Why welfare-to-work policies aimed at lone mothers were drafted more radical in the Netherlands than in the UK in the 1996-2001: In search for answers

By

Marin Gavazov

Submitted to

Central European University

Department of Political Science

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts

Supervisor: Professor Dorothee Bohle

Budapest 2007

Abstract

In the early 1990s, the Netherlands and the UK appeared as an exception in the EU landscape with the absence of work obligations on lone mothers on benefits with dependent children. Since the mid-1990, the tide changed its direction as governments in both countries began to consider offering lone mothers welfare for work.

In 1996, the Dutch government made the reception of General Assistance by lone mothers whose children are five years of age or older conditional on work obligations; as of today, New Labour still balks at forcing lone mothers on benefits to work, but the structure of the social assistance system evolves in such a way so as to make not working a no-option.

Before this research, no answer was given to the puzzle why the Netherlands took one path in drafting legislature aimed at welfare-to-work schemes for lone mothers and the UK took another. The present research finds eight possible explanations which to account for this difference. The research develops them in three interrelated chapters; political perceptions and notions of work and care, and of lone mothers, as well as the financial interests of governments hold the key to seeing why the two countries diverged in their roads of introducing lone mothers on benefits to welfare-to-work schemes.

Acknowledgements

I want to cordially thank my supervisor, Professor Dorothee Bohle, for all the helpful comments and suggestions she made concerning my research and for all the time and energy spent assisting me with my at times confusing research. Without these valuable suggestions and comments my research would never have had its final form and focus. I would also like to thank Professor Bohle for the two very interesting MA courses she gave over the academic year 2006/2007 which I found very useful to attend.

I also want to thank Professor Alexandra Krause who gave an excellent and captivating course on the welfare states in Europe; it was for the first time in that course that I figured out the field of interest on which I would later build my MA Thesis; the lively discussions and lectures surrounding Professor Krause's course are to remain a very good memory from CEU and the academic rigor and capacity of its faculty. I also want to thank Professor Francisca de Haan from the Gender Studies Department who gave an excellent and thought-provoking course which I attended this spring. My second chapter is very much influenced by the discussions and readings from this class. I also want to thank Professor Anil Duman for the receptiveness with which she met questions related to my thesis and for her insightful comments.

Last but not least, I want to thank to all the incredible people I met in Budapest for this one year, to my family, and to my friends from back 'home.' You are the best, and I could have hardly written anything without your support. Yet to you I devote all my time and memories, and my MA Thesis I devote to everyone who will in the future open its covers out of curiosity or necessity.

Table of Contents

Introduction

1. Introduction

Lone mothers became subjects of academic research, political disputes, and media attention over the last quarter century. They did so because of their increasing numbers, because of their high financial vulnerability, because of their higher risk of social exclusion[1], and in the case of Anglo-Saxon countries, because of their moral stigmatization. A high correlation between child poverty and lone motherhood made further financial and social concerns appear with respect to lone mothers. As the specter of activation policies began to haunt Western Europe, countries with traditionalist understanding of gender roles, this is countries in which women are viewed primarily as care providers, found themselves facing a dilemma - are lone mothers to work? Two such countries, the Netherlands and the UK, have shown a remarkable similarity in their treatment of lone mothers which extended up to the mid nineties when both countries started to consider welfare-to-work schemes as a means of social coverage for lone mothers on social assistance (van Drenth et al. 1999). The reforms were expected given the disadvantageous position of lone mothers in the British and Dutch societies (table 1.1) and given the broader framework of welfare state restructuring.

[1] I suggest that the reader consider Esping-Andersen's definition of social exclusion as a condition in which people are "trapped in inferior life chances" (Esping-Andersen 2002, 30).

Table 1.1: Child Poverty and Family Structure in the 1990s

Year -Country	All Children	Two-Parent Family	Single Mother	% of Children Living in Single-Mother Families
1991 NL	8.1	5.7	34.2	8.6
1991 UK	18.5	13	44.9	15.9
1994 NL	7.9	6.3	28.2	7.4
1994 UK	13.9	10.4	27.9	19.3
1999 NL	9.8	7.6	35.1	8.1
1999 UK	17	10.4	39.2	21.7

Source: Luxembourg Income Study *Poverty Rates for Children by Family Type* (2006)

However, they were following different logic; in the Netherlands, lone mothers on benefits were obliged to work after their child reaches five years of age; the political disputes were centered on technical issues surrounding this obligation – how long for a lone mother can rely on social security while she is searching for work, should lone mothers with very young children (between three and five years) be obliged to do part-time work, and so forth. In the UK, obliging lone mothers on benefits to work was viewed as a possibility only in the long run (even at present the earliest plans go for 2010). The government introduced a series of schemes targeted at the general public – notably under the Family Credit which was later turned into the Working Families Tax Credit – and at the same time started to cut the specific benefits targeted at lone mothers. The logic was to incrementally bring lone mothers into the broader societal schemes for social assistance. Thus in the UK, lone mothers were presumed to become a part of welfare-to-work schemes, however, not by compulsion but as a result of eroding or cutting their benefits and integrating them into the general schemes for social

assistance; many of these schemes follow a welfare-to-work logic (Peck 2001), and the government *de facto* provides benefits as working tax credits.

Given the historical similarities between the Netherlands and the UK in their treatment of lone mothers (Lewis 1997, 18; van Drenth et al. 1999), it is puzzling why the two countries took on so different approaches to integrating lone mothers in welfare-to-work schemes. As of today, this question has not been answered by the academia (to the best of my knowledge). Researching why the Netherlands chose the more radical and uncompromising approach of obliging lone mothers on benefits to work and why the UK chose to take the longer road of cuts in lone mothers' benefits so as to eventually make them work under a working tax credit system is an academic investment which yields multiple dividends. First, the above research question gives the possibility to test a framework which might partially or fully be extended to similar research questions well into the future on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean; the reader can at any point in my research consider how applicable my research framework is not only for analyzing workfare policies directed at lone mothers but also at the broader group of socially excluded people – ethnic minorities of "problematic" background, people with mental and physical disabilities, "underclass" youth and others. Second, answering the above research question helps us see the levels of generalizability we can allow ourselves when considering whether two countries/regimes are similar in their welfare provisions for people not supposed to work. Third, answering the above questions helps us see which factors can turn from quantitative to qualitative ones and create an arable ground for workfare policies to be sowed and cropped. Fourth, answering the above question helps us see developments in the gendered division of work and care in the two countries from a micro perspective. Fifth,

answering the above question contributes to the present literature on welfare reforms by continuing and complementing the logic of a study on welfare schemes for lone mothers in the Netherlands and in the UK by bringing up a piece of detailed, contemporary, comparative analysis on the logic behind workfare schemes aimed at lone mothers in the Netherlands and the UK.

The only somewhat recent comparative study which touches on the workfare reforms aimed at lone mothers in the Netherlands and the UK is conducted by van Drenth, Knijn, and Lewis (1999) – *Sources of Income for Lone Mother Families: Policy Changes in Britain and The Netherlands and the Experiences of Divorced Women.* Overall, van Drenth, Knijn, and Lewis have conducted a very good descriptive work on social provisions for lone mothers up to the 1997 (the last year considered in their research), and they have delicately but persistently made the point that putting lone mothers to work is problematic. However, despite its many academic merits, the article also has drawbacks; though its explanatory qualities are present, they are not as sharp as one could expect. Lone mothers are predominantly put under one common denominator which overlooks important dynamics in the derivation of social policies directed at them; the vested financial interests governments had in drafting specific social polices are not considered in any appropriate detail; the logic of welfare-to-workfare change in the Netherlands as contrasted and compared with the UK is not considered in any satisfying comparative detail either. This article, while providing facts and data which can be used to think up of the logic behind differences in workfare-related acts and legislature in the Low Countries and the United Kingdom, stays too closely focused on lone mothers and too closely focused on their similarities, which introduces a bias. In very general terms, my research can

be seen as extending the research effort of van Drenth, Knijn, and Lewis to the last years of the 1990s; in practice, my research differs significantly, since it is not descriptive but explanatory in intent, since the focus is not on lone mothers but on explaining variations in how lone mothers were incorporated into welfare-to-work schemes, and last but not least, since it builds an original research design to confront its puzzle.

The research topic of my study- why welfare-to-work policies aimed at lone mothers were drafted more radical in the Netherlands than in the UK in the 1996-2001 – falls within and draws from four interconnected realms of academic research – (1) research on welfare states' policies and their impact on lone mothers, (2) research on welfare states (esp. welfare typologies and welfare retrenchment), (3) research which focuses closely at characteristics of lone mothers, and (4) research on child care. The reader will see repeated references to all of the above research fields as my study advances on its way. It often happens that a study or a publication falls within more than one of the above categories. For example, Bussemaker et al. (1997) while explicitly addressing the state policies affecting lone mothers in the Low Countries, also, implicitly touches on a very important divide among lone mothers in a dynamic perspective – the appearance of "consciously never-married mothers." Knijn and van Wel (2001), while explicitly addressing the differences among Dutch lone mothers in terms of their qualities – whether they have a high or low *care ethos*, also provide multifarious observations on how welfare-to-work reforms were conceived by politicians, how their design fitted lone mothers, why the reforms stumbled, and so on. On the other had, recent research on welfare states does mention lone mothers as an issue - George and Taylor-Gooby (eds. 1996), Esping-Andersen (ed. 2002), or is built around them as an issue - Kilkey and Bradshaw

(1999), Christopher (2001); it is probably impossible to provide an exhaustive account of all the ways the above four fields of literature interrelate given the large number of overlapping topics and the even larger amount of literature which covers them. My research makes no exception; it combines all of the above types of literature to find an explanation to its research puzzle. For example, it looks at Lewis (1997) to find what political discourses were surrounding lone mothers in the UK, but it also looks at Peck (2001) or Taylor-Gooby (1996) to see the political interest behind such discourses. My study looks at Bussemaker et al (1997) to see the analogous discourses in the Netherlands, but it also looks at Knijn (in Daly ed. 2001) or at Kremer (2002) to see the political interest behind those discourses. My study is based on a compilation of insights and ideas from various academic sources as I have paid special attention to links between welfare and work regimes in the Netherlands and the UK and links between work and care regimes in the two countries. The first link, between welfare and work, has been excellently addressed by Esping-Andersen (1990, 1996, 2002), by George and Taylor-Gooby (eds. 1996), by Pierson (ed. 2001), and many other authors. The second link has been addressed by Lewis (ed. 1997), Christopher (2001), Knijn (in Daly ed. 2001) and other authors. I have used all of the aforementioned studies so as to borrow insights about the broad notions with which the British and Dutch governments were operating at the time when they were confronted with the decision to integrate lone mothers into welfare-to-work schemes. On the other hand, I also borrowed significantly from studies which conveyed particular governmental attitudes towards lone mothers in the Netherlands and the UK - Bussemaker et al (1997), Lewis (1997), Knijn and van Wel (2001) - and from studies which conveyed differences among lone mothers which to me appeared to relate to those attitudes – Knijn van Wel (2001), Duncan and Edwards (1996), and other. I have also borrowed more

than once from other studies, books, and publications so as to extract enough information about the differences between the Netherlands and the UK which might explain why the Netherlands chose the more radical path to integrating lone mothers in workfare schemes in 1996-2001.

2. Research Design

2.1. Assumptions

My research builds on several assumptions which it develops over three chapters to answer the question why welfare-to-work policies aimed at lone mothers were drafted more radical in the Netherlands than in the UK in the 1996-2001.

My first assumption is that governmental ideas about the whole structure of society and especially about the relation between care and work both impose constraints, templates, and possibilities for implementing different welfare-to-work programs aimed at lone mothers.

My second assumption is that perceptions of lone mothers by politicians and society will play an important role in drafting welfare-to-work acts aimed at lone mothers; I consider that perceptions of lone mothers are influenced by three sources – (1) the balance between objective differences among lone mothers and how they are used and by whom they are used to construct a common uniform image of the lone mother, (2) the objective similarities between lone mothers on aggregate level which make them different from the rest of society

(especially mothers and women), (3) the political discourses available in the country with their specific statements, assumptions, and prejudices about lone mothers.

I will immediately introduce the reader to the logic underlying the first point of my second assumption because it may appear obscure; it proceeds in several interrelated steps, and if not patently addressed, they might appear random. As concerns the logic behind the other assumptions I made, it should be sufficiently clear by now, and even if it is not, it will become as my study unfolds.

The first point in my second assumption – I consider that perceptions of lone mothers are influenced by the balance between objective differences among lone mothers as well as how they are used and by whom they are used to construct a common uniform image of the lone mother - follows the line that: (1) lone mothers differ in their characteristics in such a way that one group of lone mothers will possess a characteristic which is revered by society and governments and another group will possess exactly the opposite characteristic – I consider the characteristic to be the propensity of lone mothers to enter work; related characteristics are the propensity of lone mothers to be active and cooperating; (2) when society views the positive characteristics, it builds up a positive image of lone mothers; when it views the negative characteristics, it builds a negative image of lone mothers; however, which characteristics the society will view largely depends on who delineates the picture of lone mothers. (3) A third and slightly less connected point is that explanatory variables behind the aforementioned characteristics of lone mothers are influenced by general governmental perceptions about society. Thus in the long run differences among lone mothers in terms of

their care ethics, reproductive behavior, and incidence may at least partially be traced to governmental perceptions of equality, education, work, and care.

My third assumption is that financial cost-and-benefit analyses of both the government and lone mothers will determine different designs of welfare-to-work acts. Financial incentives on the part of governments can be triggered by macro stimuli such as welfare retrenchment and the need to get lone mothers of the welfare budget or the need to feed the hungry economy with new, unutilized by now labor; such stimuli I shall call government-centered, for they arise out of the governmental self-interest or interest with the economy. The other vein of governmental financial incentives arises out of micro stimuli; these stimuli are lone-mothers-centered as they focus on lone mothers' poverty or on the poverty of their children; the purpose of the government in this case is to improve the financial situation of lone mothers not its own. Governments will try to find the closest common grounds between the two stimuli, as adjusted to the levels of utility they derive from each of them, when drafting welfare to work legislation aimed at lone mothers. On the other hand, governments will take into account the cost-benefit analysis lone mothers face as they will try to reduce the costs and increase the benefits lone mothers receive from work. A somewhat side note to my third assumption is that financial stimuli do play a very important role in the perceptions of lone mothers by governments and society.

The above assumptions are to a large extent empirically based; I have formed them on the basis of my experience with literature of the four types discussed in the previous section. I will introduce the reader to the literature on which I based my assumptions in the process of

my first, second, and third chapters, so as not to get repetitive by introducing the literature several times.

2.2. Chapter Overview

My research, as already mentioned, proceeds in three chapters (and a conclusion). The first chapter considers governmental ideas about the whole structure of society - and especially about the relation between care and work - and investigates how well they can explain that the welfare-to-work policies aimed at lone mothers were drafted more radically in Netherlands than in the UK in the 1996-2001. The chapter first introduces the reader briefly to the many similarities between the two countries in their treatment of lone mothers, and then shows that at a closer inspection a lot of differences appear; eventually the chapter explains the differences as arising from divergent governmental ideas.

The second chapter considers how perceptions of lone mothers by politicians and society explain that in the 1996-2001 the welfare-to-work policies aimed at lone mothers were drafted more radically in Netherlands than in the UK. This chapter is in a comparative perspective the most convoluted and bulky from all the research, but also it is the most innovative one; it traces true interactions between lone mothers and politicians in its first part (as opposed to one-sided actions by politicians); first, it looks at how on average lone mothers in the Netherlands and the UK differ in objective terms – my independent research falls in line with previous research on the same matter conducted by van Drenth et al. (1999); the chapter proceeds by juxtaposing the findings with portrayals of lone mothers in social and political

discourses; it shows how differences between two large groups of lone mothers of different propensity to work if portrayed by different actors translate into different political and societal perceptions of lone mothers. The second section of the second chapter considers political discourses which have a specific stance on lone motherhood; overall, the chapter provides quite a lot of armory to shoot at the question of why in the period 1996-2001 the welfare-to-work policies aimed at lone mothers were drafted more radically in Netherlands than in the UK. By the end of the second chapter, already a substantive body of explanations appears.

The third chapter considers from a financial perspective the question why welfare-to-work policies aimed at lone mothers were drafted more radically in the Netherlands than in the UK in the period 1996-2001. It considers first governmental macro and micro stimuli[2] for drafting welfare-to-work schemes as it compares the strength and rationale of these stimuli in the Netherlands and the UK for the period 1996-2001.Then it considers how those stimuli are constrained by the specific way social assistance was drafted for lone mothers. The chapter incorporates its findings with previous results from chapter one and two and thus adds additional clarity to arguments already considered.

2.3. Constraints

The focus of the present paper is on drafting of the laws – this is on how acts and legislature come into being not on how they are implemented. This entails both advantages and disadvantages. The advantage is that maximum focus is achieved by distinguishing between

[2] See pages 9-10.

drafting and implementing and considering just one of the aspects in proper detail. Given the scope of the paper, considering both of the aspects would have made for an academic mish mash and loss of focus, for drafting follows a very different logic from implementing on many an occasion. On the other hand, significant gaps appear between drafting and implementing which means that without looking at municipalities and other factors, we cannot fully explain the outcome of the reforms. In the Dutch case, the municipalities have had a significant impact on why the "radical" reform floundered (Knijn and van Wel 2001, 804-815; 2001, 235-251), and could have on certain occasions been viewed as having conflicting interests with the central government; for example, in the Netherlands, "social assistance offices and their caseworkers often allow lone parents to pay informal child minders when they get into paid work although this in fact against the rules of the childcare measure" (Knijn and van Wel in Miller and Rowlingson (eds.) 2001, 125). Given that "municipalities can provide free child care for children of lone parents who receive social assistance provided their income is lower than 130% of the minimum income,"[3] it appears that they, however, have a vested interest to close their eyes as concerns informal child care so as to diminish the pressure they experience to provide free child care, especially under the constraint of insufficient funding (van Drenth et al. 1999, 630).

At the end of the day, however, it is the central governments who are the more important. Central governments are the one who draft laws and acts and who give the guidelines while municipalities though having discretionary powers and though being able to have an impact on the outcomes of policies cannot in the long run oppose central governments without severe

[3] http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/3/24/34004969.pdf

repercussions if the policies opposed or distorted are vital to the central government. Cases abound, for example in the UK over the 1980s and the early 1990s the central government took a lot of control over previously municipal prerogatives of housing provision schemes (Taylor-Gooby 1996, 110) partly because they were turning too costly because of "misuse" by young single mothers (Lewis 1997, 60).

My research also commits another big omission. Pivotal actors such as the social partners in the Netherlands and the center-right voters in the UK were not considered or not considered in detail. Omissions were inevitable so that a clear and relatively uncomplicated picture appears on the interplay between the expectations and interests of those who drafted policies and those whom policies were drafted for. However, such a picture, even if simplified, is necessary. It adds a stone to the edifice of knowledge to be accumulated on the variation between welfare-to-work policies.

2.4. Additional Notes

1) The real question behind my research is - why welfare-to-work policies aimed at lone mothers were drafted as based on compulsion in the Netherlands and on volition in the UK in the 1996-2001 –as I consider the presence of a work obligation (compulsion) to be more radical a fact than its absence, therefore I paraphrased my question as - why welfare-to-work policies aimed at lone mothers were drafted more radical in the Netherlands than in the UK in the 1996-2001. My interpretation that the Dutch reforms were more radical than the British

ones because of the “obligation to work” imposed by the Dutch government on lone mothers is similar to the view shared by van Drenth, Knijn, and Lewis (1999, 620).

2) In my research, I use workfare either with a strict meaning or with a lax meaning. In its strict sense, workfare means obliging people to work through conditionality of receipts on work. This is a procedural perspective. In its loose meaning, workfare means making it too costly or impossible for people not to work if they want to receive benefits. This is a perspective focusing on the outcome not on the procedure. In the strict interpretation of workfare, only the Netherlands introduced it; in its lax interpretation both the Netherlands and the UK introduced it. It should be noticed that in the literature workfare is used only in its strict meaning.

3. Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to introduce the reader to two foremost issues: (1) the logic behind the choice of the research question this paper investigates and (2) the research design chosen for addressing the research question.

Chapter One:

Governmental ideas about the structure of society as an explanatory variable

1 .Introduction

This chapter considers governmental ideas about the whole structure of society as a possible explanatory factor on why the welfare-to-work policies aimed at lone mothers were drafted more radically in the Netherlands than in the UK in the 1996-2001. The chapter pays special attention to the relation between care and work.

The chapter first introduces the reader briefly to the many similarities between the two countries in their treatment of lone mothers, and then shows that at a closer inspection a lot of differences appear; the chapter explains the differences from the perspective of governmental ideas about the whole structure of society and especially about the relation between care and work.

2. Similar on the surface

Both the Netherlands and the UK appear very similar in their treatment of lone mothers at first sight; over the 1980s, in both countries work related policies were based on the assumption that a lone mother would take care of her child and the state would support her, in the 1990s both countries tried to pass the responsibility of income support to the biological father, and already by the late 1990s, they tried to pass the responsibility of income support to the lone mother. This occurred in time of predominant though not undisputed agreement that

everybody should work and that the state should have an enabling responsibility for making working possible by both providing tax incentives, subsidizing child care, and providing job training, counseling and various forms of assistance with finding a job. The welfare state was considered as hurting individual independence. Decentralization of service provision, individual responsibilities, and flexibility became cherished norms in both the Netherlands and the UK. Lone motherhood related policies were trapped in a conflict between politicians who would still find it hard to concede that lone mothers' place is not at home taking care of their children and an ever-growing number of politicians who would view lone mothers as the same as other women and men – individuals who want, or have the obligation to want, to work - with the sole difference that they should have more child-care assistance available to them. At first sight such a depiction appears unproblematic; however, it overlooks the significant rift that occurred between British and Dutch perceptions of founding social principles in the early and mid 1990s and the repercussions of those shifts in governmental attitudes on policies directed at lone mothers.

3. Rebuilding Society: Novel Social Principle in the Netherlands and the UK

3.1. Netherlands

In the Netherlands the early 1990s were marked by a broad debate on building social principles and norms (Bussemaker et. al 1997, 109); by the mid 1990s the question of work and care was reconsidered, and a principle of gender equality was accepted under the form of the Combination Scenario; also, the relationship between social assistance and work was

reconsidered - in the beginning as a debate on fraudulent schemes in which lone parent families did not report cohabitation (Bussemaker et. al 1997, 109); however, the debate was subsumed into the broader discourse of responsibilities and obligations, and as a result ", the obligation to work, or at least apply for work, has been extended to a much broader group of people" (Bussemaker et. al 1997, 109).

The discourse of "the citizen's own responsibilities and obligations" (Bussemaker et. al 1997, 109) was emblematic of the welfare retrenchment in the Netherlands. It was related to the need to integrate women into the labor market so as to relieve the public purse, to make fathers, when absent, pay alimonies for their children, to activate the multitude of people relying on the welfare state, and in general terms to revitalize the "ill" Dutch society. In no way was the discourse targeted at a certain underclass of people. It encompassed all of the Dutch society, and it blended naturally with the Combination Scenario's building assumption – individual autonomy. The Combination Scenario presumed that men and women should both work on average 32 hours a week and share equally their care responsibilities as child care will not be provided by the government, rather "care receivers as well as carers will depend on a wide configuration of people and institutions to fulfil their need" (Knijn in Daly 2001, 164). The Combination Scenario postulated that "every adult person, whatever form his family takes, earns his own living and fulfils his own care responsibilities" (Knijn in Daly 2001, 164). Lone mothers were also incorporated in the Combination Scenario logic as they were "obliged to…work when their youngest child reaches the age of 5, are supported by an extra tax deduction…and their earnings are overlooked if they accept a part-time job. In

addition an extra child-care budget for lone parents is given to municipalities" (Knijn in Daly 2001, 165).

3.2 UK

The governmental witch-hunt of undeserving poor and scroungers so popular among Conservatives from the late 1980s was put to a halt in the late 1990s by the New Labour as Blair, Brown, Field, and others changed the political discourse from one of cutting benefits from scroungers through the means of workfare (scroungers will not work) to one extolling work and presenting workfare as a balance between rights and responsibilities (Peck 2001, 298, 329), as the responsibility to work was not seen as a toil but rather as something natural to do. Several among many examples, in 1995 the Labour MP Frank Field suggested the government offer work instead of benefits (Peck 2001, 291); in 1997 he said that "[f]rom the beginning of creation, people have always wanted to work…." (Peck 2001, 301). In 2005[4], his ex-colleague, Margaret Hodge, Minister for Employment and Welfare Reform, stated that "[h]elping lone parents to work when their children are older is important to both the parents and the children. Not only are the families better off, but work boosts the self esteem and confidence of parents."[5] Such discourses are very reminiscent of the Combination Scenario in the Netherlands and its emphasis on work as granting independence. One could hardly differentiate between a governmental proposal "to introduce an obligation on unemployed

[4] The New Labour's discourse on work has not changed over the last ten years; this is the reason I allow myself to use an example which is not from the timeframe of my study.

[5] http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/pressreleases/2005/oct/emp281005.asp

lone parents with one or more children between the ages of five and 12 to apply for a job"[6] (the Netherlands, 1999)[7] and a policy that "lone parents whose youngest child is 14 will be required to attend the interviews to get information, advice and guidance about choices open to them, as well as opportunities for work and the range of help on offer"[8] (the UK, 2005). These similarities are also present at a more general level as in both the Netherlands and the UK welfare dependency is seen as hurting individual autonomy/independence - Christian Democrats and New Labor respectively have attacked the culture of welfare dependency (Kremer 2002, 127; Peck 2001, 329).

4. The Netherlands vs. the UK: Differences

a) People in the UK find higher governmental expectations as concerns their ability to find jobs unassisted than people in the Netherlands. While in the Netherland, like in the UK, relying on the market becomes progressively the norm (Kremer 2002, 127), there is a strong presence of corporatist (as opposed to individualist) culture blended with ideological concerns about individual autonomy and collective responsibility. Therefore in the Netherlands as contrasted with the UK, politicians think different about the extent to which the labor market can be tailored in accordance with other social norms, e.g. combining work and care, and to

[6] http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/1999/12/feature/nl9912177f.html
Note: While the obligation of unemployed lone parents to seek work was present since 1996, the details surrounding the obligation were reconsidered in 1999. Proposals were made to reduce the time for which lone parents are supposed to find work, to introduce a requirement for part-time work on lone parents whose children are three years or older, and so forth…

[7] The same year, 1999, when considering the reconciliation of work and care in the *White Paper: On the Way to a New Balance between Work and Care*, the Dutch government explicitly prioritized work over care (Knijn in Daly 2001, 166).

[8] http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/pressreleases/2005/oct/emp281005.asp

which it can be intervened with (consider Esping-Andersen 1990). The extent to which the government is ready to change the structure of the market or to not to allow income inequalities is much higher than in the UK. This general picture has an implication about the context in which workfare policies are drafted and thus has repercussions on the terms under which lone mothers are put to work.

In the UK workfare operates as a supply-side strategy and the market is considered as a sufficiently capable of absorbing new quantities of people as long as wages are kept low; the government does not meddle with the labor demand, but with the labor supply as it uses tax credits and other incentives to put people to work while not inflating the low wages prevalent on the market – this policy has its roots in the general belief that the market is the right provider of social security (Esping-Andersen 1990, 2002). Also, investment in human capital and assisting unemployed with meeting the ever changing demand of the labor market would be against the operational principles of the British market economy (Hall, Soskice 2001). However, there is a sufficient body of critique pointing to the problems associated with inserting people into the labor market without also addressing demand side problems (Peck 2001, 274-282). The overall implication for British lone mothers is that the government will do little to help them integrate into the labor market save giving them tax credits; however, this way of integrating a lone parent into the labor market is considered unacceptable by the left and feminist supporters of the New Labour; given that the British government helps lone mothers little with entering the workforce in a meaningful way and given that this fact is a thorn in the eyes of the left and feminist supporters of Blair and Brown, it is logical to presume that putting lone mothers to work by an obligation would cause an outcry. Cutting

their benefits is not easy either, but it is not so dramatic a step as obliging them to work, for it does not create an either-or and all-or-nothing situations in which lone mothers lose their benefits if they do not work.

In the Netherlands, on the other hand, putting lone mothers to work by an obligation will be easier than in the UK if we consider the extent to which the Dutch government assists its citizens with entering the labor market, remaining in it, and deriving an adequate pay from it (in this light, it is not surprising that Dutch policies for labor market activation are based on tax deductions while in the UK on tax credits). Also, putting lone mothers to work would not be seen as inserting them into a low-wage job market but rather as making them autonomous, as everybody else in the Low Countries. Thus lone mothers would not be viewed as put into a suboptimal situation. Yet, practical problems do appear – for example, women do face disadvantages by the structure of the Dutch part-time economy ideal (Knijn in Daly 2001, 168-169); however, such problems are not a result of governmental inaction or lack of responsibility on the government's part to accommodate its citizens to the changing nature of the labor market (consider Hall, Soskice 2001). Therefore, while opposition remains to putting lone mothers to workfare, especially under stricter forms, it is much more muted than in the UK: because the government assists lone mothers in their labor market integration (1) and because the labor market lone mothers are integrated into is very different (in the positive sense) from the one their British counterparts are inserted in (2).

b) In the UK, there is a tradition of perceiving workfare as implying governmental commitment (Peck 2001). This governmental notion though first developed by the

Conservatives also holds for the New Labour; in 1997, Blair viewed welfare-to-work schemes directed at lone mothers as implying expansion in childcare provision (Peck 2001, 303), as such notions still persevere[9] – consider Labour's statement that lone parents may become obliged to work if by 2010 the Labour introduces a comprehensive full-time day care scheme[10]. The government in the UK perceives that governmental assistance with childcare provisions is necessary to put lone mothers to work; however, given how costly such an endeavor is and the significant time needed for the appropriate infrastructure to develop, it looks understandable why the British government balks at obliging lone mothers to work and is more lenient than its Dutch counterpart when it envisages when a lone mother should enter the labor market.

On the other hand, in the Netherlands where governmental commitment to welfare was never a bugaboo and where there is higher trust in the ability of the individual to find support from the community – workfare should not be seen as implying such "high"[11] levels of governmental commitment as it does in the UK. One of the reasons is that with their actions in the 1980s Dutch lone mothers suggested that they can meet their childcare obligations without significant governmental assistance. Another reason is that the Dutch government holds the ideal that every family, regardless of its structure, should be able to meet its work and care obligations on its own. Therefore, it appears that the Dutch government has a much broader freedom to be radical in its workfare schemes than its British counterpart; Dutch lone

[9]Such notions have a long history in British public policy which leads back to the 1970s when lone mothers were encouraged "to work, but the special need of lone mothers were also recognized within the social assistance scheme, and given the cost of childcare and the low wages commanded by women, it became less and less worthwhile for lone mothers to enter the labour market." (Lewis 1997, 70)

[10] http://news.independent.co.uk/uk/politics/article2332020.ece

[11] High levels of commitment as perceived by the government itself.

mothers appear unproblematic a subject to be drafted into the workfare ranks, since public provision of childcare is not stressed and even if it was stressed, one can argue that the Dutch government would be less sensitive than its British counterparts first because the community, not the government, is seen as the proper pillar for arranging childcare provisions, and second, even after the market-centered reforms taking place in the Netherlands, the government should most likely not scream and shriek at the thought of using the public purse for social provisions – such as making childcare affordable to each and every parent – as much as its British analogue.

c) In the Netherlands and the UK, differences in governmental perceptions of desirable levels of equality in society and differences in convenience with spending governmental funds to achieve it lead to both differences in welfare-to-work programs' drafting and to divergent incentives for lone mothers to work. The British government requires that lone mothers attend programs which are more of job-search counseling or mobilization character rather than based on training and education (not that such programs do not exist) partly because of the differences in their costs, job-counseling is much cheaper (Peck 2001, 269) and partly because of the lack of universality of the British educational system and the Anglo-Saxon educational systems in general. In the 1980s, about 25% of British children continued their education after the age of 16. "The majority of less academic students were likely to leave at 16 and either enter the labor market (many of them becoming unemployed), or pursue further education courses of lower status than higher education and funded at about two-fifths of the level per head" (Taylor-Gooby 1996, 98). In the Netherlands, on the other hand, the government actively extends education programs to lone mothers (Knijn and van Wel 2001, 805), rather in

line with the logic that "labour market changes…have tightened the link between employment and education" (Taylor-Gooby 2004, 4) as lone mother with education below the level of secondary vocational training are considered disadvantaged (Knijn, van Wel, 2001: 805). Those lone mothers in the Netherlands who were taking educational courses were seeking for jobs "more actively" (Knijn and van Wel 2001, 811). The comparative repercussions of the educational systems in the UK as compared to the one in the Netherlands are manifold.

Table 2.1: Educational Qualifications of Lone Mothers in 1994

Highest Level of Education	Minimum	Intermediary	Higher
Netherlands	34.0	53.3	12.8
United Kingdom	54.6	33.4	11.9

Source: Duncan Gallie, Serge Paugam, *Welfare Regimes and the Experience of Unemployment in Europe*, OUP 2000, table 9.2

We will consider just one in this chapter. Because of the higher commitment to implementing educational schemes, the Dutch workfare policies aimed at lone mothers appear as having higher concern with building human capital than the British ones, which are primarily pushing people into the labor market without changing their qualifications but their motivation. Given the higher human capital building aspect of Dutch workfare schemes, they should be looked not as purely exchanging work for welfare, but rather as enabling people to achieve welfare through work – which would overall diminish the unattractiveness and negative connotations associated with workfare. On the other hand, in the UK, workfare, as we already discussed, will be much likelier to turn into an exchange of welfare for work, as nether the work aspect nor the welfare aspect would be particularly satisfying. In this light, putting lone mothers to

workfare par force would be easier in the Low Countries, since workfare would not have so strong a negative connotation.

d) In the UK, since New Labour came to power political discourses led to an apotheosis of work; it is seen as desired by and desirable for every individual, any similar discourse on care is absent. In the Netherlands work is also considered as of primary importance; however, it is considered as important not so much per se but rather as a means to individual autonomy; for the same reason, being able to provide care on one's own is considered extremely important in the Netherlands. The upshots - obliging people to work would lead to an inconsistency in British political discourses much more than it would do in the Netherlands. How come if all people want to work deep in their nature, the government obliges people to work? Given that the desire of people to stay on benefits is seen in the UK, and in Holland as well, as resulting from welfare dependency – in both countries there will be strong incentives to cut benefits; however, given the logic behind the welfare regime types in the two countries, cutting benefits will be much harder in the Netherlands.

While discourses in both countries equally strongly decry welfare dependency, in the UK, it will be more painless fighting it through cutting benefits because the strong discourse of the unconditional desirability of work (blended with the discourse that the welfare state hurts it) would imply constraints on forcing people to work - after all if work is so desirable why so many oppose it?; on the other hand, cutting benefits so much as to make people's reservation wage minuscule and to propel them into the labor market can easily be interpreted as a proof of people's desire to enter work, which would only strengthen the New Labour discourse on

how natural it is people to want to work. In contrast, fighting welfare dependency by obliging people to work will be the more painless a course of action in the Netherlands given that the welfare regime ideology would not allow for such drastic a cutting of benefits as needed to put people to work.

5. Conclusion

The chapter provided a general overview of the similarities between the Netherlands and the UK in their attitudes and treatment of lone mothers; then it traced the main changes in political discourses and notions about the labor market and the welfare state occurring in the early and mid 1990s and showed how they related to lone mothers. The chapter focused on differences between the Netherlands and the UK in terms of their general notions of equality, work, and welfare, and derived four logical assumptions:

1) Dutch governments place higher expectations on themselves for helping lone mothers enter the labor market than their British counterparts; therefore putting lone mothers to work in the Netherlands should not be seen as letting vulnerable people struggle on their own with the unfettered market while such a depiction might have some validity in the British case. Moreover, the overall milder perceptions and realities surrounding the state of work in the Dutch labor market further my expectations that obliging lone mothers to work should be viewed as easier in the Low Countries than in the United Kingdom.

2) In the Netherlands, workfare should not be seen as implying such "high"[12] levels of governmental commitment as it does in the UK. Spending significantly on childcare would appear as a prerequisite for obliging lone mothers to work in the UK, but not in Holland. Given the high costs of childcare provision and the uneasiness with which the UK unties the governmental purse, one can expect that lone mothers in the UK have higher chances not to be obliged to work than their Dutch analogues; part of the explanations is that in the Netherlands lone mothers are seen as able to rely on the community to meet their childcare obligations while in the UK, where "[t]here is no such thing as society, only individuals and their families" (Thatcher quoted in Twine 1994, 10) no such assumptions could be made.

3) Given the higher human capital building aspect of Dutch workfare schemes, they should be perceived in an overall more positive light and thus would make it easier for the government to oblige lone mothers to work. On the other hand, given the design of the whole British economy, workfare for lone mothers may appear as a suboptimal solution; obliging lone mothers to work can be further exacerbated by the history of negative discourses surrounding workfare in the UK over the early and mid 1990s (Peck 2001).

4) In the UK, cutting benefits is preferable to obliging people to work, because the former strengthens the discourse on how desirable work is to people while the latter would undermine it; in the Netherlands the welfare regime puts breaks on the ability of

[12] High levels of commitment as perceived by the government itself.

governments to cut benefits significantly, but the discourse of desirability of achieving autonomy through work and care (not of people's natural desire to work) makes it easier in comparison to the UK to oblige people to work. The Dutch discourse is about general social values; while the British one makes assumptions about individual desires and preferences – not surprising if we think of the cultural differences between the two countries.

It appears that overall it will be an easier political decision to compel lone mothers to work in the Netherlands because: 1) it will be perceived as not so costly, 2) because people would not be seen as thrown on their own in the unfettered market, but rather as 3) being given the chance to build up human capital and to integrate into the labor market. (4) Last but not least, no assumptions about individuals' inclinations to work would be made, but rather social norms would be postulated (in the form of a wide political compromise) as valid. Thus in the Netherlands, it will be much easier to make somebody comply with a social norm through obligation than to oblige her to work on the grounds she wants to work when she does not.

Chapter Two:

Constructing perceptions: Who lone mothers are and who they are thought to be

1. Introduction

Chapter two considers differences in perceptions of lone mothers to be an important explanatory variable for why the welfare-to-work policies aimed at lone mothers were drafted more radically in Netherlands than in the UK in the 1996-2001.

The chapter first investigate differences on aggregate level between lone mothers in the Netherlands and the UK; then it contrasts lone mothers among themselves on a national level and compares them on a cross-national level, so that a better clarity is achieved into the dynamics of how they are perceived by the government and by society in both the Low Countries and the United Kingdom; eventually the chapter considers political perceptions of lone mothers which have their derivation from neo-conservative discourses and leftist discourses; this overall framework of perceptions is used to pinpoint constraints and opportunities which central governments have when drafting welfare-to-work schemes/acts aimed at lone mothers.

The second chapter should be viewed as organically interlinked with the first chapter; sometimes it uses relevant information and insights from the first chapter to give further depth to its analysis.

2. Lone mothers in the Netherlands and the UK: aggregate level

Table 3.1: Child Poverty and Family Structure in the 1990s

Year -Country	All Children	Two-Parent Family	Single Mother	% of Children Living in Single-Mother Families
1991 NL	8.1	5.7	34.2	8.6
1991 UK	18.5	13	44.9	15.9
1994 NL	7.9	6.3	28.2	7.4
1994 UK	13.9	10.4	27.9	19.3
1999 NL	9.8	7.6	35.1	8.1
1999 UK	17	10.4	39.2	21.7

Source: Luxembourg Income Study *Poverty Rates for Children by Family Type* (2006)

In 1994, in the Netherlands, the poverty ratio of lone mothers to married mothers was 3.24, and in the UK in 1995, the similar figure was 3.19 (almost no difference) (Christopher 2001, table 1). The percentage reduction in poverty rates among lone mothers due to the transfer tax system were estimated by Christopher (2001, table 2) to be 73.2 in the Netherlands and 56.9 in the UK. The child poverty ratios for children living in lone mother families were very close for the Netherlands and the UK in the 1994 and 1999 (table 3.1, third column); employment rates by time of employment for lone mothers were also very close as well (table 3.2). However, there were several significant differences; first, lone mothers in the UK would be twice-to-two-and-half times as many as those in the Netherlands since 1994 (table 3.1, last column). Second, in 1995 the employment rate of women overall was 61.7% in the UK and

just 53.8% for the Netherlands[13], which meant British lone mothers appeared more of an outlier in their low labor participation than their Dutch counterparts (table 3.2). Third, "Britain also has a much higher teenage fertility rate than other western European countries, and unlike any other European country, the British rate has not declined over the last decade. In 1989, the UK contributed only 20 per cent of the total number of births within the European Union, but contributed 37 per cent of all teenage births (Kiernan 1996). In 1990 it was 33.3 per 1000 women aged 15 – 19 compared with a rate 12.7 for Sweden and 6.4 for the Netherlands (Selman and Glendinning 1996).However, teenage unmarried mothers constitute a small partition of the total number of lone mothers" (Lewis 1997, 56). Also, the UK has disproportionately higher number of never-married than divorced or widowed lone mothers as compared to the Netherlands (table 3.3).

Table 3.2: Employment Figures for Lone Mothers in the Netherlands and the UK

	Part-time	Full-time	Overall
Netherlands (1994)	24	16	40
UK (1990/1992)	24	17	41

Source: Jochen Clasen, *Comparative Social Policy: Concepts, Theories and Methods*, Blackwell Publishig 1999, table 10.6

Table 3.3: Types of Lone Mother Families in Percentages, 2001

	Single*	Separated**	Divorced	Widowed
Netherlands	33	11	51	6
United Kingdom	46	20	29	4

Notes: a single* mother is a lone mother who "never married or cohabited," and a separated** mother is a lone mother who is separated "from a marriage or cohabitation."

Source: Clearinghouse on International Developments in child, Youth, and Family policies at COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY, table 2.18

[13]http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page?_pageid=0,1136184,0_45572598&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL

When viewed from different perspectives, the difference in numbers, demographic characteristics, and labor market participation between both lone mothers in the Netherlands and in the UK become twice as big. In the Netherlands not only is the number of lone mothers smaller than that in the UK and their demographic and relative labor market characteristics better, but also the discourses surrounding their behavior and moral is much better; when Dutch politicians view lone mothers, they do so through very different glasses as compared to their British colleagues.

To explain the differences in perceptions of lone mothers, in this section, I will provide evidence and explanation that: 1) lone mothers in both the Netherlands and the UK can be separated into two opposing groups with respect to their attitude to the labor market; 2) that in the Netherlands the characteristics of the more work friendly and proactive group were incorporated in the image of lone mothers, and 3) that characteristics of the more "work unfriendly" and "inactive" group had a history of being drawn attention to by a friend not by a foe, and thus the discourse surrounding them was much milder. Then, I will show that New Right political discourses led to a completely different image of lone mother been portrayed in the UK – the reasons, the image of lone mothers was drawn (in the beginning and then predominantly) by a foe not by a friend (though the present situation has seen changes), and lone mothers for long times were equated with just that group of lone mothers who would not like to work (changes occurred since the mid 1990s).

3. Two different groups of lone mothers

Do lone mothers want to work? This is a question which causes tremendous political dispute in the UK. However, it is in the academia that it was answered. In their research on the labor market participation of British lone mothers, Duncan and Edwards (1996: 198-202) provide a framework to answer this question by high-lighting that entering the labor force is a decision which includes multiple rationalities which occur at both financial and non-financial planes, as they contrast work-related and care-related rationales as decisive for the work orientation of a lone mother. In a detailed research on attitudes of Dutch lone mothers to work, Knijn and van Wel (2001, 804-815; 2001, 235-251) show that lone mothers are essentially different among themselves in their *care ethos*, not in their *work ethos*.

The decision of a lone mother to enter work is influenced by a variety of characteristics. Both cross-country research (Gonzalez 2004) and research related to Dutch "lone mothers" (Knijn van Wel 2001) and British lone mothers (Francesconi and Van der Klaaw 2004, Table 1) show that work participation of lone mothers is related to their education.[14] Lone mothers

[14] The attitude towards work participation of lone mothers is influenced also by other characteristics, as one appears significant - ethnic origin. In the Netherlands, women from Surinam "even outperform indigenous Dutch women" in their job participation (and have satisfying levels of education) while Moroccan mothers have the lowest job-participation (and education levels) (Ypeij 2005, 110). In the UK, black lone mothers as well show strong commitment to job participation. They "are more likely to be economically active and much less likely to work part-time [as compared to white women], regardless of age and child-care responsibilities (Bartholomew at. al. 1992)" (Duncan, Edwards 1996, 205).

with different levels of education do not only differ in their labor market participation but also in their receptivity to activating schemes such as child care. In the Netherlands, for instance, "state-subsidized care is used mainly by more highly educated mothers," and "formal child care facilities are primarily used by mothers with "big" part time jobs (twenty four hours or more a week)" (Kremer 2002, 120-121). "[L]ess highly educated lone mothers make less use of child care" and have a higher distrust of publicly provided child care (Knijn and van Wel 2001, 245).

According to a study conducted by van Drenth, Knijn, and Lewis (1999: 619-641) – lone mothers with high *care ethos* predominate in both the Netherlands and the UK. Also, Barlow et al. (2002: 114) make the argument that only a minority of British lone mothers prioritize work over care. Therefore, lone mothers of high *care ethos* should be much more visible to the government on the basis of their quantities (numbers) than mothers of low *care ethos*; the same logic holds if we look at the "qualities" of lone mothers of high *care ethos*; they are much more problematic to the government both in terms of their low propensity to work and low receptiveness to activation stimuli such as childcare. Therefore governmental attitudes towards lone mothers of high *care ethos* will be detrimental in drafting workfare acts; however, visibility of lone mothers of low *care ethos* can have an impact as well.

When Dutch and British governments drafted welfare-to-work legislature aimed at lone mothers, they were confronted with a uniform image of lone mothers. In the 1996, the Dutch central government had very little if any idea of "the labor-market orientation of single

parents living on social assistance" (implied by Knijn and van Wel 2001, 805) and whatever an idea the British government had in 1997, it was based on a dispute based on broad generalizations so often made by the government for the government to legitimate its moves or by its opposition to curb its radicalism. Given the lack of precise knowledge about differences among lone mothers, how their image would be delineated was of import for how welfare-to-work policies would be drafted. In the Netherlands, the image of lone mothers was much more favorably delineated and also their demographic and labor market characteristics were better, and yet the Netherlands eventually obliged lone mothers to work; how come? To the answer of this question the next two sections are dedicated.

4. Lone mothers in the Netherlands: the same as everybody else

"The Dutch welfare reform of 1996 that required lone mothers to find work was not inspired by a moral stigmatization of lone motherhood." (Knijn and van Wel 2001, 236). This can partly be explained by the fact that the image of lone mothers as poor welfare dependents was not delineated by a foe but by a friend. "Feminists and lone mothers themselves drew attention to the position of lone mother families on benefit in order also to draw attention to their poverty." (Bussemaker et. al 1997, 108) Also, in the late 1970s ", consciously never-married mothers" appeared and created support networks on their own (Bussemaker et. al. 1997, 115); these lone mothers received a lot of attention because of their high levels of individual autonomy and mutual cooperation; on the other hand ", in terms of their characteristics and problems they appeared to be little different from other categories of lone mothers." (1997, 115) So a group of lone mothers in the Netherlands have differentiated

themselves in the late 1970s and the 1980s by exhibiting a characteristic which is for the Dutch society even more important than *work ethos*[15] - individual autonomy and active participation in society (through seeking arrangements which do not involve the government), but on the other hand that group of lone mothers related very strongly to other groups of lone mothers - those of strong *care ethos* - and the problems they had. "[C]onsciously never-married mothers" affected positively the whole perception of lone mothers by society. The consequence was that lone mothers became perceived as the same as other citizens and as able to meet their obligations for child care through their own arrangements. Another more sublime consequence was that the image of lone mothers became intertwined with the *Free Choice* discourse of parents' responsibilities taking momentum in the Netherlands in the 1980s and becoming crucial in the 1990s - "parents should be able to choose freely between work and care, but then they should also bear the consequences of their choice," child care provision was not to be an obligation on the part of the government (Kremer 2002, 126). "Consciously never-married mothers" appeared not only as responsible to meet their responsibilities but also as able to do so (Bussemaker et. al. 1997, 115). Media attention and lone mothers own actions stressed their free choice of becoming pregnant though non-married:

> I am to become pregnant looking for a number of women who – like me – have made a conscious choice to become pregnant, or are considering this. Aim: exchanging experience, mutual support, cooperation in solving practical matters (quoted in Holtrust 1995, p.51, quoted in: Bussemaker, van Drenth, Knijn, and Plantenga 1997,115)

[15] Studies on the *work ethos* of "consciously never-married mothers" are not present to the best of my knowledge; however, my experience and observations tell me that such lone mothers exhibit very often if not always above average *work ethos*, age, and professional development.

The overall implication is that the Dutch government has had strong incentives not to differentiate lone mothers from other citizens in terms of their capabilities to participate in the work process even unassisted[16], and lesser constraints to put them to workfare.

5. Lone mothers in the UK: the immoral scroungers?

"The degraded feminine status accorded by the right wing tabloid press to the young single mother who is presented as dependent on the state, overweight, unkempt, unattractive, unhealthy, a heavy smoker and usually pictured pushing a buggy against a backdrop of a gloomy council estate" (McRobbie 1997, 180) has taken some roots in the British society. But on the other hand, strong leftist and traditionalist responses occurred as a response to right wing denigrations of lone mothers; the New Labour did not continue the New Right discourses demonizing lone mothers but had to struggle with their consequences. On one hand, New Right discourses were of traditional aspirations and allowed the notions of a male-breadwinner society to prolong their lives. Also, the traditional male-breadwinner model seems to have higher acceptance among British politicians as compared to their Dutch counterparts, since nothing like new gender contract was considered in the UK while it was debated and established in the Netherlands over the 1990s. In the UK, lone mothers were viewed as undesirable by the New Right, but putting them to work was not necessarily seen as the way out (Lewis 1997, 66). Putting lone mothers to work was also not appealing to some segments of the left, which saw both compulsive workfare and lack of job creation policies as unsatisfying (Peck 2001, 278). In this light, it is not surprising that Blair faced a "back bench"

[16] Yet, (meager) financial assistance with childcare was extended to them when they were obliged to seek work to keep social benefits

revolution when he tried to cut benefits for lone mothers in 1997 (Peck 2001, 313)[17]. Yet, Blair persisted, and transfers to lone mothers diminished (Innocenti Report Card no.1, 2000, 21).

Putting lone mothers to workfare in Britain was (and still is) a more daunting task than it was (is) in the Netherlands, first because conservative and traditionalist discourses were accommodated under the New Right and still hover in the air. Second, since lone mothers had become a very contentious issue with a lot of visibility, obliging lone mothers to work would have implied much higher political inconvenience than cutting or eroding their benefits.

6. Reverse causation

The purpose of the present section is more to raise awareness, so to say, than to describe or explain. Also, the reader may feel free to disregard the present section, since it does not relate strongly to the research question of the present paper, but given the amount of knowledge we have accumulated by reading the present research thus far, the section is interesting to consider.

In Chapter one, we saw that there are different principles of equality which underline the British and the Dutch societies as they translate into different education systems (pp. 24-26); however, different educational systems translate into different lone mothers on the aggregate level. One of the findings for the Netherlands is that there is a negative correlation between

[17] http://www.socialistaction.org.uk/archive/98womenlone.htm

the level of education of the lone mother and her proclivity for "early" pregnancy and an inverse correlation between education and the number of children a lone mother has (Knijn and van Wel 2001, 810). The negative correlation between educational levels and number of children is also valid for the UK (Esping-Andersen 2002, table 3.5). One can also assume a negative correlation between education and "early" pregnancies in the UK (Esping-Andersen 2002, table 3.5). The French case seems to adduce further evidence of a likely general negative correlation between "early" pregnancy and the level of educational of lone mothers (Algava and Roberston 2002, 750).

In this light, it is logical to trace governmental general beliefs about equality to lone mothers' behavior and therefore to the occurrence of workfare policies, of negative perceptions of lone mothers arising out of degenerating of their work and demographic profile, and of pressure on the governmental budget.

7. Conclusion

This chapter conveyed that looking at perceptions of lone mothers and not just at their "objective" characteristics on aggregate level is necessary to understand why welfare-to-work policies aimed at lone mothers were drafted more radical in Netherlands than in the UK in the 1996-2001. The chapter discovered two explanations:

1) The image of the "consciously never-married mother" coincided with governmental discourses on work and care, so as to make it easier for the Dutch government to see

lone mothers as the same in their work capabilities and abilities to meet their childcare responsibilities without governmental help as all other citizens. The male-breadwinner model received a blow that way, and Dutch lone mothers were potentially much more perceived as workers than as mothers. In the UK, New Right discourses prolonged traditionalist views about mothers as carers and thus made it harder to put lone mothers to work; also, lone mothers were not assumed to be able to meet their child care obligations unassisted significantly by the government, which put a brake on putting lone mothers on workfare. The overall result is that the Dutch government had fewer constraints on forcing workfare on lone mothers, which made it easier for it to be "radical" to achieve its goals.

2) In the UK, lone mothers have become a very contentious issue with a lot of visibility; therefore, obliging lone mothers to work would imply much higher political inconvenience than cutting or eroding their benefits. While in the Netherlands lone mothers have sometimes become a contentious issue, never have they caused such a stir as in the UK; the lesser degrees of contentions surrounding lone mothers should have made it less problematic for the Dutch government to oblige them to work.

Chapter Three:

Financial determinants: the missing link?

1. Introduction

This chapter broaches its analysis by considering governmental macro and micro stimuli[18] for drafting welfare-to-work schemes as it compares the strength and rationale of these stimuli in the Netherlands and the UK for the period 1996-2001. Consequently, the chapter considers how those stimuli interrelate with obliging or not obliging lone mothers on benefits to work; eventually, the chapter points to constraints governments faced posed by the way they have drafted their social assistance benefits for lone mothers.

2. Micro and Macro stimuli

2.1. The Netherlands

The Dutch government had a much richer plethora of stimuli than their British colleagues for integrating lone mothers into the labor market. On one hand, the poverty among lone mothers was an important driving power for including them in welfare-to-work schemes: "Welfare reform in the Netherlands was aimed at getting lone mothers off welfare in order to free them

[18] See pages 9-10.

from poverty and social isolation…" (Knijn and van Wel 2001, 236). "Increasing labour market participation is seen as a means of improving their [lone mothers'] material welfare and enhancing their 'social integration'…." (van Drenth et al. 1999, 630); on the other hand, also dependence on state benefits (van Drenth et al. 1999, 625; Kremer 2002, 124), the need to increase employment so as to lower the dependency ratio given unfavorable demographic shifts, especially in light of the discourse of "wasting" human capital by keeping women as full-time carers (Kremer 2002, 124), and labor shortages in the services and in general (Knijn in Daly 2001, 168) were strong stimuli for putting lone mothers to work. Being on social assistance, according to Kremer (2002, 124), made lone mothers especially targeted by the government, for it had the levers to induce them to enter the labor market. If this is not true in absolute terms, then at least, it is a valid point in comparative terms, as we compare to the rest of other women.

2.2 The UK

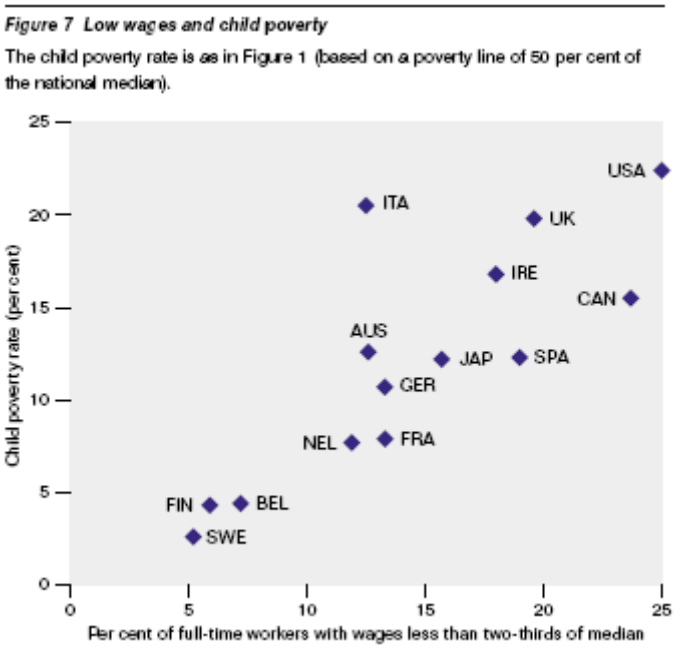
If one considers the excellent account of British workfare in the 1980s and 1990s provided by Jamie Peck (2001), she will see the almost unholy obsession with fiscal prudence among both New Labour and Conservative; the need to diminish the bulging welfare state dependence of lone mothers in the UK while having its Dutch counterpart in essence has no match in extent. In the UK both the much higher number of lone mothers and the "stingier" welfare regime type predetermine a central role of the budget related considerations when drafting policies aimed at lone mothers. In both the UK and the Netherlands, work was viewed and is viewed

as a way to diminish the poverty of lone mothers[19]. However, in the UK unlike in the Netherlands, fewer other micro and macro financial incentives have been pushing the government to impose workfare. British workfare schemes were constructed with supply-side emphasis; New Labour's goal is/was "not to create jobs but to assist the unemployed to *find* work." (Peck 2002, 280). In the Netherlands, the government in addition had demand side incentives to push lone mothers to the labor market (shortages of labor supply)[20]. Also, if both British and Dutch politicians were wishing a strong labor market on which to rely for successful workfare policy implementation – the Dutch politicians found their wishes coming closer to reality (actually the British labor market in the mid and late 1990s was quite vibrant, especially in historical perspective, but in the 1990s there was one miracle only, and it was Dutch). Given the higher salience of the public purse in the UK and the high salience of the labor market as source of prosperity in the Netherlands; it appears logical, that if *hypothetically* politicians in the two countries had to choose between taking lone mothers of the governmental budget or putting them into the labor market, the British politician would have had a higher utility than their Dutch counterparts from choosing the first option. In reality, however, increasing labor market participation and reducing social assistance are very often the two sides of one and the same coin, but nobody says the coin should be of equally attractive sides (I, for example, prefer Heads to Tails). Compared to the Dutch labor market, the labor model in the UK as seen from the Innocenti Report Card no.1 (2000) does not offer a viable way out of poverty (figure 1). Therefore, it seems that relying on the labor market to extract lone mothers from poverty and welfare dependency would make more sense in the Netherlands; also, if we add the assumptions (1) that in the UK, the government is first and

[19] See page 21.
[20] See page 41.

foremost interested in the public purse (which is a viable argument, especially in light of Peck (2001)) and (2) that in the Netherlands the whole economic growth and origins of new social contract are based on the logic of active participation of all able citizens of working age in the labor market, then it should come as no surprise that in the UK lone mothers are facing benefits cuts and benefits erosion while in the Netherlands they are obliged to seek employment.

Figure 1: Poverty & labor market participation



Source: Innocenti Report Card no.1 (2000), page 14, Figure 7

3. Are lone mothers the only victims of a benefit cut?

What is common between a Dutch alcoholic, a Dutch drug-addict, a Dutch troubled youth, and a Dutch lone mother? That they were all grouped together under one common social

security scheme The General Social Assistance Act (ABW) –as at the time of the reforms approximately 65% of the beneficiaries under ABW were lone mothers (Knijn and van Wel 2001, 236). In the UK unlike in the Netherlands lone mothers were targeted by a series of specific allowances. Therefore if lone mothers in the UK did not want to work, the government could simply cut the levels of their benefits so as to diminish their reservation wage and push them to the market without serious repercussions for other groups of people but the families of the lone mothers. On the other hand, given that there are no special benefit provisions for lone mothers in the Netherlands – though lone mothers occupy a disproportionately high share of ABW recipients – if benefit cuts are introduced, all of the ABW recipients will be affected, not only lone mothers. However, such a move will be logically impossible as a step to workfare, because ABW was meant as a scheme "specially aimed at people with limited ties to the labour market." (Bussemaker et al. 1997, 106). On these grounds, it becomes obvious that if lone mothers had incentives not to enter the labor force, it would have been much easier in the UK to reshape their incentives through benefit cuts than it would have been in the Netherlands.

4. Conclusion

This chapter considered the financial logic which British and Dutch governments espoused and the labor market structure of the two countries as a point of departure for explaining why the Netherlands imposed an obligation to work on lone mothers back in 1996 and the British government has not done so up to the present day. Also, the chapter considered why if lone mothers decide not to participate in the labor market - because poverty traps do exist in both

the Netherlands (Knijn, van Wel 2001, 245) and the UK[21] and because not all lone mothers want to work – the British and Dutch government will have quite different levels of constraint in dealing with the situation through benefit cuts. The chapter provided two explanations why in the Netherlands lone mothers were obliged to work while in the UK they faced cuts in benefits:

1) The governments in the Netherlands and the UK differed in their bundles of macro-incentives which led to the UK preferring cuts and the Netherlands – compulsion; in the UK, the government is first and foremost interested in the public purse while in the Netherlands first and foremost in the labor market; the governments would pursue those policies which best accommodate their foremost priorities. Thus the UK chose cuts and the Netherlands – compulsion. These choices were further strengthened by the various returns in terms of exit from poverty and dependence on the budget from entering the labor market. Such trends could further be exacerbated by variation in wage gaps between the men and women in the Netherlands and the UK. In the Netherlands around 1990s the wage ratio in manufacturing was around 75%, in the UK around 68% (Anker 2001, 146, table 2).

2) If the Netherlands would have chosen cuts in benefits, this would have hurt strongly a large part of people in a very precarious social position who had very weak links to the labor market, since they were put under one common social assistance scheme with lone

[21] On Saint Valentine's Day 2007, an article appeared on the first page of Daily Telegraph; Jean-Philippe Cotis, an OECD chief economist, said that "[q]uite simply, it's not really rewarding to re-enter the workforce if you are…a lone parent…" because "lone mothers in the UK trying to get off state handouts and return to employment could lose money because of the extra taxes, the loss of benefits, and the huge cost of childcare" and even worse "[t]he OECD found that, of all the world's major economies, Britain has the worst benefits trap for women."

mothers. In the UK due to the targeting of much social assistance precisely to lone mothers, no negative spillovers were expected and neither were they to be feared if present as much as in the Netherlands given the callousness with which British governments of liberal leanings treat the poor,[22] especially if compared with their Dutch counterparts.

[22] For an example of a flagrant Conservative misdeed, consider how Conservatives "removed the right of homeless families to permanent housing" in 1995 (Lewis, 1997, 70); for an explanation why Blair was "willing to avoid any charge from the Conservatives that his party would be soft on welfare recipients," (Peck, 2001: 290), consider Peck (2001, 290-292).

Conclusion

This study asked a question which was not asked by now - why welfare-to-work policies aimed at lone mothers were drafted as based on an obligation to work in the Netherlands and on benefit cuts in the UK in the 1996-2001. To answer it, the study built on previous research from various fields in political science, public policy, and gender studies and established a framework of assumptions to answer the question posed. The study tried to dissect the relationship between governments and lone mothers and get an insight into how the governmental "brain" functions when confronted with the option of putting lone mothers to workfare. The study first considered how general perceptions of governments, especially about the relationship between work and care, are reflected in political behavioral attitudes towards lone mothers. Then it explored the dynamics of how perceptions about lone mothers are formed and how different dynamics lead to different perceptions. At the end, the study explored how financial stimuli influenced governmental behavior and attitudes towards lone mothers as potential subjects of workfare schemes.

The paper provided eight possible answers to the question why welfare-to-work policies aimed at lone mothers were drafted more radical in the Netherlands than in the UK in the 1996-2001.

1) Dutch governments place higher expectations on themselves for helping lone mothers enter the labor market than their British counterparts; therefore putting lone mothers to work in the Netherlands should not be seen as letting vulnerable people struggle on their own with the unfettered market while such a depiction might have some validity in the

British case. Moreover, the overall milder perceptions and realities surrounding the state of work in the Dutch labor market further my expectations that obliging lone mothers to work should be viewed as easier in the Low Countries than in the United Kingdom.

2) In the Netherlands, workfare should not be seen as implying such "high" levels of governmental commitment as it does in the UK. Spending significantly on childcare would appear as a prerequisite for obliging lone mothers to work in the UK, but not in Holland. Given the high costs of childcare provision and the uneasiness with which the UK unties the governmental purse, one can expect that lone mothers in the UK have higher chances not to be obliged to work than their Dutch analogues; part of the explanations is that in the Netherlands lone mothers are seen as able to rely on the community to meet their childcare obligations while in the UK, where "[t]here is no such thing as society, only individuals and their families" (Thatcher quoted in: Twine 1994, 10) no such assumptions could be made.

3) Given the higher human capital building aspect of Dutch workfare schemes, they should be perceived in an overall more positive light and thus would make it easier for the government to oblige lone mothers to work. On the other hand, given the design of the whole British economy, workfare for lone mothers may appear as a suboptimal solution; obliging lone mothers to work can be further exacerbated by the history of negative discourses surrounding workfare in the UK over the early and mid 1990s (Peck 2001).

4) In the UK, cutting benefits is preferable to obliging people to work, because the former strengthens the discourse on how desirable work is to people while the latter would undermine it; in the Netherlands, the welfare regime puts breaks on the ability of governments to cut benefits significantly, but the discourse of desirability of achieving autonomy through work and care (not of people's natural desire to work) makes it easier in comparison to the UK to oblige people to work. The Dutch discourse is about general social values; while the British one makes assumptions about individual desires and preferences – not surprising if we think of the cultural differences between the two countries.

5) The image of the "consciously never-married mother" coincided with governmental discourses on work and care, so as to make it easier for the Dutch government to see lone mothers as the same in their work capabilities and abilities to meet their childcare responsibilities without governmental help as all other citizens. The male-breadwinner model received a blow that way, and Dutch lone mothers were potentially much more perceived as workers than as mothers. In the UK, New Right discourses prolonged traditionalist views about mothers as carers and thus made it harder to put lone mothers to work; also, lone mothers were not assumed to be able to meet their child care obligations unassisted significantly by the government, which put a brake on putting lone mothers on workfare. The overall result is that the Dutch government had fewer constraints on forcing workfare on lone mothers, which made it easier for it to be "radical" to achieve its goals.

6) In the UK, lone mothers have become a very contentious issue with a lot of visibility; therefore, obliging lone mothers to work would imply much higher political inconvenience than cutting or eroding their benefits. While in the Netherlands lone mothers have sometimes become a contentious issue, never have they caused such a stir as in the UK; the lesser degrees of contentions surrounding lone mothers should have made it less problematic for the Dutch government to oblige them to work.

7) The governments in the Netherlands and the UK differed in their bundles of macro-incentives which led to the UK preferring cuts and the Netherlands – compulsion; in the UK, the government is first and foremost interested in the public purse while in the Netherlands first and foremost in the labor market; the governments would pursue those policies which best accommodate their foremost priorities. Thus the UK chose cuts and the Netherlands – compulsion. These choices were further strengthened by the various returns in terms of exit from poverty and dependence on the budget from entering the labor market. Such trends could further be exacerbated by variation in wage gaps between the men and women in the Netherlands and the UK. In the Netherlands around 1990s the wage ratio in manufacturing was around 75%, in the UK around 68% (Anker, 2001, 146, table 2).

8) If the Netherlands would have chosen cuts in benefits, this would have hurt strongly a large part of people in a very precarious social position who had very weak links to the labor market, since they were put under one common social assistance scheme with lone

mothers. In the UK due to the targeting of much social assistance precisely to lone mothers, no negative spillovers were expected and neither were they to be feared if present as much as in the Netherlands given the callousness with which British governments of liberal leanings treat the poor, especially if compared with their Dutch counterparts.

The above eight observations taken together confirm the logic of the Dutch choice to oblige lone mothers on social assistance to work and the British choice to cut their benefits but not to put them to work. However, many more factors behind the British and Dutch decisions to put lone mothers to work were left unexplored. It is, for instance, a matter of further research to see how social partners influenced governmental decisions on workfare aimed at lone mothers. Also, many other questions are to be dealt with in more detail. Yet, while this paper was just a small step towards understanding in complete detail the logic of the difference between the Netherlands and the UK in their welfare-to-work policies drafted for lone mothers, it is nonetheless a progress, a progress in a new, relevant, and intriguing direction.

The paper is also a useful ground for further research when disaggregated into chapters and not looked holistically. The first chapter contributes to the broad literature on welfare state regimes; it implicitly raises the question whether the Netherlands and the UK can still be considered as traditionalist, male-breadwinner welfare states, or it is a matter of fact for the Low Countries and a matter of time for the United Kingdom that women are considered equally gifted workers and men are pushed to be more responsible carers. Also, the first

chapter, combined with chapter three, helps us see the effect of welfare retrenchment on gendered models of division of work and care.

The second chapter contributes to the broad literature on lone mothers and suggests how perceptions by the subject (the government and society) can be influenced by lone mothers. The second chapter has the potential to go even further and to contribute to the feminist literature depicting various and variegated women's struggles showing once more that the power lies with her who has the power to name/describe.

The third chapter contributes to the broad literature on welfare states as institutions balancing the interests of many actors; however, the third chapter neither consider labor nor does it "bring the capital back," it rather considers the government as a pivotal player; the chapter makes a series of arguments which can be of interest to a series of academic fields from political economics to public policy.

Bibliography

Anker, R. (2001), 'Theories of occupational segregation by sex,' in M. F. Loutfi, *Women, Gender and Work*, International Labor Office, 129-156

Algava, É. and Robertson, G. D. (2002), 'France's One Parent Families in 1999', *Population-E*, 57: 4-5, 729-752

Barlow, A., Duncan, S. and James, G. (2002), 'New Labour, the rationality mistake and family policy in Britain', in Carling, A., Duncan, S. and Edwards, R. (eds.), *Analysing Families: Morality and Rationality in Policy and Practice*, Routledge

Bussemaker, J., van Drenth, A. and Knijn, T. (1997), 'Lone Mothers in the Netherlands', in J. Lewis (ed.), *Lone Mothers in European Welfare Regimes. Shifting Policy Logics* Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Christopher, K. (2001), 'Welfare State Regimes and Mothers' Poverty', *Luxembourg Income Study Working Paper no.286*

Clasen, J. (1999), *Comparative Social Policy: Concepts, Theories and Methods*, Blackwell Publishig

Duncan, S. and Edwards, R. (1996), 'Lone Mothers and Paid Work: Neighborhoods, Local Labor Markets and Welfare State Regimes', *Social Politics*, summer/fall, 195-222

Esping-Andersen, G. (ed.) (2002), *Why We Need a New Welfare State*, Oxford University Press

_____ (ed.) (1996), *Welfare States in Transition – National Adaptations in Global Economies*, SAGE, 1-31

_____ (1990), *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*, Polity Press

Francesconi, M. and Van der Klaaw, W. (2007), 'The Socioeconomic Consequences of 'In-Work' Benefit Reform for British Lone Mothers', *Journal of Human Resources*, 42: 1, 1-31

Gallie, D. and Paugam, S. (2000), *Welfare Regimes and the Experience of Unemployment in Europe*, Oxford University Press

George, V. and Taylor-Gooby, P. (eds.) (1996), *European Welfare Policy: Squaring the Welfare Circle*, Macmillan Press Ltd.

Gonzalez, L. (2004), 'Single Mothers and Work', *Socio-Economic Review* 2, 285-313

Hall, P. and Soskice, D. (eds.) (2001), *Varieties of Capitalism*, Oxford University Press

Kilkey, M. and Bradshaw, J. (1999), 'Lone Mothers, economic Well-Being, and Policies', in D. Sainsbury (ed.), *Gender and Welfare State Regimes*, Oxford University Press

Knijn, T. and van Wel, F. (2001), 'The Labor Market Orientation of Single Mothers on Welfare in the Netherlands', *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 63: 3, 804-815

_____ (2001), 'Careful or Lenient: Welfare Reform for Lone Mothers in the Netherlands', *Journal of European Social Policy*, 11: 3, 235-251

_____ (2001), 'Does it work? Employment policies for lone parents in the Netherlands', in Jane Millar and Karen Rowlingson (eds.), *Lone Parents, Employment and Social Policy: Cross-national Comparisons*, The Policy Press

Knijn, T. (2001), 'Care Work: Innovations in the Netherlands', in Mary Daly (ed.), *Care Work. The Quest for Security*, International Labor Organization

Kremer, M. (2002), 'The Illusion of Free Choice: Ideals of Care and Child Care Policy in the Flemish and Dutch Welfare States', S. Michel and R. Mahon (eds.), *Child Care Policy at the Crossroads. Gender and Welfare State Restructuring*, Routledge

Lewis, J. (ed.) (1997), *Lone Mothers in European Welfare Regimes: Shifting Policy Logics*, Jessica Kingsley Publishers Ltd

McRobbie, A. (1997), 'The Es and the Anti-Es: New Questions for Feminism and Cultural Studies', in M. Ferguson and P. Golding (eds.), *Cultural Studies in Question*, Sage Publications, 170-186

Peck, J (2001), *Workfare States*, The Guilford Press, 261-340

Pierson, P. (2001), *The New Politics of Welfare State*, Oxford University Press, 80-104

Twine, F. (1994), '*Citizenship and Social Rights: The Interdependence of Self and Society*', SAGE

van Drenth, A., Knijn, T. and Lewis, J. (1999), 'Sources of Income for Lone Mother Families: Policy Challenges in Britain and The Netherlands and the Experiences of Divorced Women', *Journal of Social Policy*, 28: 4, 619-641.

Ypeij, A. (2005), 'Gendered Travels: Single Mothers' Experiences at the Global/Local Interface', in T. Davids and F. van Driel (eds.), *The Gender Question in Globalization: Changing Perspectives and Practices*, Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 109-124