Beroepsarbeid door gehuwde vrouwen. De betekenis van het verrichten van beroepsarbeid door gehuwde vrouwen in de rolverdeling tussen man en vrouw
Clason, Christine Etske

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SUMMARY

THE EMPLOYMENT OF MARRIED WOMEN AND THE DIVISION OF ROLES BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN

Chapter 1: MAN AND WOMAN IN SOCIETY, A FIRST APPRAISAL OF THE PROBLEM

Employment does not yet wholly accord with the role expectations of women. These expectations are based on the role-division between people, which is to a very large extent, based on the criterion of sex. Another differentiation based on sex is the one between 'superior' and 'inferior', which is distinctly normative in nature. Using the work of Bem (1970) as a starting point, the idea is developed that the assumption that there are universal criteria on which individuals can be valued as more superior and more inferior could be called a 'zero-order' belief (Bem, p.6). Sex is, in that case, a very likely criterion to base one's opinion on, an opinion that could be considered a 'first-order' belief (Bem, p.6). If this should be the case it will be necessary - if one is interested in the problem of how to change the role differentiation based on sex to a very large extent - to discover how this 'first-order' belief could be shaken. It would seem that employment could turn out to be an important factor in this respect. In an examination of the role-expectations of men and women in the Netherlands, the employment of married women would seem to be worthy of more detailed attention. The main question here is, whether the employment of married women could be the starting point for a process of change through which the belief that sex ought to be a criterion that plays a role in all role-differentiation could become manifest, which, in its turn, could change the role-division between men and women considerably.

Chapter 2: TO WHAT DEGREE COULD INNATE HEREDITARY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN JUSTIFY A DETAILED AND FAR-REACHING ROLE-DIFFERENTIATION ON THE BASIS OF SEX?

The question of the inborn differences, both physical and psychic, between the sexes is important, because if they were really deeply rooted and the most important cause of a very detailed role-division between men and women, then a search for the possibilities for changing this role-division would be futile. Different resources were used to gain more insight into this problem. Although the existence of innate differences between the sexes which go further than the biological functions in procreation is not unlikely, these differences don't seem to justify unescapably a far-reaching role-differentiation on the basis of sex.

In this chapter the theories of Engels (1884) and Parsons (1955) with respect to the relationship between employment of (married) women and sex-role differentiation, are discussed and compared as well. Both these theories have had, and still have, a large influence on the theory and research on this subject. Although at first sight the two theories seem to present quite different views on the impact of employment of (married) women, they turn out to have much more in common than was expected; neither questions the importance of sex as a criterion for role-differentiation.
Chapter 3: RESEARCH ON THE SUBJECT OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMPLOYMENT OF MARRIED WOMEN AND THE ROLE-DIVISION ON THE BASIS OF SEX

Here we have tried to compile the relevant empirical research findings on this subject. Dutch research (3.1) was dealt with separately from research from outside The Netherlands (3.2).

In the Netherlands no research was done on this subject till after World War II, with one exception (Posthumus-van der Goot, 1938). There was much discussion about employment of (married) women and there were treatises on different aspects of this employment, but no empirical research. This finding was placed in the context of the development of the employment of (married) women in this country.

The first research after the war, conducted on behalf of "De Nederlandse Huis­houdraad" (The Dutch Household Council), was set up to find out why married women get employed and how employment affects their marriage and family (Schel­lekens-Ligthart, 1957 and 1961).

The shortage of manpower (and especially womanpower) on the labour market brought some more researches by which on the one hand one tried to find out under what conditions married women would be willing to seek employment and on the other, how that would affect their families. Not until the seventies has there been any research in which the point of view shifted to the married women themselves, rather than the family or the labour market.

From Dutch as well as other research, information was collected about: the relationship between employment, education and parental family on the one hand and the attitude towards the sex-role differentiation on the other; the relationship between education, phase in the family life cycle, the husband (income, education and attitude), the division of power within the family and the division of labour within the family on the one hand and employment on the other; motives of married women for seeking employment; and the relationship between employment and the role-division between men and women.

Chapter 4: DEFINITION OF THE PROBLEM, HYPOTHESES AND RESEARCH DESIGN

First of all, we formulated our research problem:
1) Is there a relationship between the employment of married women and their attitude towards the existing sex-role differentiation?
2) Which other variables are related to the attitude towards the existing sex-role differentiation?
3) If one controls the other variables which are related to this attitude, does there remain a relationship between employment and attitude?
4) What can be concluded as to the nature of the relationship between employment and attitude?

The hypotheses derived from this research problem were formulated on the basis of the findings of chapter 3. These hypotheses are divided into 5 categories:
4.1.1. Hypotheses concerning variables which determine to a large degree the objective opportunities of a married woman to decide autonomously either to become
stay employed or not (M.1. to M.6.). 4.1.2. Hypotheses concerning variables which relate to childhood and the period before marriage (J.1. to J.10.). 4.1.3. Hypotheses concerning the variables directly relating to the situation of the woman in the period that the research was executed (S.1. to S.9.). 4.1.4. Hypotheses concerning the variables relating to employment (8.1. to 8.8). 4.1.5. Hypotheses concerning the attitude of women toward their own life (L.1 to L.3.).

On practical as well as more theoretical grounds we decided on a semi-experimental research design with matched pairs of employed and non-employed women. The execution of this design was based on Rubin and Althauser (1970). Our research design was different from that described by Rubin and Althauser, in that there was no fixed moment in the past for which we know what the attitude was. Therefore, it was only possible to determine if at the moment of the research a difference in attitude between employed and non-employed married women existed. On the other questions raised at the beginning of this chapter, however, no clear answer can be found. As research subjects we chose women in the 24-65 age group who had been married for at least one year when the research was executed, and who were living with their husbands. They all lived in the city of Groningen or the neighboring suburban village of Haren. We matched each of our respondents for: her own age ("geboortejaar vrouw"), age of husband ("geboortejaar echtgenoot"), year of marriage ("huwelijksjaar"), number of children living at home ("aantal kinderen thuis"), age of the youngest child at home ("geboortejaar jongste kind thuis"), educational level of the woman ("opleiding vrouw") and the socio-economic status of the husband ("beroep echtgenoot"). For a description of the matched pairs, see Appendix 2 ("Bijlage 2").

The dependent variable was the attitude towards the existing sex-role differentiation, defined as the degree to which one accepts the existing division of roles between men and women. The external variables were divided into: variables related to the formative years before marriage of the respondent, variables that are directly associated with the situation at the time of the research, variables which are related to employment and career and variables which are related to the attitude towards her own life.

A description of the execution of the research itself is given (4.4). Special attention is paid to the selection of the respondents and to the way in which employed and non-employed married women are matched (4.4.1.).

Chapter 5: HOW TO MEASURE THE ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE EXISTING SEX-ROLE DIFFERENTIATION

This whole chapter is devoted to the construction of a scale to measure this attitude. Activities were selected from daily life at home, concerning social participation and leisure time, and concerning the world of employment. Activities which are predominantly executed by men or by women, in other words, sex-typed activities, were chosen. To test if the selected activities are really sex-typed, we asked our respondents first if these activities generally belong to the sphere of men, of women, or of both. Next, we asked them if they were at liberty to decide which activity was to belong to the sphere of men, of women, or of both. Because the division of roles is most clearly seen in married persons, we preceded this question by a short introduction. In this introduction it was stated that in The Netherlands there exists a division into activities executed by married men and married women (at least in the question 18). We analysed the answers to this second question, after dichotomization by means of the stochastically cumulative, one-dimensional scale analysis developed by Mokken (1974).
We decided to use a 15-item scale constructed by this method, which we named "the sex-role differentiation scale" (SRD-scale) to measure the attitude towards the existing sex-role differentiation.

To test the reliability of this scale we analyzed material of the preliminary research for our own project, as well as material acquired by Meynen (1977) and Peschar (1975).

To test the validity of the SRD-scale, we compared the scores obtained from the SRD-scale with the scores obtained from two 'self-direction' scales based on the theory of Kohn (1969) used by Meynen (1977).

Chapter 6: RESULTS

For the purpose of testing our hypotheses we were limited by the possibilities available within the research design we used. There was no question of two independent samples that could be compared the selection of the non-employed women was completely based on the employed women already interviewed.

For the purpose of testing our main hypothesis: employed married women accept the existing sex-role differentiation to a lesser degree than non-employed married women, we made use of the Wilcoxon-Rank-Sign Test for Matched Pairs. The unit of analysis was here the matched pair as it was in the testing of the other hypotheses. For the purpose of testing the other hypotheses, concerning the relationship between variables other than the match variable 'employment' and the attitude towards the existing sex-role differentiation, we formed sub-groups within the total sample of 83 matched pairs, through manipulation of the variable concerned. As the dependent variable we used the sum of the SRD-scores of a pair (relationship between that variable and attitude, independent of the relationship employment/attitude) or the difference of the SRD-scores of a pair (the influence of that variable on the relationship between employment/attitude). By determining if the differences on the dependent variable between the sub-groups are significant, the relationship between the variable concerned and the dependent variable is established. Here we made use of the Mann Whitney test to determine if differences between two sub-groups can be considered significant. In cases where we found an influence on the relationship between employment and attitude, the main hypothesis was tested for the sub-groups concerned once more (Wilcoxon-Rank-Sign Test for Matched Pairs). If the independent variable was a variable on interval level and it was impossible to construct meaningful sub-groups, we made use of product-moment correlations to test our hypotheses.

Our main hypothesis was confirmed: employed women did accept the existing sex-role differentiation to a lesser degree (t= -2.76, p=0.003).

A relationship with the attitude towards the sex-role differentiation, independent of the relationship between employment and attitude, was found for: educational level, socio-economic status of the husband, brothers or sisters of the respondent, socio-economic status of the father, educational level of the mother, employment of the mother in the childhood of the respondent, leisure-time activities, political interest, preference for a political party, the kind of employment before marriage, employment after the date of marriage, the importance attached to promotion, the attitude of the husband, satisfaction with daily life, socio-economic status of the father, having sister(s), length of marriage, political preference, belonging to a religious denomination, membership of any clubs, all these influenced the relationship between employment and attitude. If both fathers had a low socio-economic status, the relationship between employment and attitude disappeared. The same occurred when both belonged to a religious denomination, when neither of them had any interest in politics or neither was a member of a club. If neither one
belonged to a religious denomination, or if both had political interests or were members of a club, the relationship between employment and attitude was more pronounced.

Chapter 7: CONCLUSIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

First of all, attention was drawn once more to the fact that a clear difference was found in attitude towards the existing sex-role differentiation: the employed married women accepted the existing division of roles to a lesser degree than the non-employed married women.

After that, we concentrated on two questions: whether the relationship between employment and attitude was likely to be spurious or not; whether it was employment that leads to a more critical attitude or whether it was the critical attitude that leads to employment.

As was stated in chapter 4, we could not be expected to find more than an indication of an answer, due to the limitations of the design we used.

As for the first question, it did not seem likely that there were other factors which led to employment as well as to a more critical attitude. It seems more likely that the relationship between employment and attitude becomes more pronounced under the influence of certain factors or in certain conditions. As far as the second question is concerned, it was assumed that if it was a critical attitude that led to employment, both groups would differ clearly in those factors concerning life before marriage that influence the attitude towards the existing sex-role differentiation (table 7.1). On the other hand, it was likely that if employment should lead to a more critical attitude, both groups would differ clearly on those factors that have to do with employment (table 7.2). It seems that a critical attitude makes employment more likely, but is in no way a precondition. Employment may lead to a more critical attitude, even to an unmistakably critical attitude, but not in all circumstances. This influence of employment will be found in circumstances where it is difficult to reconcile employment with the expectations concerning the proper role of men and women. There is a difference between a more critical attitude (critical compared with the attitude of others, mainly the matched partner) and a critical attitude (an SRD-score of 7 or less). There were 35 pairs where neither woman had a critical attitude. In all, there were 37 employed women which had a critical attitude and 20 non-employed women.

Surveying the Dutch situation, it would seem that employment in married women is becoming more socially acceptable without basically changing the role-division between men and women. This could mean that employment would not bring married women so easily in conflict with the prevailing expectations concerning the roles of men and women, provided they will be able to find jobs which make it possible for them to fulfill their double roles. It is to be expected, however, that in the foreseeable future they will have trouble finding jobs at all. As a consequence married women could get into conflicts because at the same time when employment is more expected of them, opportunities will get fewer. This could become more pronounced under the influence of some other factors: the infiltration of men into 'female' jobs, the rising level of education of women, a higher divorce-rate. A counter-influence could become the greater freedom, both in practical and in moral terms, to decide if one is to have children. The same holds true for the more recently increased value attached to the work of the housewife. However, it could be that for some time it will be not so much employment as not being able to secure employment that will lead to a more critical attitude towards the existing sex-role differentiation.

A real change in the role differentiation between men and women, will not
occur as long as the division into gainful employment/other work is coupled with a division into more valued/less valued activities and with the division into men/women. Until this triple bond of sex-work-prestige loosens there can be only relatively small adaptations in the existing role-division between men and women. It will be necessary to give more attention to those variables, those circumstances, which keep this unholy alliance intact. Therefore, one should take pains to discover how to make the more unconscious beliefs (Bem) conscious. The employment of married women will remain important in that connection. In research the emphasis, however, will have to be on those circumstances in which employment will have its greatest effect, in other words, will be as much as possible going against the prevailing expectations. In all this the family cannot and should not remain unaffected; its expectations should change as well. As long as the role-division of men and women within the family—be it the group of a man, a woman and their offspring or other small groups of people living together in close contact—is not basically changed, sex will remain a criterion that has too great an influence on the role-division between persons.