been an important part of the policy process for two decades in the UK, flexibility of work has now been incorporated into one of the pillars of the European employment strategy (1998-2002). That is, under the third pillar of encouraging adaptability, the social partners are invited to implement flexible working arrangements. However, in recognition that flexible employment may create ghettos of disadvantaged jobs (O'Reilly 1996) the employment guidelines also make reference to achieving the required balance between flexibility and security (namely, 'flexicurity') and increasing the quality of work (European Commission 2001).

A second issue, related to the increase in work flexibility, is the increased diversity of working time in the different member states (OECD 2001, Anxo and O'Reilly 2000, Mutari and Figart 2001). There is, for example, a greater dispersion of part-time working, unpredictable or irregular working and unsocial hours, with an associated decline of the full-time, standard working week. Nevertheless, national differences in working hours are still related to differences in national systems for regulating working hours either by legislation or through collective bargaining (ibid.).

In the UK however, there has been particular concern that despite the Working Times Regulations 1998, existing work practices have been left largely intact and the long hours culture remains entrenched (DTI 2001, EIRO November 2001, TUC 2002).

A third issue, now the subject of extensive academic debate, concerns differences in gendered working time regimes across the member states (for example, Rubery *et al*. 1998, 1999, Fagan 2001, Mutari and Figart 2001, O'Reilly and Fagan 1998). Whilst gender time differences are found in all labour markets, reflecting divisions of labour in the domestic sphere, the extent of these differences also depend on national regulatory frameworks, as well as on the nature of the welfare state and the particular gender order underpinning it. Compared to other European countries the UK has been said to have a dualist and highly gender differentiated dispersal of working hours between the polar opposites of short part-time hours for women and long full-time hours for men (Fagan 2001). Debate here has also centred on the disadvantageous nature of female part-time employment as a distinctive segment of the UK labour market (for example, Dex and McCulloch 1995, Gallie *et al.* 1998, Perrons and Hurstfield 1998, Purcell 1999, 2000).

A fourth academic and policy concern which has developed is the impact of flexible working on family life. Research in both the USA and the UK has documented the stress imposed on family life by intensified workloads and long and unsocial hours, as well as the difficulties of parenting in the context of lack of child care and elderly care (for example, Hochschild 1997, Schor 1991, Sennett 1998, Burchell *et al*. 1999, Burghes 1997, Dex *et al*. 1999, DTI 2000, Ferri and Smith 1996, La Valle 2002). Policy responses at the EU level as well as in the UK have been the recognition of the need to promote policies to reconcile paid work and family life. For example, such policies form part of the fourth pillar of the European employment strategy and an important part of the policy agenda of the new Labour government in Britain.

This paper addresses a number of these academic and policy debates. The research findings are, therefore, highly relevant to a number of current issues, namely, the long hours work culture in the UK, working-time preferences, the quality of part-time work, the spillover of the working-time regime into the home, and work and family relations.

The HWF project has been concerned with examining the ways in which members of the household put together different forms of work and the impact of such

work on the household and on quality of life. Background papers for the project have documented how the discourse and policies on flexibility differ in the different national contexts.[3] A key feature of the project is therefore to place the national survey findings within the institutional and policy context of each country.

While recognising the diverse meanings of the term flexibility, the project defined flexibility of work in terms of flexibility of time (for example, working hours), flexibility of place (for example, at home or various locations) and flexibility of contractual conditions of work (for example, different types of contract). However, in the UK survey, flexibility of working time (and specifically the 'short hours for women, long hours for men' pattern) is far more important than flexibility of conditions, for example, temporary work. In fact, temporary fixed-term contract work constitutes only 5 per cent of the workforce, whilst other forms of temporary work such as agency work comprise less than 1 per cent. However, as we discuss below, one aspect of flexibility of conditions, namely whether respondents have a contract of employment or not, is salient. In the Netherlands and Sweden too, part-time work[4] for women is the most important source of flexible work, and indeed these two countries together with the UK have the highest part-time rates in the EU (Employment in Europe 2002). In contrast, in the central east European countries flexibility of working time and particularly part-time working is much less developed and is certainly not used as a means by which mothers can combine work and family life (Cousins and Tang 2002b).

The nature of the HWF data, therefore, enables a comparison of working time arrangements and family life in the three west European societies, the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK. These are particularly interesting countries to compare, for the Netherlands and Sweden provide examples of working time regimes 'where part-time employment has been integrated into a regulated labour market environment in accordance with the principles of equal treatment in labour law and wage structures' (Fagan and Lallement 2000:45). In contrast, research in the UK has consistently demonstrated a greater polarisation between female full-time and part-timer workers (for example, Breugel and Perrons 1996, Hakim 1996, 2000). The three countries also differ quite substantially in the extent to which welfare and social policies support the reconciliation of work and family life, leading to very different labour market outcomes for women.

In addition to a comparative perspective, the nature of the HWF data also enables a more detailed analysis of the UK situation with respect to, for example, working hours distribution by sector and occupation. Reference is also made to ethnic minority workers in the UK survey, although numbers are too small to enable a detailed analysis.

The paper is organised as follows: first, there is consideration of working hours arrangements and working time preferences. Secondly, we focus on the conditions of work of the female part-time workforce in comparison with their full-time counterparts. In the third section of the paper we examine the extent to which work and family impinge on one another and the extent to which this generates conflict.

WORKING TIME ARRANGEMENTS

In this section we consider the working hours, unsocial hours and working time preferences of respondents in the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK. In addition there is an examination of the sector and occupational distribution of working hours in the UK and reference to ethnic minority workers.

Working hours

The HWF survey confirms the gendered nature of working time arrangements in the UK, that is the 'short hours for women' and 'long hours for men' pattern. Over two-thirds of men work more than 40 hours per week and 29 per cent more than 50 hours (Table 1). At the other end of the spectrum, 44 per cent of women work less than 30 hours and one quarter less than 20 hours per week.[5]

If we compare working hours in the UK with those of respondents in the Netherlands and Sweden, as Table 1 demonstrates much higher proportions of men in Netherlands and men and women in Sweden report working exactly 40 hours per week than they do in the UK. These differences are interesting as they reflect variations in levels of working time regulation in each country. In the UK until the Working Time Regulations 1998 there was no statutory working time regulation, coupled with a relatively un-coordinated and decentralised collective bargaining system and/or the individualisation of working time through the employment contract (Anxo and O'Reilly 2000). As many studies have shown this has resulted in a greater

dispersion of working hours in the UK, as well as an entrenched long-hours culture (Anxo and O'Reilly 2000, OECD 2001). Sweden, on the other hand, shows a high concentration of working hours around the statutory or collectively agreed norm of 40 hours. The Netherlands illustrates a 'double regulation' with statutory rules and strong regulation through collective bargaining, with a high dispersion of working time due to disparities between bargaining areas (Anxo and O'Reilly 2000, OECD 2001). Despite the 1998 legislation in the UK, over one third of men work more than the 48 hours per week specified by the EU Working Time Directive compared with around one fifth of men in the Netherlands and Sweden.[6]

Table 2 shows the working time of respondents with and without dependent children in the three countries. In all three countries fathers work longer hours than men without dependent children, although Swedish fathers are slightly less likely to work very long hours. It is also noticeable that two fifths of fathers in the UK work above the 48-hour threshold,[7] around twice as many in the Netherlands and Sweden.

In the Netherlands and the UK, the presence of children has a considerable impact on mothers' working hours, the proportions of part-timers rise to 80 per cent and 58 per cent of mothers respectively (compared to 39 per cent and 30 per cent respectively of women without children). Short part-time hours, that is, less than 20 hours per week, are also important for a significant minority of mothers in both countries, around two-fifths in the Netherlands and one third in the UK.[8]

In Sweden, however, the presence of dependent children does not have such a large impact on the proportions working less than 30 hours a week. Only a minority of mothers, 15 per cent, work less than 30 hours per week. Swedish mothers, therefore, work longer hours than their counterparts in the Netherlands and UK, for example 85 per cent of mothers work over 30 hours compared to 21 per cent and 42 per cent in the Netherlands and the UK respectively. With respect to mothers of young children under the age of 6, the Netherlands and Sweden are mirror images of each other, in that 84 per cent of Swedish mothers with young children work full-time compared with 17 per cent in the Netherlands. In the UK the corresponding figure is one third of mothers with young children. These differences reflect the well-known configuration of social polices in Sweden which support mothers in combining work and family life, namely, extensive and generous parental leave schemes when children are young and the provision of public childcare for those who demand it. Paid

parental leave and affordable childcare, on the other hand, are much less available in the UK and the Netherlands.[9]

These differences between the three countries are also reflected in how lone mothers fare in the labour market. Here we find very large differences, with at one extreme, nearly two-thirds of lone mothers in the UK working part-time compared with 5 per cent in Sweden. The corresponding figure for Dutch lone mothers is 57 per cent.[10]

Unsocial hours

Consistent with other research (for example, La Valle *et al.* 2002), the HWF survey also showed that working overtime during 'unsocial' hours is fairly widespread

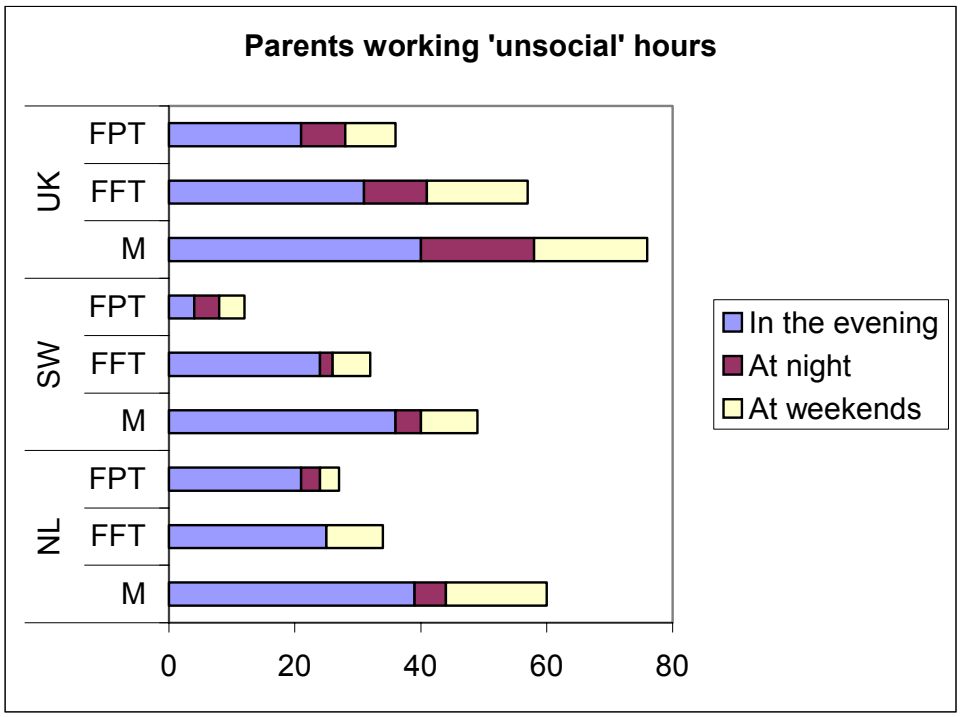

Figure 1

Key:

FPT	Female part-time worker
FFT	Female full-time worker
M	Male

among parents. As Figure 1 and Table 3 show 40 per cent of fathers and nearly one third of full-time working mothers in the UK work overtime in the late afternoon and evenings at least once a week, and nearly one in five fathers worked overtime at night

or at weekends. Similar proportions of fathers in the Netherlands and Sweden also worked overtime in the late afternoons/evenings, but they were less likely to work at night and, in the case of Sweden, at the weekends. Similarly, full-time mothers in these two countries were less likely than their counterparts in the UK to work during these

periods. In contrast, female part-timers in the UK are less likely than full-time men and women to work overtime during evenings, nights or weekends and this was also the case, in the main, in the Netherlands and Sweden. This supports the finding of Gallie *et al.* (1998) that part-timers, at least in the UK, are not particularly flexible with respect to their hours of work (see also Cully *et al.* 1999).

Sectoral and occupational distribution of hours

With respect to sectoral distribution, there is a high reliance on female part-timers in three service sectors, that is distribution, retail and hotels, (58 per cent of women working in this sector work part-time), public service sector (46 per cent) and other services (48 per cent) (Table 4). Overall, nearly three-quarters of female part-timers were in the first two of these sectors. Long work hours of men, on the other hand, are to be found in construction where 45 per cent work more than 48 hours and in banking, finance and insurance (42 per cent) and other services (44 per cent). Working hours are also distributed unequally by occupational status. Nearly sixty per cent of men in managerial and professional occupations (ISCO group 1) work more than 48 hours, making up over one quarter of those working over 48 hours (Table 4). In contrast, 60 per cent of women working part-time are in occupational groups 4 (clerical and secretarial) and 5 (services workers, shop and market sales workers).

Ethnic minority workers

Ethnic minority respondents constitute 7 per cent of the HWF sample, a similar proportion to that in the population as a whole. However, as the numbers are small (86 respondents) the following discussion does not break down the analysis by different ethnic groups, although it is recognised that they are far from homogeneous. Just under three quarters of men from ethnic minorities are in paid work (a similar proportion as in the sample as a whole), but for female workers the corresponding figure is only 45 per cent (compared to 65 per cent in the whole sample). Of these just over one quarter of men and women worked part-time. For male workers this is

higher than in the sample as a whole (at 10 per cent). However, consistent with other research (for example, Dale and Holdsworth 1998), far less women from ethnic minorities worked part-time than in the whole sample (see Table 1). Fifteen per cent of ethnic minority men and 10 per cent of women are unemployed, in both cases much higher proportions than the national unemployment figure.

Working time preferences

There is clearly a desire on the part of many parents in the UK to reduce their working hours in order to spend more time with their families. Around two-fifths of fathers and full-time working mothers wished to reduce their hours, although this rises to 55 per cent of fathers working more than 48 hours per week (Table 5). Two thirds of fathers who wished to reduce their hours gave as their reason the desire to spend more time with their families (Table 5). For full-time working mothers the corresponding proportion is 60 per cent. Quite high proportions of fathers in the Netherlands and Sweden also wished to reduce their working hours, although far fewer gave as their reason the desire to spend more time with their family. That is, half as many Swedish fathers and roughly one third as few Dutch fathers gave family commitments as their reason for wishing to reduce their hours. Dutch and Swedish mothers too were also less like to give family commitments as their reason for wanting to reduce their working hours.

In contrast, the large majority of female part-timers in the Netherlands, Sweden[11] and the UK are content with the hours they work, 68 per cent, 75 per cent and 81 per cent respectively. Again, however, higher proportions of part-timers in the UK gave as their reason 'the need to fulfil domestic commitments'. In sum, parents' working time preferences in the UK are more closely related to family and domestic commitments than in either the Netherlands or Sweden. Many full-time parents would like to reduce their hours to spend more time with their family, and part-time mothers demonstrate a preference for short hours because of their domestic commitments.

THE PART-TIME WORKFORCE

In this section of the paper we examine female part-time workers, their personal characteristics, job-related characteristics and aspects of their work history.

Comparisons are made both between female part-timers and full-time workers and between the part-time workforce in the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK. As the proportion of male part-timers is small in each country, analysis focuses on the female part-time workforce.

In all three countries higher proportions of part-timers have dependent children in comparison with full-time female workers, although part-timers in the UK have the highest proportion of children aged 7 to 15 years (Tables 6 and 7, Appendix). In the Netherlands very few full-timers (7 per cent) have children under age of 6. The modal age group is between 30-39 years in all three countries. However, with respect to education qualifications it is noticeable that female part-timers in the UK are much less well qualified than either the Netherlands or Sweden. Over half of part-timers in the UK have no or low qualifications (ISCED 1 and 2) compared to one quarter in Sweden and just 3 per cent in the Netherlands.

The average usual hours of work of part-timers in the UK are very short at 17 hours per week. These short hours are associated with a high proportion of part-timers in receipt of a low personal income: nearly three-quarters receive an income in the lowest quartile of the income distribution (less than £780 per month), compared with 30 per cent of full-time women and 12 per cent of men in the UK. For Dutch women short part-time hours are also associated with low personal pay, as nearly three quarters fall within the bottom quartile of the income distribution. In contrast, in Sweden only 13 per cent of part-timers earn a low income on this definition, reflecting the persistence of wage solidarity policies in this country despite changes to wages structures in recent years.

Consistent with the substantial literature in this area, Table 6 also shows that female part-timers in the UK are disadvantaged in a number of working conditions in comparison with female full-timers. For example, as Table 6 demonstrates, male and female full-time workers are twice as likely as part-timers to have been promoted in the past 12 years. However, this also varies considerably between the sectors, ranging from one in eight part-timers in the distribution sector who had been promoted to one in three in the banking and finance sector (Table 8 Appendix). However, it is with respect to employment protection that we see the largest differences between the countries. Whilst the proportions with no contract of employment is negligible for all

workers in Sweden and a small percentage of Dutch part-timers (6 per cent) as many as 27 per cent of female part-timers in the UK state that they have no contract of employment.[12] In the distribution, hotel and retail sector this was as many as 40 per cent of part-timers with no employment contract (Table 8 Appendix). We can also see substantial differences in job tenure of part-timers in the three countries. Over one quarter of the part-time workforce in the UK have been employed in their job for less than one year, and therefore do not qualify for employment protection. This is twice as many as full-timers workers in the UK and also twice as many as their part-time counterparts in the Netherlands and Sweden. Conversely, fewer part-timers in the UK have been in their current job for more than five years, compared again to either full-time men or women in the UK, or part-timers in the Netherlands and Sweden.

However, not all is disadvantageous for part-timers in the UK. A higher proportion of female part-timers have some control over their hours (in that they can decide their own hours or decide together with their employer) than either male or female full-time workers. Nearly three out of five part-timers have some control over their hours, a higher proportion than in Sweden although not as high as the Netherlands where over three quarters of both full-time and part-time female workers exercise control over their hours. A higher proportion of female part-timers also show satisfaction with their job in general and, as we saw earlier, the large majority prefer to work their existing hours. With respect to the experience of unemployment in the past twelve years, there is little difference between female part-timers and full-timers.

Further, similar proportions of part-timers and full-timers, around one third of all groups, had attended a training or educational course in the past year. This is a higher proportion than that reported in the Labour Force Survey, although the question used there asks about job related training. Other research is inconsistent on access to training and further education. Green (1999) for example finds little difference between part-timers and full-timers who have received training in the past year, whilst the IALS finds that full-time workers are roughly twice as likely to have received training in the past year (DfEE 2000). However, consistent with other research (for example, Green 1999, DfEE 2000) further training or education was

more likely to have been received by more highly educated respondents in the HWF survey.

Work conditions, however, vary considerably across the sectors. As Table 8 Appendix shows distribution, hotels and retail stands out as the sector with the most disadvantageous working conditions. As noted earlier, this sector has the highest share of part-timers and one of the highest proportions of part-timers who are low paid (see also EOC 1999), nearly two thirds compared with one half in the public services. Further, all workers in this sector are the least likely to have received training or education in the past year, and only a small proportion of part-timers (12 per cent) have been promoted in the past twelve years. Job tenure is low for part-timers, and as mentioned earlier two out of five have no contract of employment. On the other hand, better conditions for part-timers are found in the public sector. For example, a high proportion can decide their own hours, nearly half have job tenure of more than five years and two-fifths have received training in the past year.

PERCEPTIONS OF FAMILY/WORK ARRANGEMENTS

In this section of the paper we consider the extent to which work and family impinge on one another and the extent to which this generates conflict. Respondents were asked if they had experienced the following in the past three months:

Work makes it difficult for me to do household tasks
Work makes it difficult for me to fulfil family responsibilities
Family responsibilities prevented me from working adequately

Table 10 shows, unsurprisingly, that higher proportions of parents compared to non-parents in all three countries experience a conflict between work and family life, although this is less pronounced for Dutch parents. However, it is striking that in the UK fathers are more likely than mothers to state that work makes it difficult to do household tasks or fulfil family responsibilities. This is a rather surprising finding given that mothers bear the major responsibility for childcare and domestic task as we have discussed in an earlier paper (Cousins and Tang 2002a).[13] However, as we

discuss below, UK fathers' experience of conflicts between work and family life does appear to be related to long working hours. In contrast, Swedish mothers are more likely than mothers in the Netherlands and the UK to state that work makes it difficult to do household tasks or fulfil family responsibilities; whilst in the Netherlands there is little difference between the parents. With respect to the third question 'family responsibilities prevented me from working adequately', there is a general reluctance to agree with this statement in all three countries. However, it is noticeable that over one quarter of UK fathers agree with this statement, around twice as many as in the Netherlands and Sweden and twice as many as mothers in all three countries.

Table 11 demonstrates that long hours of work are clearly associated with the experience of conflict between work and family life for both mothers and fathers in all three countries. However, this is particularly so for fathers in the UK who work more than 50 hours per week. Conversely, though, the large majority of women working short hours (under 20 hours per week) in all three countries state that they do not experience such difficulties between work and family life. It can be suggested here that women working very short hours have already accommodated the demands of family life by reducing their working hours and are therefore less likely to experience work and family conflict (see also Ginn and Sandell 1997). With respect to those mothers working between 20-29 hours, however, quite high levels state that they experience a conflict between work and family, especially in the UK. An analysis of the UK data presented in an earlier paper suggested that fathers' involvement in childcare and domestic work decreased when their partners worked part-time (Cousins and Tang 2002a). We, therefore, investigated the extent to which the experience of conflict between work and family life is related to the domestic division of labour. Table 12 shows a strong association between the experience of work and family conflict and responsibility for household tasks and childcare of these part-time mothers. This would appear to indicate that even for part-time mothers in the UK, the long working hours of their partners and the persistence of the traditional division of labour still means that combining work and family creates difficulties.

CONCLUSION

This paper has demonstrated that working time patterns in the UK exhibit a much greater dispersion for both men and women than either in the Netherlands or Sweden.

In the latter two countries there is a concentration around a statutory norm of 40 hours per week for male workers (and also for female workers in Sweden). In the UK there is much less of a peak at 40 hours, rather the dominant pattern is that of 'short hours for women and long-hours for men'. Further, it is noticeable that one third of men and two-fifths of fathers in the UK work more than the threshold of 48 hours per week specified in the EU Working Time directive. This is twice as many as in the Netherlands and Sweden. Respondents in the UK, especially parents, are also more likely than their counterparts in the Netherlands and Sweden to work unsocial hours, especially at night or weekends

The UK therefore demonstrates both a specific gendered division of time as well as the deregulated nature of working time. In the Netherlands too there is a highly gendered distribution of working time, but here part-time work for women is not seen as atypical or flexible (Jager 2002). Indeed, as the HWF survey findings have demonstrated, for mothers it is almost the only form of employment.[14] In Sweden there is a much greater standardisation of the working week with the majority of men and women as well as parents working between 30 and 40 hours.

Parents in the UK also showed the highest association between working time preferences and family commitments. Although there is clearly a desire on the part of a sizeable proportion of parents in all three countries to reduce their working hours, parents in the UK are more likely to give as their reason a wish to spend more time with their family. The UK survey also contained the highest proportion of part-time mothers who are content with their existing hours because of domestic commitments.

The HWF survey also confirms the generally disadvantaged nature of part-time work for women in the UK with respect to pay, promotion, job tenure and protection and especially so in the distribution, hotel and retail sector. However, higher proportions of female part-timers than full-timers are able to exercise some control over their working hours, and similar proportions of part-timers and full-timers had received training in the past year. Part-timers also showed higher levels of satisfaction with their work and their experience of unemployment was also similar to female full-timers.

In the Netherlands short part-time hours are also associated with low personal income. Nevertheless, in comparison with the UK, part-time jobs in the Netherlands are highly projected and regulated, for example, part-time work has equality of treatment and conditions with full-timers and since 2000 there has been the right to

request part-time work (Jager 2002, Visser 2002). However, the most noticeable difference between the three countries concerns employment protection. Much higher proportions of part-timers in the UK have no contract of employment or have been employed for less than one year and thereby do not have employment protection.

Finally, whilst the long working hours of parents in all three countries are related to the experience of conflict between work and family life, this is most pronounced among fathers in the UK. Further, although mothers working short hours were less likely to experience conflicts between work and family this is less the case for part-time mothers working between 20 and 29 hours per week. In the UK it was suggested that this is related to the long working hours of their partners and the persistence of the traditional domestic division of labour.

In summary, in comparison with the Netherlands and Sweden the UK is distinctive in a number of respects. That is, the UK is distinctive in the long hours that fathers work, in the high proportions of parents who wish to reduce their working hours in order to spend more time with their families (or conversely chose to work part-time hours in order to meet domestic commitments), in the extent to which long working hours impact on family life and finally, in the association between work flexibility and job insecurity and lack of employment protection for some female part-time workers. All of these issues raise policy considerations and although they have been or are currently the subject of legislation, one could question whether the legislation is, or will be, too moderate.

.

REFERENCES

Anxo, D. and O'Reilly, J. (2000) 'Working Time Regimes and Transitions in Comparative Perspective' in J. O'Reilly et al. *Working Time Changes: Social Integration Through Transitional Labour Markets*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

Brown, W. et al. (2000) 'The Employment Contract; From Collective procedures to Individual Rights' *British Journal of Industrial Relations* 38 (4): 611-629.

Bruegel, I (1996) 'Whose Myths are They Anyway? *British Journal of Sociology* 47 (1): 175-7.

Bruegel, I and Perrons, D (1996) *Deregulation and Women's Employment: The Diverse Experience of Women in Britain*, Gender Institute, London School of Economics.

Burchell, B. J. et al. (1999) *Job Insecurity and Work Intensification: Flexibility and the Changing Boundaries of Work*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Burghes, L et al. (1997) *Fathers and Fatherhood in Britain*, London: Family Policy Studies Centre.

Cousins, C. and Tang, N. (2002a, forthcoming) '*Working Time and Family Life in the UK*', University of Hertfordshire Business School Employment Studies Research Unit Working Paper Series.

Cousins, C. and Tang, N. (2002b) 'Households, work and flexibility in Europe: the integration of work and family in west and central east Europe' to XV World Congress of Sociology (International Sociological Association) Research Committee on Family Research RC06 Session Work and Family, July 2002 Brisbane, Australia, also forthcoming in University of Hertfordshire Business School Employment Studies Research Unit Working Paper Series.

Crompton, R. and Harris, F. (1998) 'Explaining Women's Employment Patterns: Orientations to Work Revisited' *British Journal of Sociology*, 49 (10): 118-143.

Cully, M. *et al.* (1999) *Britain at Work* London: Routledge.

Dale, A. and Holdsworth, C. (1998) 'Why Don't Ethnic Minority Women in Britain Work Part-time?' in O'Reilly, J. and Fagan, C. (eds.) *Part-time Prospects: An International Comparison of Part-time Work in Europe*, *North America and the Pacific Rim*, London: Routledge

Dex, S. (ed.) (1999) *Families and the Labour Market: Trends, Pressures and Policies*, London: Family Policy Studies Centre.

Dex, S. and McCulloch, A. (1995) *Flexible Employment in Britain: A Statistical Analysis,* London: Equal Opportunities Commission.

DfEE (2000) *Skills For All: Research Report from the National Skills Task Force*, DfEE Publications

DTI (1998) White Paper on *Fairness at Work,* May London: Department of Trade and Industry

DTI (2000) *Parents and Work*, http://www.dti.gov.uk/er/review.htm

DTI (2001) *Implementation of the Working Time Regulations*, Neathy, F. and Arrowsmith, J.: Employment Relations Research Series No. 11

EIRO (Nov. 2001) Working Time Developments and the Quality of Work, UK http://www.eiro.eurofound.ie/2001/11/StudyUK/TN111143S.html

EIRO (Feb. 2002) Working Time Developments – annual update 2001 http://www.eiro.eurofound.ie/2002/Update/tn0202103u.html

Employment in Europe (2001, 2002) Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

EOC (1999) *Lower Earnings Limit in Practice*, Manchester: Equal Opportunities Commission

European Commission (2001) *Guidelines for Member States' Employment Policies for the Year 2001 and Council Recommendations on the Implementation of Member States' Employment Policies*, Directorate-General for Employment and Social Affaires, Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

Fagan, C. and Lallement, M. (2000) 'Working Time Regimes and Transitions in Comparative Perspective' in O'Reilly, J. et al. (eds.) *Working-Time Changes: Social Integration Through Transitional Labour Markets,* Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

Fagan, C. (2001) 'Time, Money, and the Gender Order: Work-orientations and Working-Time Preferences in Britain' *Gender, Work and Organization*, 8 (3) 239-266.

Ferri, E. and Smith, K (1996) *Parenting in the 1990s*, London: Family Policy Studies Centre.

Gallie, D. *et al.* (1998) *Restructuring the Employment Relationship*, Oxford: OUP.

Ginn, J. *et al*. (1996) 'Feminist Fallacies: a Reply to Hakim on Women's Employment' *British Journal of Sociology* 47 (1): 175-7.

Ginn, J. and Sandell, J. (1997) 'Balancing Home and Employment: Stress Reported by Social Services Staff', *Work, Employment and Society*, 11 (3): 413-434.

Green, F. (1999) 'Training the Workers' in P.Gregg and J.Wadsworth *The State of Working Britain*, Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Hakim, C. (1991) 'Grateful Slaves and Self-Made Women: Fact and Fantasy in Women's Work Orientations', *European Sociological Review* 7 (2): 101-21.

Hakim, C. (1995) 'Five Feminists Myths about Women's Employment' *British Journal of Sociology* 46 (3): 429-55.

Hakim, C. (1996) *Key Issues in Women's Work: Female Heterogeneity and the Polarisation of Women's Employment*, London: Athlone Press

Hakim, C. (2000) *Work-Lifestyle Choices in the 21st Century: Preference Theory*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hochschild, A. (1997) *The Time Bind: When Work becomes Home and Home becomes Work*, New York: Henry Holt and Company.

Jager, A. (2002) 'Literature Review Netherlands' in C. Wallace (ed.) *HWF Research Report 1: Critical review of Literature and Discourses about Flexibility*, Vienna: HWF Research Consortium, Institute for Advanced Studies. http://www.hwf.at

La Valle, I. et al. (2002) The Influence of Atypical Working Hours on Family Life, Joseph Rowntree Foundation http://www.jrf.org/

Mutari, E. and Figart, D. (2001) 'Europe at the Crossroads; Harmonization, Liberalization and the Gender of Work Time', *Social Politics*, Spring:36-64.

OECD (1997) von Bastelaer, A. et al. *The Definition of Part-time Work for the Purposes of International Comparisons,* Paris: OECD.

OECD (2001) Evans, J. M. et al. *Trends in Working Hours in OECD Countries*, Labour Market and Social Policy Occasional Papers Number 45, Paris: OECD.

O'Reilly, J. (1996) 'Labour Adjustments through Part-time Work' in G. Schmid and J. O'Reilly (eds.) *International Handbook of Labour Market Policy and Evaluation*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

O'Reilly, J. and Fagan, C. (eds.) (1998) *Part-time Prospects: An International Comparison of Part-time Work in Europe*, *North America and the Pacific Rim*, London: Routledge.

Perrons, D. and Hurstfield, J. (1998) 'United Kingdom' in Perrons, D. (ed*.) Flexible Working and the Reconciliation of Work and Family Life – A New Form of Precariousness,* Final Report to the Community Action Programme on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (1996-2000) Brussels: European Commission.

Purcell, K. *et al.* (1999) *Whose Flexibility? The Costs and Benefits of 'Non-standard Working Arrangements and Contractual Relations*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Purcell, K. (2000) 'Gendered Employment Insecurity?' in Heery, E. and Salmon J. (eds.): *The Insecure Workforce*, London: Routledge.

Rubery, J. et al. (1998) National Working-time regulations and Equal Opportunities *Feminist Economics* 4 (1)

Rubery, J. et al. (1999) *Women's Employment in Europe*, London: Routledge.

Schor, J. B. (1991) *The Overworked American*, New York: Basic Books.

Sennett, R. (1998) *The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism,* London: W.W. Norton & Co.

TUC (2002) 'One in Six UK Workers put in more than 48 Hours a week' Press Release February 4.

Visser, J. (2002) 'The First Part-time Economy in the World: a Model to be Followed?' *Journal of European Social Policy* 12(1): 23-42.

APPENDIX

Table 1 Usual weekly working hours of respondents in the UK, the Netherlands and Sweden (% of gender)

	UK		NL		SW	
Hours per week	**Male** N=290	**Female** N=363	**Male** N=398	**Female** N=373	**Male** N=670	**Female** N=611
1 – 19	5	24	2	28	1.5	3
20 – 29	5	20	4	28	2.5	10
30 – 39	20	31	30	28	12	27
40 – 49	39	18	45	14	66	51
50 +	29	4	20	3	18	7
40 hours exactly	22	12	33	11	45	40
48 +	34	5	21	3	19	8

Table 2 Working time of respondents with and without children in the Netherlands, Sweden and UK (% of gender)

Country	**Gender**	**Hours of work per week**						
		1-19	**20-29**	**30-39**	**40-49**	**50+**	**40 exactly**	**48+**
NL	**Fathers** (N.=203)	1	1	26	50	22	40	23
	Men without children (N.=223)	2	6	33	41	17	28	20
	Mothers (N.=182)	39	41	15	5	1	3	1
	Women without children (N.=221)	20	19	36	20	4	17	4
SW	**Fathers** (N.=234)	1	1	13	69	17	44	17
	Men without children (N.=415)	2	3	12	63	19	46	20
	Mothers (N.=242)	4	11	34	47	5	38	5
	Women without children (N.=372)	2	9	26	54	9	41	9
UK	**Fathers** (N.=105)	2	4	18	43	32	20	40
	Men without children (N.=178)	7	5	22	36	27	23	31
	Mothers (N.=185)	31	27	29	9	4	7	4
	Women without children (N.=178)	17	13	33	26	5	17	7

Table 3 Overtime work of respondents with and without children in the Netherlands, Sweden and UK (% of gender)

Countries	Gender	Work hours	Works overtime at least once a week		
			In the evening	At night	At weekends
NL	**Fathers** (N.=203)	FT	39	5	16
	Men without children (N.=223)	FT	51	4	17
	Mothers (N.=182)	FT	25	-	9
		PT	21	3	3
	Women without children (N.=221)	FT	40	5	14
		PT	17	2	15
SW	**Fathers** (N.=234)	FT	36	4	9
	Men without children (N.=415)	FT	30	4	7
	Mothers (N.=242)	FT	24	2	6
		PT	4	4	4
	Women without children (N.=372)	FT	23	2	9
		PT	17	4	11
UK	**Fathers** (N.=105)	FT	40	18	18
	Men without children (N.=178)	FT	38	10	20
	Mothers (N.=185)	FT	31	10	16
		PT	21	7	8
	Women without children (N.=178)	FT	36	15	17
		PT	18	5	14

Table 4 Short hours and long hours per week by selected sectors and occupational groups by gender (% of sectors and occupations)

Hours of work	Female working part time (N.=164)			Male working over 40 hours (N.=196)			
	Distribution etc	**Public sector**	**Other service**	**Construction**	**Transportation etc**	**Banking etc**	**Other service**
1-19	30	23	37				
20-29	28	23	11				
40-49				42	45	26	33
50+				42	31	40	44
48+				**45**	**38**	**42**	**44**
	ISCO 4	**ISCO 5**		**ISCO 1**		**ISCO 7**	
1-19	22	37					
20-29	22	30					
40-49				28		45	
50+				54		29	
48+				**59**		**78**	

Table 5 Working hours preference of respondents with and without children in the UK, Netherlands and Sweden (% of gender)

Country	Gender	Work hours	Working hours preference		Prefer same hours to fulfil domestic commitments	Prefer fewer hours to spend more time with family
			Same hours	**Less hours**		
NL	Fathers (N.=203)	FT	56	40	5	27
	Men without children (N.=223)	FT	55	43	-1	14
	Mothers (N.=182)	FT	59	31	13	48
		PT	74	9	49	33
	Women without children (N.=221)	FT	59	34	13	26
		PT	67	16	27	15
SW	Fathers (N.=234)	FT	50	48	16	34
	Men without children (N.=415)	FT	59	37	9	15
	Mothers (N.=242)	FT	59	36	26	27
		PT	68	5	32	5
	Women without children (N.=372)	FT	59	35	7	10
		PT	58	8	10	3
UK	Fathers (N.=105)	FT	58	38	46	66
	Men without children (N.=178)	FT	68	26	14	40
	Mothers (N.=185)	FT	58	39	53	60
		PT	81	5	68	60
	Women without children (N.=178)	FT	65	31	24	30
		PT	79	5	29	67

Table 6 Personal and work related characteristics of respondents in the UK (% of gender)

Personal characteristics	Male FT >30 hrs N = 255	Female FT >30 hrs N = 199	Female PT <30 hrs N = 164
Age			
Av age (years)	39.2	39.6	40.2
Under 30	28	25	23
31-40	28	29	32
41-50	24	26	23
51-65	21	20	22
Age of dependent children			
Children under 6	21	16	33
Children aged 7-15	31	28	43
Educational level			
Higher (ISCED 5-6)	23	29	18
Middle (ISCED 3-4)	40	34	30
Low or no education (ISCED 1-2)	37	37	53
Work related characteristics			
No employment contract	9	6	27
Hours of work (mean)	46.3	39	17.2
Earning monthly income less than £780	12	30	72
Satisfied with job in general	80	82	88
Decides own hours or negotiates with employer	49	49	58
Additional education and training in past twelve months	32	34	31
Work history			
Duration of job less than one year	13	14	26
Duration of job between 1-5 years	31	39	37
Duration of job more than 5 years	56	47	38
Experience of promotion in past 12 years	35	33	17
Experience of unemployment at least once in past 12 years	18	12	11

Table 7 Personal and work related characteristics of female respondents in the Netherlands and Sweden (% of full time and part time working females)

Personal characteristics	NL Female FT >30 hrs N = 167	NL Female PT <30 hrs N = 206	SW Female FT >30 hrs N = 532	SW Female PT <30 hrs N = 79
Age				
Av age (years)	37.1	41.2	40.4	41.5
Under 30	34	16	22	20
31-40	30	32	30	32
41-50	22	31	25	18
51-65	14	21	23	30
Age of dependent children				
Children under 6	7	30	18	39
Children aged 7-15	16	34	26	37
Educational level				
Higher (ISCED 5-6)	54	31	41	14
Middle (ISCED 3-4)	46	67	51	60
Low or no education (ISCED 1-2)	0.6	3	8	26
Work related characteristics				
No employment contract	2	6	.2	1
Hours of work (mean)	37	17.4	39.7	21.3
% in lowest income quartile	15	73	17	13
Satisfied with job in general	89	94	88	84
Decides own hours or negotiates with employer	75	78	53	40
Additional education and training in past twelve months	49	38	45	27
Work history				
Duration of job less than one year	14	12	12	13
Duration of job between 1-5 years	36	31	33	29
Duration of job more than 5 years	51	58	56	60
Experience of promotion in past 12 years	NA	NA	NA	NA
Experience of unemployment at least once in past 12 years	NA	NA	NA	NA

Table 8 Personal and work related characteristics of respondents in selected service sectors in the UK (% of gender)

Personal characteristics	Distribution etc N=145			Banking etc N=100			Public sector N=190		
	FTM	FTF	PTF	FTM	FTF	PTF	FTM	FTF	PTF
Educational level									
Higher (ISCED 5-6)	12	8	10	43	36	19	53	45	30
Middle (ISCED 3-4)	59	43	29	26	41	25	33	21	29
Low or no education (ISCED 1-2)	29	49	61	31	24	56	15	23	41
Work related characteristics									
No employment contract	55	14	39	6	7	6	2	3	11
Hours of work (mean)	47.9	40.3	18.4	46.4	38	16.4	43.1	39.1	17.7
Earning low income less than £780 per month	14	27	64	3	9	69	2	20	50
Satisfied with job in general	69	81	74	91	75	94	93	85	83
Decides own hours or negotiates with employer	52	54	52	66	39	44	37	51	61
Training in past twelve months	21	27	27	40	32	31	44	43	39
Work history									
Duration of job less than one year	21	22	31	17	14	19	7	15	25
Duration of job between 1-5 years	45	41	40	29	46	44	27	29	27
Duration of job more than 5 years	33	38	29	54	41	38	66	56	48
Experience of promotion in past 12 years	36	24	12	46	48	31	29	29	22
Experience of unemployment at least once in past 12 years	26	16	19	17	20	-	7	4	15

Table 9 Experience of work/family conflicts in the Netherlands, Sweden and UK (% of saying sometimes, often and always)

Country	Work/family conflict	Working men without children	Working women without children	Working fathers	Working mothers
NL N=771	Work makes it difficult for me to do household tasks	39	42	44	45
	Work makes if difficult for me to fulfil family responsibilities	20	28	30	29
	Family responsibilities prevented me from working adequately	7	7	8	11
SW N=1281	Work makes it difficult for me to do household tasks	35	44	54	58
	Work makes if difficult for me to fulfil family responsibilities	29	38	48	50
	Family responsibilities prevented me from working adequately	7	8	14	13
UK N=646	Work makes it difficult for me to do household tasks	42	33	55	42
	Work makes if difficult for me to fulfil family responsibilities	24	22	45	38
	Family responsibilities prevented me from working adequately	15	8	25	12

Table 10 Work/family conflicts experienced by parents in the UK, Netherlands and Sweden (% of saying sometimes, often and always)

Hours of work per week	UK		NL		SW	
	Fathers N = 105	Mothers N = 185	Fathers N = 203	Mothers N = 182	Fathers N = 234	Mothers N = 242
Work makes if difficult for me to do some of household tasks that need to be done						
1-19	-	26	-	31	-	29
20-29	-	62	-	50	-	43
30-39	16	46	37	57	42	60
40-49	50	65	49	70	53	59
50+	85	57	51	-	78	93
Work makes it difficult to fulfil my responsibilities towards my family						
1-19	-	23	-	20	-	14
20-29	-	42	-	34	-	40
30-39	16	41	28	37	32	56
40-49	39	47	29	43	48	48
50+	68	57	41	80	68	85
My responsibilities towards my family prevented me from doing my work adequately						
1-19	-	11	-	10	-	14
20-29	-	22	-	12	-	3
30-39	11	15	5	13	19	15
40-49	20	12	10	-	13	9
50+	35	14	16	-	10	-

Table 11 Experience of work/family conflicts and domestic division of female part timers working between 20-29 hours per work in the coupled households with dependent children (N= 30)

Work/family conflict	Domestic division	Respondent %	Partner %	Shared equally %
Work makes it difficult for me to do some of household tasks that need to be done	Cooking	79	17	6
	Cleaning the house	89	6	6
	Washing the laundry	89	6	6
	Shopping	67	11	22
	Child care	67	-	33
	Care of sick child	83	-	17
Work makes it difficult to fulfil my responsibilities towards my family	Cooking	73	20	7
	Cleaning the house	87	7	7
	Washing the laundry	87	7	7
	Shopping	73	13	13
	Child care	73	-	27
	Care of sick child	80	-	20
Family responsibilities prevented me from doing my work adequately	Cooking	67	33	-
	Cleaning the house	83	-	17
	Washing the laundry	100	-	-
	Shopping	50	17	33
	Child care	50	-	50
	Care of sick child	67	-	33

NOTES

[1] The project 'Households, Work and Flexibility' (contract number HPSE-1999-00030) extends from April 2000 to April 2003. The participating countries are the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK in west Europe and Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovenia in central east Europe. The authors, who are the UK partners in this project, are grateful to the European Commission for their support of this work. Further details of this research project and related papers can be found at: http://www.hwf.at

[2] The national surveys were carried out in Spring 2001 using a standardised questionnaire. The sample sizes were 1007 households in the Netherlands, 2292 in Sweden and 945 in the UK. Face-to-face interviews were conducted in the UK, although, because of cost constraints, interviews in the Netherlands and Sweden were by telephone.

[3] Details of these papers and their availability can be found at: http://www.hwf.at

.

[4] Defined in accordance with OECD (1997) recommendation as less than 30 hours per week.

[5] The gender difference is similar to the national LFS figures in Spring 2000.

[6] This is a higher proportion than that found among employees in the WERS 1998 by Cully *et al.* (1999). In this survey 22 per cent of employees worked more 48 hours per week.

[7] In the recent Joseph Rowntree Foundation study nearly one third of fathers worked over the 48 hours limit (La Valle *et al*. 2002)

[8] In an earlier paper (Cousins and Tang 2002a) we were also interested in how different members of the family combine their working hours in the UK. . In the full-time/part-time earner family there is a tendency for the long working hours of fathers to be complemented by the short hours (under 20 per week) of their partners. Nearly one half of respondent fathers and their partners and two-fifths of respondent mothers and their partners have this working pattern. In families with two full-time working parents, we found that in a substantial minority of families both parents are working over 40 hours a week. That is, over one third of respondent fathers and their partners and one fifth of respondent mothers and their partners work more than 40 hours per week. Thus, while the 'short hours for women', 'long hours for men' pattern is common for many parents, a sizeable minority of parents in two full-timer earner households are working very long hours indeed.

[9] Indeed Visser (2002) concludes that as mothers in the Netherlands could not count on public facilities supporting the combination of work and motherhood, part-time work became their dominant coping strategy. In the UK, however, there has been a long debate as to whether part-time work for mothers is a lifestyle choice or reflects structural constraints in the context of lack of childcare (for example, Hakim 1991, 1995, 2000, Bruegel 1996, Ginn *et al*. 1996, Crompton and Harris 1998).

[10] There are also large differences in the employment rates of lone mothers in the three countries, ranging from around three quarters of lone mothers in the Netherlands and Sweden to 50 per cent in the UK.

[11] In Sweden, however, over one third of female part-timers stated that they wished to work more hours per week (the majority in order to earn more money) indicating quite a high level of involuntary part-time working (see also Employment in Europe 2001).

[12] Overall, the UK survey contained the highest proportion of respondents in the 8 partner countries who stated that they had no contract of employment. That is, 15 per cent of respondents in the UK stated that they had no employment contract. Elsewhere the proportions ranged from less than 1 per cent in Sweden to 10 per cent in Hungary. The proportion in the UK survey is also high in comparison with the analysis of the 1998 WERS by Brown *et al.* (2000). There the authors found only 2 per cent of employees had no contract of employment, although this specifically referred to a written contract.

[13] In an analysis of the HWF UK survey data presented in an earlier paper, we found that whilst there is evidence of a shift to more equal sharing of domestic tasks and childcare (especially in two full-time working parent families) the responsibility for childcare and domestic work was overwhelmingly taken by mothers (Cousins and Tang 2000a).

[14] In the Netherlands policies by the social partners to develop part-time work and the demand from women themselves for this type of work (see Visser 2002) have enabled women to care for their children at home and work part-time. The author of the HWF Dutch report notes that there is still a very strong ideology of caring for children by the mothers themselves. Nevertheless, the stress is on individual working patterns and individual solutions to the problem of combining work and care (Jager 2002). As the Dutch author notes part-time work for women tends to emphasise rather than undermine traditional differences between men and women.