

Anette Brunovskis

Opportunities and Choices

Women's employment and family change in Latvia in the 1990s

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Preface

This paper contains my cand. polit dissertation in sociology, completed in December 2001 at the University of Oslo. During the work with the dissertation I was a student associate at Fafo, Institute of Applied International Studies This paper is a part of the project Social Exclusion and Social policy in the Baltic Countries, and also draws on material from another Fafo project, the NORBALT living conditions study.

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Abstract

Quite early in the 1990s, concerns were expressed for the situation of women in the post-socialist countries in Eastern Europe, in particular with regards to access to the labour market. As the former regime had been committed to the full employment of both men and women, it seemed obvious that women would lose out in the competition in new labour markets. In addition, social provision designed to alleviate the conflict between work and family deteriorated. In most research from the early and mid 1990s, one of the central presumptions was that women would be the first to become unemployed, and would as a consequence of this be the losers of the transition.

In the latter half of the 1990s, case studies emerged showing the surprising result that women, as compared to men, had not been pushed out of the labour market, in several of the countries in question. It was suggested that women had retained their relatively strong position in the labour market due to the nature of economic restructuring, which hit hardest in the male dominated parts of the industry, in addition to a growth in typically female occupations in the service sector.

This paper aims to illuminate some further possible explanations for women's stronger than expected position in the labour market through an explorative study of the Latvian case. In addition to the opportunity for women's continued employment, as argued in former studies, the paper examines the relationship between work and family, and family change, in particular falling fertility rates as a potential contributing factor in sustaining women's high level of participation in the labour market. Dramatically falling fertility rates have been a trait in most of the post-socialist countries. This study focuses on women in Latvia as actors choosing between the two arenas of work and family in where to invest their time, within structural constraints.

The study first deals with the opportunity structure in Latvia with regards to access to the labour market and the combination of work and family. Changes in the labour market are shown to be similar to what has been identified in other East European countries. Restructuring did initially hit hardest in men's jobs, reflected in the higher unemployment rates of men in the early and mid 1990s. Further, the largest growth in employment sectors has been in service occupations, creating many jobs that are seen as typically feminine. State provision for families with children is also examined. A concern in former research on Eastern Europe was that the closing of kindergartens in particular would make work and family harder to combine. While this has also been the case in Latvia, the decline in provision of financial resources through family benefits, combined with low wage levels, has increased the necessity for women to work at a paid job, as most families cannot live on a single salary. Consequently, the opportunities for most women to choose a home-based existence are scarce.

At the individual level, the necessity to work is reflected in the high labour force participation and employment rates of women, which are very similar to those of men. It is further shown that women work predominantly full time, and that this is also the case for women with children. This indicates that adjustments are not mainly made in the labour market to accommodate the conflicting demands of work and family on time.

Finally, it is argued that women's relatively strong position in the labour market can be seen in connection with the falling fertility rates in Latvia in the 1990s. Many people have chosen to postpone or forego having children, as birth numbers and birth rates have declined by half during the decade. This means that there has been a substantial decline in the number of women with small children, and consequently fewer women who confront the conflict between work and family. As a result there are also fewer people who compete over the use of public childcare facilities. This is reflected in a large increase in the share of children attending kindergartens from 1994 to 1999, entirely accounted for by the drop in birth numbers. Falling fertility rates may thus be taken as strengthening women's opportunity to enter into the labour market at the aggregate level.

On background of the processes outlined above it is suggested that the economic and political processes initially believed to cause women to drop out of the labour market in favour of a traditional housewife role, have in fact been more influential in family change, in particular in terms of falling fertility rates. This, in addition to the characteristics of economic restructuring, may have contributed to women's relatively high participations rates in the labour market.

1 Introduction

As was the case for most countries in Eastern Europe, the 1990s in Latvia were marked by the transition from a state socialist system to democracy and a new market economy, and the social changes were enormous as well as rapid. The change involved, among other things, a shift away from the policy of full employment to a society where unemployment became a very real problem, as markets were hit by economic recession, while restructuring led to different demands on employees in terms of qualifications. This process fundamentally changed Eastern European societies in the course of just a few years. On the background of this change, the topic for this paper is an explorative study of women, work and family change in Latvia in the 1990s.

Quite early in the 1990s, concerns were expressed for the situation of women in the post-socialist countries. When the former regime had been committed to the full employment of both men and women, it seemed obvious that women would lose out in the competition in the new markets. In most research from the early/mid 1990s, one of the central presumptions was that women in Eastern Europe would be the first to become unemployed, and would as a consequence of this become the losers of transition. This was expected to happen as a result of one; women being pushed out of the labour market where men were being seen as more reliable and having greater resources, while the deterioration of social provision would make work and family harder to combine. Secondly, there seemed to be a tendency for women themselves to embrace the role of the traditional housewife as a reaction to the past of full employment, without fully realising the detrimental long-term effects of such a choice.

The central question

The area consisting of Eastern Europe and the former socialist regimes is of course very diverse. The countries in question differ greatly from each other in terms of present politics, religion and economy. They do, however, have in common the heritage of their formerly shared ideology. Quite a few of these countries also share the characteristic that women's employment levels are surprisingly high, which is also the case in Latvia. Considering the fact that there was no significant difference between the employment rates of men and women in Latvia in 1999, the question remains as to how women can work as much as they do, given the undisputed structural changes. This is the central theme in this paper. Recent research suggests that the character of economic restructuring common to most countries in Eastern Europe was not necessarily to women's disadvantage as compared to men. In this study, an additional tentative explanation is offered in the fertility decline that has occurred in the Latvia in the 1990s. I wish to

strongly underline that the focus on women's high labour market participation should not be taken as a statement that gender discrimination in the labour market in Latvia is a negligible problem. The focus in this study is on access to the labour market arena rather than internal distribution mechanisms among those in the arena, as this is a very central question with regards to the life opportunities of the individual.

This is a promising field for research in many ways. Studies of recent developments in Eastern Europe can contribute to the theoretical understanding of women and the labour market in general. Given the problematic economic situation for many people in this region, these studies also have importance for policies directed at alleviating problems of poverty by giving a better understanding of the behaviour of individuals. Finally, as the decade of transition brought about rapid changes, updated information is of great importance for understanding the change processes at hand. This means that part of the purpose in this study is to document some recent developments with respect to women in the labour market in Latvia, and suggest the possible link to falling fertility rates.

The structure of the paper

Chapter 2 treats part of the background for the study, consisting of a brief history of Latvia and the so-called "woman question" in the Soviet Union, i.e. the understanding of gender, which to a large extent governed the development of policies. Further, some selected research contributions on the theme are summarised in chapter 3 to offer an overview of what was expected to happen. In short, it was generally assumed that women would experience large changes in their labour market connection as compared to men, partly as a consequence of deteriorating social provision. Empirical studies have to some degree documented that this has not necessarily been the case.

Chapter 4 discusses the theoretical background and central questions in this study, basically concerning how one can explain that women have kept relatively high labour market participation rates. There is little doubt that the social provision believed to largely facilitate women's labour market participation was eroded. My suggestion is that this could be illuminated by way of two main explanations; one, that the same processes that led to the erosion of social provision, that is a weaker economy, also necessitated women's continued work, and in addition, women's identity as workers was also internalised during the socialist period, meaning that many women would not want to give up work even if they had a provider. Secondly, the character of economic restructuring meant that at least in the first round, typically 'feminine' jobs were not the first to be hit. Consequently, a theoretical approach taking into account both actors' choices and structural circumstances is developed, with a focus on resources and access to arenas, based on Stein Ringen's (1995) typology, expanded to include the relationship between work and family in particular. Through a focus on the basic resources time and money, the provision of which deteriorated through the decline in availability of kindergartens and the levels of family benefits, it is suggested that the necessity for women to work was strong. Further, the nature of a competitive labour market may be assumed to lead to a

substantial demand on time needed to invest in the labour market arena, and this could have affected the amount of time available for investment in the family. This could be reflected in the fertility rates, which have fallen by half during the 1990s, indicating that at among the population as a whole, less time is in fact invested in the family. A conscious choice has been made to keep the theoretical approach as open as possible, due to the explorative nature of the study.

After a chapter describing methodological concerns and central definitions in this study, I move on to the analysis, which consists of chapters 6 to 8. Chapter 6 is divided in two parts, and describes structural circumstances believed to be of importance for women's participation in the labour market and the relationship between work and family. The first part concerns the general changes in the Latvian economy and labour market in the 1990s and provides the background for understanding the present situation. The second part concerns state provision for families with children, and shows that the policy does not encourage withdrawal from the labour market, as the levels of benefits are very low. These two parts provide the structural background for the relationship between work and family, while chapters 7 and 8 focus more on individual actors.

In chapter 7, developments in the labour market are treated, with a main focus on differences between men and women, and between women in different family arrangements. The general differences between men and women are shown to be surprisingly small.

Chapter 8 deals with family and fertility change and the situation for families with children. It shows that a strategy for women to opt for a provider is not very viable. The economic situation of families with children is rather difficult, as having children, in particular more than one child, is one of the factors that substantially increase the risk of poverty. The economic situation of families with children must be seen in connection with the weak state support for this group, and the traits of the labour market that make family and work hard to combine. I therefore argue that it is likely that the economic and political processes initially believed to cause women to drop out of the labour market have in fact been more influential in the family, and especially in fertility rates.

Chapter 9 summarises the results and conclusions, and discusses them in relation to the approach chosen for this study.

2 History and background

A brief history of Latvia

Latvia is situated on the Baltic Sea, and neighbours Estonia, Russia, Belarus and Lithuania. During history, the territory has been under Russian, German, Polish and Swedish control. Latvia is a small country with a population of approximately 2.3 million at the beginning of 2001.

In 1918 the Latvian republic declared its independence, which lasted until 1940, when Latvia was forcefully incorporated into the Soviet Union, following the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. The country was occupied by Nazi Germany in 1941, and German rule lasted until the Soviet army returned in 1944. By 1945 the entire area that today constitutes Latvia was under Soviet control (Muiznieks 1993:184).

The Soviet period brought about great changes for the country. It was adjusted to the command economy, and heavily industrialised. This was followed by a large influx of primarily Russian workers, and the ethnic composition changed dramatically. While Latvians made up 75 per cent of the population in the pre-war period, by the end of the Soviet period the share was down to just above 50 per cent. Many Latvians were concerned that they would soon become a minority in their own republic. The push for independence started in the mid 1980s, with a growing national consciousness leading up to declaration of total independence in 1991, following the attempted coup d'état in Moscow (Dreifelds 1996:52, 79).

Since independence, relations with Russia have been strained with the treatment of the Russian minority at the heart of the conflict. Latvia adopted a controversial citizenship law only allowing the pre-war population and their descendants automatic citizenship. This meant that a substantial part of the Russian population was deprived of citizenship rights. Russian troops were kept on Latvian territory until 1994 and were used as a means of pressure from Russia to influence the legislation (Karklins 1994:134). Legislation has since been changed, partly due to pressure from the international community. The country has, however, continued to receive criticism for using 'windows' of naturalisation, only allowing a certain number of people to apply for citizenship each year, and also for using knowledge of the Latvian language as one of the criteria for obtaining citizenship.

The political landscape has been somewhat characterised by instability, with many coalition governments following each other. The 1990s have been marked by controversy over citizenship and language laws, while the foreign policy commitments have

been to membership in the European Union and NATO, seen by many as key to continued Latvian independence.

The “woman question” in the Soviet Union

The recent past of gender relations and women’s work is of great importance, and has bearing on the behaviour of men and women today. The question of gender equality in the Soviet Union was of a particular type. It is often referred to as state feminism, but it had little in common with what has become the prevailing view of feminism in the west. There was a deep scepticism to “bourgeois feminism” and concepts of individual autonomy. The history of gender in the Soviet Union is very important as it provides the background for the current implications of terms like work and family, or the public and the private sphere.

The term “woman question” covered all issues of equality between men and women, with a focus on how to bring women up to men’s levels in different parts of society, and stems from early Marxist writings (Einhorn 1993:19). In this brief overview of the position of women under Soviet rule, most of the references will be to the Soviet policies and concerns in general. The centrality of Soviet history is also given by the fact that this is part of the Latvian history, as the country was a Soviet republic for almost 50 years, and as such, subject to Soviet laws and policies.

Although Latvia was formally incorporated into the Soviet Union in 1940, the history of the “woman question” in the Soviet Union before that time is relevant for understanding the background of the policies that affected women living in Latvia as well, and consequently has a certain relevance for understanding present processes. Among scholars today there seems to be a general agreement that the liberation of women was sought as a precondition for the general economic development of society as a whole and as a step in the direction of socialism. Sarah Ashwin points out that interpreting Soviet gender politics in terms of whether they were “emancipatory” or “instrumental” means missing the fact that the goal was not to free women from men, but to free them from the patriarchal family, to facilitate both men and women’s service to the communist cause (Ashwin 2000a:5). The basic understanding of men and women was fundamentally biological. While there was no inherent contradiction in the terms ‘worker’ and ‘mother’, men and women were believed to have distinct traits and abilities according to their sex.

This understanding persisted throughout the Soviet period. Illustration of this can be found in quotes from Lenin and Gorbachev respectively. In 1919 Lenin commented on how one should aim to liberate women from their, in his words, “domestic slavery”:

“We are establishing model institutions (...) which will liberate women from housework. And it is precisely women who must undertake the work of building these institutions ... women themselves should see to the development of such institutions” (quoted in Ashwin 2000a:11).

In a strikingly similar manner, Gorbachev in 1987 envisions how family health and the family's position in society can be strengthened through, among other measures, the anti-alcohol campaign:

“We expect the women's council to be very active and to take the initiative. (...) No other organisation is so closely tied to the private sphere and to women's problems as they are.” (Gorbatsjov 1988:119).

It seems obvious that both in 1919 and 1987, matters concerning the family and the private sphere were seen as logically tied to, and would preferably be solved by, women.

In the first period after the 1917 revolution, measures were taken to liberate women from the patriarchal family order. Women obtained political rights in the first constitution of 1918, they were given the same rights as men concerning minimum wages, and the principle of equal pay for equal work was adopted. Restrictions on divorce were lifted, and abortion was legalised in 1920. The latter issue was a controversial one, and subject to open disagreement in the 1920s. In spite of these enormous changes, the prevailing view was not that full equality had been obtained. Women were perceived as having a long way to go before reaching the level of political consciousness already achieved by men (Buckley 1989:34).

In 1930, however, under Stalin, the “woman question” was officially declared as solved. The focus now shifted towards strengthening the family. In general, this period was characterised by severe tightening of what could be openly discussed at all levels of society. Abortion was banned in 1936; simultaneously motherhood was praised (Buckley 1989:109). The “woman question” “kept having been solved” until the subject was tentatively raised again in the end of the 1950s. The ban on abortions was lifted in 1955, when the grave health consequences of numerous illegal abortions under unsanitary conditions could no longer be ignored (Buckley 1989:156). The general democratisation and opening of previously unmentionable subjects for discussion under Khrushchev coincided with a growing awareness of demographic and economic problems in the union.

This became even clearer during the Brezhnev period, from 1964 to 1982. It became imperative to investigate how women organised their lives in order to account for and find measures against the falling birth rates in the Slav and Baltic republics (Buckley 1989:161). Shortage of workers was a serious concern, and the position of the Party was clearly expressed at the 24th Party Congress in 1971, when the aim of improving women's working conditions and at the same time easing their domestic work was announced. In 1981, at the 26th congress, the “woman question” was directly linked to “the population problem”. The congress declared support for a natalist policy of more kindergartens and part-time work for women, and legislation was passed to give women the right of up to one year of childcare leave after giving birth (Buckley 1989:179). Time use data from Latvian small towns during this period (measured in 1972 and 1987) indicates that to some degree women's position improved with regards to an increase in free time. There was a decrease in the total workload, with less time spent on paid work, particularly among women. Interestingly, during the same period, there was also an in-

crease in the time spent by men on childcare. The average difference between men and women's free time was reduced by several hours a week (Zarina 1992:123).

A new era began with Gorbachev and his policy of *perestroika*, reconstruction, and *glasnost*, publicity or openness. As Mary Buckley points out, this did not necessarily mean that policies and debates would take a more feminist direction. This is already indicated in the Gorbachev quote referred above, but becomes even more clear in Gorbachev's (in)famous statement how to solve many of the social problems of Soviet society. The solution, says Gorbachev, is to make it possible for women to return to their purely womanly mission, and make it possible for women to again fulfil their natural duties, such as housework, childrearing and keeping a friendly atmosphere in the home (Gorbatsjov 1988:118). The basic commitments however, remained the same in the 1980s. The party declared its intention to continue promoting women as political actors (Buckley 1989:197) If anything, this period seems to have opened for more diversity in the "woman question", allowing different views to be expressed more freely.

The legacy of the Soviet gender regime

There was a persistent tension between economic and demographic concerns during the Soviet period which was never resolved (Ashwin 2000a:14). The situation was aggravated by the enormous population losses experienced during the Second World War, which made re-population and economic rebuilding a necessity. This meant that women were more needed than ever as workers, and their dual roles as workers and mothers were further institutionalised. At the same time, women's economic independence meant that men became more peripheral in the family. The family unit's vulnerability was reflected in the enormous growth in divorces (Ashwin 2000a:15).

To a large extent, while women did adopt paid work as a part of their identity, the roles were also seen as "unnatural" and distorted. Women wanted to work, but they also wanted men to be the main breadwinners. The contradictions inherent in men's roles were closely tied to the relationship between their roles in the family and at work. Male dominance in the public sphere was seen as legitimate, reflected in higher salaries and positions. The private sphere, however, was the domain of women, supported by the state. It has been claimed that as a consequence men sought refuge in drinking with their male friends as a source of self-identification, avoiding responsibility for the family (Ashwin 2000a:17).

The view that gender roles were distorted during the Soviet period persists. For instance, the UNDP 1995 *Latvia Human Development Report* states that "... the [Soviet] state deformed social relations between the sexes." In contrast, says the report, a gendered division of labour, which arises because a large part of women's lives consists of caring for children and for the home and family, while for men, "...raising children and caring for a family do not require leaving work", is now "... natural and acceptable to all." (UNDP 1995:37). This also illustrates how the private sphere is very often seen as just that, private, natural and outside what the state should interfere in. While Western feminists have fought to make "the private the political", under state socialism the private was the last refuge from an omnipresent and omnipotent state.

It has been argued that especially the Soviet system of simultaneously denying and institutionalising national identity was precisely what made post-Soviet nationalism not only possible, but in fact unavoidable (Brubaker 1996). In the same way, one could say that the institutionalised gender differences and avoidance of certain gender inequality issues, such as division of domestic work, or men's roles as fathers, under the old system is the foundation of present essentialist views on gender differences. Men and women were declared as equal while the view of a natural division of labour still shaped family relations and expectations. Two quotes from a Latvian article may serve to illustrate this view. The article was printed in a Latvian compilation of academic texts on feminism and literature:

“Only men and women working together can facilitate the multi-faceted development of society. Only men and women working together can create true harmony. Women can accomplish what men cannot, and vice-versa.”

“Women can become parasitic in certain conditions of civilisation. Supporters of the women's liberation movement are essentially parasites who do nothing and are materially well-off and who “forget” their main purpose in life, choosing instead to think up theories in defence of this parasitism.” (Luse 1998:164).

It should be mentioned that this by no means is the “standard view” of gender in Latvia, Luse has been criticised for this comment (see Bekere 1998:91).

After the end of the Soviet period, research on gender in the former socialist countries started to emerge at a greater scale. The next chapter summarises some of this research, and outlines the main concerns.

3 Former research on gender in Eastern Europe

With the opening of these formerly quite closed societies, research on Eastern Europe, both in general and regarding gender issues, gained in strength. The access to information substantially improved. This chapter summarises various contributions to research on gender in Eastern Europe. The theoretically based research in the first part of this chapter makes quite broad analyses usually pertaining to the post-communist area as a whole, and outlines general tendencies. The two main concerns are women's political engagement and labour market participation. I will mostly focus on what was believed to influence women's paid work, as this is the central issue in this study.

The selected contributions represent only a small part of what has been written, but cover some approaches that seem to be quite common. I will first summarise some articles and books mainly from the early and mid 1990s, which seem to share a rather pessimistic view of women's situation in the post-socialist countries. It has been pointed out that much of the research from the early 1990s in this field did seem to be based mostly on theoretical assumptions and anecdotal evidence, while there were numerous good theoretical reasons for the expectation that women would become more disadvantaged in the labour force during the 1990s (Fodor & van der Lippe 1998: 132). Two more explicitly empirical studies, which to some degree challenge the concerns of the early 1990s, are included towards the end of the chapter.

Approaches to research on gender in Eastern Europe

Citizenship

A focus on citizenship casts light on the relationship between the individual and society, more precisely how formal rights (and duties) given by the state may have different effects for men and for women. Barbara Einhorn has written one of the most cited books on this theme, published in 1993. Einhorn analyses women's situation with regards to citizenship, by which she means the "...active agency, the assertion of full individual autonomy within a community dedicated to the well-being of its members, who are bound by broader ties than those of family or kinship." (Einhorn 1993:3). Einhorn concludes that prospects for women in Eastern Europe to become citizens in the full meaning of the word are not rosy. In an era of nationalism, ideological and economic pressures are pushing women out of the

labour market, making women the majority of the unemployed. Einhorn claims that a self-identification based on what one is *not* makes gender the next dividing line after ethnicity, although she does find some prospect of improvement given that the emerging women's movements gains in strength (Einhorn 1993:260).

Jaqueline Heinen examines gendered differences in the new democracies with regards to rights under the new system. Based on T. H. Marshall, she sees citizenship in three parts; civil, political and social rights. This facilitates distinguishing between what types of rights are at stake, whether they are moulded by the relationship between the public and the private spheres, and how far they interfere with the social or political dimension of citizenship (Heinen 1997:585). Cuts in social programs, such as kindergartens, crèches and hospitals, give women an extra burden of caring for the family. In particular, the erosion of social rights tied to childcare may threaten women's participation in the labour market and the political sphere. Heinen's conclusion is quite similar to that of Barbara Einhorn, but more optimistic in tone. She says that the associations that are emerging to defend the interests of different social groups may very well be the starting point for a development of a civil society that women take part in, and for a public debate that is a part of the exercise of social and political citizenship (Heinen 1997:594). This broadening of the idea of democracy from below can facilitate women's increased participation in state institutions.

In line with this are theories of social movements. This direction points out that while women are pushed out of the labour market, there are few organisations which will defend their interests, and that in general there is a lack of interest in feminism (Fodor & van der Lippe 1998:133). There does not seem to be a clear consensus on whether there is reason to expect that women's social movements will gain in influence.

The international context

While the social movements approach focuses on domestic organisations and initiative in the post-socialist countries, the international community has also been mentioned as a possible influence. This is of particular interest as many of the former socialist countries aim to integrate in the broader European community. Maxine Molyneux says that one effect of integration into the international economy is that women have become a majority among the poor and unemployed, and a minority among those getting hired. The author also says that while some protective rights under the new system are undermined, others are promoted, as the international community may act as a check on the adoption of legislation influenced by nationalism (Molyneux 1994:312).

The influence of the international community has been quite significant in connection with nationalism and minority rights, which in general seem to be a higher priority than gender issues. The EU makes demands regarding citizenship and language laws of countries aspiring to be admitted into the union. In addition, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) incorporates work on general human rights and minority protection, and has considerable influence. Although gender issues come further down the list of attention, former gender adviser at the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Lara Griffith, has observed that the effect of CE-

DAW is noticeable in post-socialist countries¹. It may also be that not only international organisations, but also contact on the grassroots level between women's organisations can have had some influence. One such initiative is the Network of East-West Women (www.neww.org).

Nationalism, women as bearers of the nation

The rise of nationalism in post-socialist countries has been an object of concern for many years, especially with the experience of the Yugoslav wars. Much has been written on the role of women in a nationalist climate, when the nation becomes defined as one big family, held together by blood and kinship. Though ethnic conflict took on extreme expressions in the former Yugoslavia, a nationalist discourse has been quite common in many countries in the region.

Under nationalism, motherhood takes on a strong symbolic meaning, as mothers give birth to and raise new members of the nation. Women become the "... *keepers of history...*" (McCrone 1998:123). Tanja Renner and Mirjana Ule have made the point that the basis of both "real socialism" and a nationalist ideology is strictly opposed to individual values and that the individual has meaning only when belonging to the larger entity, whether it is the state or the nation. The problem arises when new collective identities are defined, with a classification of public men and private women. This means that women are morally confined to the domestic sphere, without real access to public action (Renner & Ule 1998:123).

Patriarchy

Another set of explanations focuses on the patriarchal structure of East European societies. One approach is quite similar to the 'deep freeze theory' on nationalism in post-socialist countries, which says that a strong conservative structure was suppressed during the state socialist era, only to surface when the pressure was lifted. Others apply theories about the link between patriarchy and the capitalist mode of production and liberal market economy. When wages go down and welfare provisions are eroded, women have to compensate by taking on more domestic work, no longer being able to purchase services or having lost services formerly provided by the state. This results in women having less time for labour market participation. It also reinforces the conception of women having less human capital. This means that women lose out in terms of wages and employment opportunities, since they are perceived as less skilled, have less labour market experience and are seen as less reliable because of their domestic responsibilities (Fodor and van der Lippe 1998:133). The patriarchy set of explanations has been criticised for containing tautological explanatory mechanisms, for instance by

¹ Conversation, Warsaw, October 1999. CEDAW: The Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women. The convention was adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly, and has been ratified by a large number of post-socialist countries during the early nineties (www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw)

Blossfeld & Drobnic (2001), who refer to Curtis (1986) and argue: *“On the one hand, patriarchy is used to explain why women are subordinated to men, but on the other, the observed subordination of women is identified as patriarchy. Thus, the concept actually assumes what is to be proved.”* (Blossfeld & Drobnic 2001:25)

Main themes

In sum, the main themes in this body of research are the gendered characteristics of the Western type of democracy and of capitalism that was adopted in Eastern Europe, the relation between the public and the private sphere and how this has changed, a backlash against feminism, with return to traditional roles, and women’s role as bearers of the nation. In addition, a ‘false consciousness’ or ‘emotion work’ explanation seems to be quite common in explaining why women in these countries do not protest their situation, but seem to accept that they are in a less privileged situation than men².

The overview of research in this area shows a concern for the position of women under the transition from state socialism to market economies. As described above, there is great variation in what is identified as the main problems, and the authors focus on different processes to explain changes. I do find, however, that Jaqueline Heinen’s gendered citizenship model is quite useful for finding the common themes in these contributions and as an organising principle for the various approaches. As will be remembered, Heinen’s argument is that citizenship can be analysed as consisting of three parts, social, civil and political rights. It is primarily the erosion of women’s social rights that leads to a deteriorating position of women in the labour market and in the political decision-making processes. The other contributions described above can be interpreted as identifying processes that lead to this erosion of social rights, and offer different, though mostly not mutually exclusive, explanations for the erosion of social rights. The final outcome of the process is claimed to be a gendered social inequality, which hinders women’s full participation in all arenas of society. This inequality can be seen as both a direct effect of fewer social rights and an indirect effect, as the lower quality of social provision negatively influences civil and political rights as well.

These contributions seem to concentrate on the structural level. At the same time, Jaqueline Heinen has pointed out that changes in mentality take longer than changes in structure. She uses this to explain how the Communist system based on respect for hierarchy discourages the development of political participation among the population (Heinen 1997:590). However, if we are prepared to accept this as an explanation for general political apathy as rooted in the past, we should also remember that other aspects of mentality, or rather; identity, are very important. As pointed out above, women’s participation in paid work was a central element of both policy and behaviour in the socialist regimes. There is little evidence that women would abandon their com-

² For instance, Jaqueline Heinen observes that *“... most women seem to be shut in a logic that makes them accept their priority assignation to the private sphere”* (Heinen 1997:587). Barabara Einhorn writes: *“Interviews conducted by this author reveal a widespread subjective tendency on the part of women themselves to reinterpret their redundancy as the embodiment of a ‘choice’ previously unknown, enabling them to spend time at home with their children.”* (Einhorn 1993:115)

mitment to paid work over night. The interplay between structural constraints and self-identification may thus be a very important factor in understanding behaviour, and the outcome of changes on a system level.

Many of the contributions summarised above can also be criticised for lacking sufficient documentation of the changes that are discussed. This seems to be confirmed when looking at two studies with more explicitly empirical approaches, summarised in the next section. These studies to a certain degree contradict, or at least provide nuance to, many of the assumptions about the deterioration of women's position in Eastern Europe.

Empirically based research

Sarah Ashwin has dealt with the important question of identity and behaviour. Her conclusions are based on a qualitative analysis of labour market behaviour of men and women in Russia. She finds that most women want to and do continue to work, while at the same time the responsibility for running the household with little or no help from men is deeply internalised. In general, women have a normative expectation of a dual role, and may perceive "getting everything done" as a form of self-realisation. This means that women's identity is tied *both* to work and family. The way women behave in the labour market is closely tied to how they can provide for their families. They are concerned with pay and stability, and will often display considerable downward flexibility (Ashwin 2000b:2-5). Men's identity is very closely tied to their work status, i.e. pay, profession, sector and interest, and these factors seem to be more important to men than whether or not they are able to provide for their household. Men will take higher risks than women in the labour market, and are more likely to decline a job offer if the conditions are not to their satisfaction. This means that men who are less successful in the labour market are vulnerable to becoming caught in a downward spiral. For many men in this situation the outcome is to turn to alcohol, or simply fall into despair (Ashwin 2000b:7-9).

Ashwin to a large extent analyses gender identity as the legacy of the Soviet type gender regime, and underlines the importance of women's socialisation into paid work. This is one of the main factors that can explain how women have maintained their presence in the labour market, and consequently, the element of women's agency is very important. Ashwin's paper illustrates that studies of gender relations and the individual behaviour of women and men must be sensitive to questions of identity, and importantly, that gender identity must be understood in light of the influence of the past and of present constraints.

Sarah Ashwin mentions, contrary to common claims, that the economic activity rates of women in Russia have fallen by almost exactly the same as men's (Ashwin 2000b:2). The general image of women as the undisputed losers in the labour market is also punctured by other studies emerging in the latter half of the 1990s. Eva Fodor and

Tanja van der Lippe (1998) have conducted a quantitative analysis of six post-socialist labour markets³. The results of this analysis are very interesting, as one of the conclusions is that there were *not* many changes in gender inequality between 1988 and 1993, but that there were differences that already existed before the demise of state socialism (Fodor & van der Lippe 1998:131).

The authors find that only in one country (Poland) were women more likely than men to be unemployed, but even there, the gender differences were smaller than the average gender difference in unemployment rates in the European Community in 1990 (Fodor & van der Lippe 1998:136). The overall conclusion is that there is no evidence to support the claim that women have suffered major setbacks in their economic positions compared to those of men in the first five years after the collapse of state socialism (Fodor & van der Lippe 1998:146). They suggest various possible explanations for this. One is that women are 'protected by prejudice', or that the sectoral segregation with a clear view of what is a proper job for a man or a women may mean that women's jobs are not the first to go (Fodor & van der Lippe 1998:136). This seems a very good explanation for the early 1990s at least, as the economic restructuring hit hardest in the male dominated part of the industry.

Fodor and van der Lippe's analysis indicates that a one sided negative development for women in the labour market, as compared to men, has not necessarily occurred, and that claims about women's position in the post-socialist countries should be better documented than what seems to have been the case in many early studies if the area. Theoretical assumptions based on predominantly Western developments may not be sufficient to explain change processes in Eastern Europe. Fodor and van der Lippe's results are surprising in as much as one presumes that social provision designed to facilitate the combination of work and family has an effect on women's labour market participation. It is quite indisputable that in most countries in the region these provisions were to a large extent downscaled, and the official policy of full employment for both men and women was abandoned.

In the next chapter, I will outline what I think could be a possible further expansion in explaining this development, which so far has focussed mostly on trends in the labour market and economy as such. I suggest that the strong position of women in the labour market should also be seen in connection with the family and the changes that have occurred in most of these countries, in particular with regards to fertility.

³ Fodor and van der Lippe use data from Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Russia and Slovakia (Fodor & van der Lippe 1998:131).

4 Theory

Fodor and van der Lippe observe; "... we set out to demonstrate the deteriorating position of women in the east European labour force, but, to our surprise, we did not find persuasive signs of such a decline at all." (Fodor & van der Lippe 1998:146). Their results are truly surprising knowing that social provision has deteriorated throughout the region. By way of explanation, Fodor and van der Lippe point to the nature of economic restructuring as providing the opportunity structure for women's continued employment, which is a very important point. One cannot automatically presume that given restructuring, women's jobs would be the first to go. In addition, Ashwin points to the important issue of identity, suggesting that the actions of individuals in adjusting to constraints is a key element in the transition countries. Finally, I argue that it could be useful to include a perspective on the family and the family in relation to work, since it was the presumed greater responsibilities of women in the family that would make it more difficult for them to keep working.

As this is an explorative study, and a new field of research, I feel that it is useful to keep the theoretical framework as open as possible, while including the elements I outlined above; the opportunity structure, individuals as actors, and the relationship between work and family. A useful starting point can be found in Stein Ringen's (1995) approach to the measurement of well being. The general idea is captured quite well in this quote from the UNDP report *Gender and Human Development in Latvia*:

"...not all gender roles are negative, or have necessarily negative consequences. The objective should not be to advocate the complete replacement of the traditional set of gender roles (for example, 'women must be housewives') with a 'modern' set of static gender roles ('women must earn a living'). (...) At the end of the day, every person should be able to choose how to experience his or her gender based on personal desires and circumstances." (UNDP 1999:8)

The core of gender equality here is equality in freedom of choice. The individual chooses between different options, based on personal desires and personal circumstances. In writing about the measurement of well-being, Stein Ringen asserts that an individual can have a good life if he or she can choose how life is to be lived, and that the presumption must be that each individual makes the most of his or her freedom to create the life he or she wants (Ringen 1997:17). This is in line with the view held by Amartya Sen; freedom to choose is an important component of well-being, freedom being defined in terms of "alternative sets of accomplishments that we have the power to achieve" (Sen 1992:34, quoted in Korpi 2000:132).

Returning to the quote above, personal desires may be conceptualised in two parts, preferences and expectations. The former is the most central in this connection, and is closely tied to identity. Personal circumstances make up the context within which the personal choice, based on preferences and expectations, may be exercised. Circumstances can also be divided into two concepts; personal resources and options offered in the individual's socio-economic environment, which can also be described as arenas of action. The social provision identified as so central in discussions about women's situation in eastern Europe, contributes substantially in shaping the options the individual has in the arenas, by affecting personal resources. I will discuss each concept more in depth below, and expand on why I think this is a good approach to the issue of women, work and family in Latvia.

Preferences and expectations

I will concentrate on the former term. Briefly described, preferences refer to how life is lived, or the composition of consumption (either in the narrow economic sense or the broader sense of way of life), while expectations refer to the level of consumption. Ringen argues that these terms are often treated together as 'tastes', but that they should be analytically separated, and that preferences should indeed be treated as tastes, while expectations should be seen as demands or interests. He says that preferences relate to the composition within a budget, while expectations refer to the size of the budget itself (Ringen 1997:9).

Preferences cannot be assumed to be the same for all individuals, nor can they be assumed to be unchanging for individuals during their lives. One of the questions in the east-west dialogue on gender issues concerns which social and labour market policies that can best represent women's interests, the basic disagreement being on what women's interests really *are*. A point of conflict has been whether women are pushed out of the labour market or whether they finally have the opportunity to spend more time at home. The question here, then, is whether labour market participation is a precondition for a good life that women would want to choose, or whether there are other aspects of life they value more. The problem is to agree what constitutes a good life. In a recent newspaper chronicle researcher Inger Skjelsbæk quotes a Russian woman as saying a few years ago that finally she has the opportunity to stay at home with her sons when they are ill. Formerly, during Soviet times, she went to work even when they had high temperatures, as her family's everyday problems came in the shadow of the larger social project. Now, she says, she feels that she can make up for what was lost when they were little (Aftenposten 16. July 2001). It can of course be questioned whether this is a reflection of the reality for most people in a competitive labour market, but it illustrates that several aspects should be considered. As Ulla Grapard also points out, the idea of finding common interests among women may in itself be suspect (Grapard 1997:666).

Women and the labour market: The problem of preferences

Preferences pose a problem when it comes to measurement of inequality when equality is defined in terms of freedom to choose, since preferences cannot be assumed to be the same for all individuals and over time. Another problem is connected with preference formation – how have preferences become what they are, and can preferences be interpreted as a part of inequality?

This last problem has been subject for debate between Catherine Hakim (1997) and various feminists (Bruegel 1997, Ginn et al 1997). The core of the debate is whether gender differences in the labour market can be seen as indicative of gender discrimination. While Hakim says that many women choose family over paid work, or adjust their labour market behaviour to be able to cope with family obligations, feminists have retorted by challenging the freedom in such a choice. Irene Bruegel cites the example of learning to prefer winter sports over summer sports in a cold climate as a parallel to women learning to prefer mothering to auto mechanics (Bruegel 1996:175).

This seems to be an argument in favour of disregarding the preferences of women who give priority to mothering over pursuing a career, on the basis that these preferences may not be ‘real’. To the contrary, they are ‘tainted’ by being learned and represent an adaptation of preferences to structural constraints that leave the individual with no other option. But what should we then make of women who give preference to paid work over traditional mothering? Are their preferences less learned? And how do we know? Is it a learned preference to want to raise children at home, but a true preference to prefer public childcare? Should only preferences that coincide with economic rationality be taken into account, or must the existence of preferences in general be disregarded in discussions of inequality, leaving it up to the researcher to decide what is good or bad for people? What Bruegel seems to say is that it may very well be that individuals make the most of the freedom they have to create the life they want, which is Ringen’s presumption, but that they are often ‘mistaken’ in thinking the life they pursue is the life they ‘really’ prefer.

Catherine Hakim is but one of the critics. The problem of determining preferences becomes even clearer in a cross-cultural setting, and this has been a point of conflict in the east-west dialogue on gender issues. For instance, Czech researcher Jirina Siklova (1998) has quite harshly criticised Western feminists for showing a lack of basic understanding for the special circumstances of gender issues in the post-socialist countries. She claims that there is a tendency to overestimate the significance of paid labour for emancipation. According to Siklova, the experience of women “... *who survived real socialism* ...” was that since they still had the responsibility of taking care of children and running the household, they simply could not keep up with men. This meant that paid work did not necessarily raise women’s self-esteem or confidence, nor did it automatically promote equality. In addition, she argues that rights that have been fought for in the West were taken for granted under socialism. One such right, she says, is public childcare, which many parents now regard as an inadequate way of raising children. Further, many (older) women feel that the value of taking care of the family and running a household is underestimated (Siklova 1998).

The auto mechanics quote referred above is a bit flippant, and is cited in connection with a debate, but still draws the attention to an important aspect when the family is brought into the analysis. The character of unpaid care work and the emotional bind between parents and children in many ways defies an economic logic or rationality. Feminists are likely to meet resistance when terms such as “the burden of welfare” (Orloff 1993:312, addressing the question of moving care away from the family, or from women to men) or “child penalty” (Gornick et al 1998:35) are used. While this is a relevant way of looking at care in connection with a stated goal of labour market entry, it reduces the concept of care beyond recognition and makes it hard to understand how care can be given unless it is a result of some forced choice, when care is reduced to something that stands between women and their alleged preference for participating in the labour market on exactly the same terms as men.

Another problem is that while the feminists assert that women’s choice of family over paid labour can be a learned preference, they do not present evidence for it. In the same way, the problem with Catherine Hakim is that she does not consider the possibility that women’s (or men’s for that sake) preferences are also influenced by other circumstances than a completely free choice, and that adaptation of preferences to structural circumstances may in fact occur. She declares that whether women’s choices are seen as a false consciousness or not is a matter of intellectual taste. Be that as it may, Hakim’s view of preferences may be a bit static and taken at face value.

It should, however, be taken into account that not all individuals have the same preferences, and this problem cannot be solved by saying that the preferences that do not fit with an economic rationality are learned and as such not valid expressions of individuals’ life projects. What Hakim does not do is to challenge the consequences of having certain preferences. She does seem to have an individualistic and harmony based view of individual agency, accepting that if women want to choose mothering, they have to accept less autonomy in material terms. While she does say that policies should allow for diversity in sex-role preferences and family lifestyles (Hakim 1997:166), she does not indicate how this should be done. In playing up the differences between women, she simultaneously plays down structural constraints. This is a well-known problem within the so-called equality-difference debate within feminism (see for instance Crompton 1997:184). The debate on preferences is also a reflection of one of sociology’s core problems, the relationship between structure and actor or agent.

Preference formation is far outside the scope of this paper. However, without being too categorical, it seems reasonable to assume that most women in Latvia would like to combine work and family. Several surveys from Latvia show that women’s identity is closely tied to paid work, that in general they place high value on having an independent income and that women have a strong wish to work (see chapter 8). This is closely tied to a relatively long history of women’s full employment, and it would be quite unlikely for this expectation to change over night. Furthermore, many women also have resources in terms of education. At the same time, as Sarah Ashwin points out in her study of Russia, women have a dual role expectation, tied to both work and family, and it is not entirely clear which one would be the stronger (Ashwin 2000b).

Resources and social arenas

Returning to Ringen's typology, when a choice is made, based on preferences (and expectations), it is put into action by the utilisation of personal resources in arenas, such as skills in the labour market or money in the consumer market (Ringen 1997:18). The outcome can be seen as revenue on the personal resources "invested" in the arena. The outcome will contribute in shaping the individual's access to new resources and/or be a resource in itself.

Arenas may however be of such a character that they are either closed to certain individuals, or function in a way that creates mechanisms which result in different "revenues" for different individuals (Hanssen-Bauer & Kharabsheh 1998:32-33). Access to arenas is one of the main concerns in the existing body of research on gender and post-socialist states, for instance, how the erosion of social rights tied to childcare may threaten women's participation in the labour market (Heinen 1997:581), or in the dramatic words of Daina Stukuls, that women are "... *shut behind the doors of kitchens, bedrooms and bordellos*" (Stukuls 1999:538). Peggy Watson claims that women are "... *relegated to the margins of social life*" (Watson 1993:482).

A typical example of unequal distribution mechanisms would be different wages ("revenue") for men and women with the same education (resource) or performing the same tasks. This was the instance in a recent court case in Latvia, in which a female employee won her case against her employers on the grounds that she had been given a substantially lower wage than her male colleagues who did the same kind of work as she did (Araja 2000:34).

The focus in this paper will primarily be on access to arenas rather than internal distribution mechanisms, such as gender discrimination. Differences in access to the labour market arena are believed to create bigger differences than unequal distribution among those in the arena. Comparing a woman outside the labour market, a woman in the labour market, and a man, also in the labour market but receiving a higher salary than the woman, the larger difference is most likely between the two women in terms of opportunities. I do however wish to underline that when less weight is put on internal distribution mechanisms such as gender discrimination in the labour market, that is not to say that gender discrimination is not a problem in the Latvian labour market today. Another consequence of focussing more on access to arenas is that differences *between* women are played down, as women obviously hold different personal resources, for instance in terms of education.

Resources are of great importance when considering access to arenas. As previously mentioned, the deterioration of social provision is a central element in the concern for women's situation in Eastern Europe. Social provision is a provision of resources, and in the case of women, the most central aspect is that the state substitutes (in varying degrees) resources that are lost when a child is born. The resource provided in the first instance is money, in the form of benefits, when it is necessary to take time off work

after childbirth. Secondly, the state can provide time as through public childcare⁴, a necessity for a mother who wishes to return to the labour market after a period of leave. Time and money are the *basic* resources needed for the actor to negotiate the relationship between the two arenas. Further, while the very basic resource needed for entry into the labour market is time, to enter into the family requires both time and money. This means that when provision of both resources deteriorated during the transition period in Latvia, it contributed in changing the framework within which women could move between the two arenas in question.

It can be argued that the same processes that have contributed in the deterioration of social provision, i.e. economic crisis, have also made women's labour market participation a necessity. In the early 1990s in particular, there was much concern over what seemed to be a new 'traditionalism' among women. Many expressed a wish to stay at home with children, and spend more time in a traditional housewife role. As it were, this would have presupposed the presence of a provider. This was not a very likely outcome for most families. Wages were low, and many men were hit by unemployment, meaning that the new wage system was definitely not a reflection of a male-breadwinner model (as in the term used by Jane Lewis (1992) to describe a system where provision is based on a provider model). Decommodifying⁵ effects, as described by Esping-Andersen (1990) of social provision deteriorated, and the dependency on the labour market increased. So even if women would want to stay at home and become housewives, the opportunities for choosing this life were scarce. In fact, it has most likely become more necessary to invest more time in the labour market as a consequence of low wages and high living costs.

Given that there is a necessity to work, a central question concerns whether the labour market arena is of such a character that it is in general open to women. Fodor and van der Lippe found in their study that there was in fact opportunity for women to work, women were not the first to lose their jobs as restructuring hit harder in the male-dominated industry. Further, a growth in the service sector has created many jobs that are seen as typically feminine, for instance in retail trade. This means that there are jobs available for many women. It should also be remembered that for instance the sectoral segregation goes along other lines in these countries than they often do in the West. For instance in Latvia, being a medical doctor is a more typically feminine job. In some cases, society is completely reliant on women's labour force and their knowledge and specialisations.

The relative strength of individual motivational factors; necessity and identity (as discussed above as an indication of preferences), will be very important for the future given that the general economy and wages in particular improve. If more men become

⁴ Childcare can of course also be provided through the market, or by other members of the family or social network than the mother, but I will not include the discussion of the relationship between the market, state and family in the provision of welfare. In the case of childcare, the market is not a relevant factor in Latvia, as I will return to in chapter 6 on state provision for families with children.

⁵ "Decommodification occurs when a service is rendered as a matter of right, and when a person can maintain a livelihood without reliance on the market" (Esping-Andersen 1990)

capable of financially providing for a family, it may be that more women will also stay at home, given that the necessity to work is a strong motivation for many women. This in turn could lead to an increased future inequality *among* women, given that women with higher education would perhaps have a stronger identity tied to the labour market. On the other hand, necessity could be a prevailing factor precisely among women with lower education, given both lower wages and a trend for marital homogamy, meaning that they would probably be less likely to have a high earning husband or partner. It should also be remembered that families are in many cases not very stable, and that many women therefore would not take the chance of relying on their husband's or partner's income. This is pointed out in several articles on Latvia (see for instance Eglite & Zarina 1999).

Inequality in access

The definition of inequality implied in the resources, arenas and outcome model is that inequality cannot only be conceptualised in terms of outcome, but must also be thought of in terms of access to arenas. It is not sufficient to look only at the choices that have been made; the choices that *can* be made are of great importance as well. The opportunity offered in terms of measurement of gender inequality is a way of alleviating the problem of determining preferences. Preferences must in some way be assumed if only outcome inequality (for instance labour market participation) is considered as a measure of gender inequality. Full time employment is an expression of freedom to choose only if that is what the individual wants. If the individual would prefer to work part time, for instance to spend more time with children, or if the individual in question is a mother with an infant of three months who would prefer not to work at all for a period of time, full time employment is clearly not an expression of freedom.

The feminists Hakim criticise seem to represent what Stein Ringen calls a non-welfarist, dictatorial approach to the measurement of well-being. In these kinds of approaches, well-being is measured by objective circumstances of their lives rather than their subjective satisfaction. This means that the 'objective' circumstances must be determined by the researcher, hence the dictatorial element, as preferences cannot be respected. An opposite approach, the welfarist one, has its focus on the individual's experience of satisfaction, thus leaving the 'validity' of preferences unquestioned. The problem here is that interpersonal comparison becomes impossible. The problem then arises with measurement, either because experienced well-being is assumed not to be observable, or because only data on 'objective' circumstances are available. Another problem is that satisfaction, or utility, is not only the result of preferences but also of expectations.

Ringen suggests a way of avoiding this problem without having to apply a dictatorial approach. The solution is not to measure what people are doing (direct measurement of outcomes), but what they *can* do (indirect measurement). Resources are indicative of the choices open to people. However, if only resources are included, the presumption must be that all people operate in identical arenas. The solution to this is to include informa-

tion on arenas as well as on resources, measuring not what people do, but what they *can* do. The opportunity structures in the arenas are consequently of great importance.

Ringen's main project is to find a way of measuring well-being while both respecting individual preferences and making inter-personal comparison possible. It is problematic to apply this approach in full, as Ringen also points out. Lack of information makes it difficult to get a full picture of how access to and distribution within arenas is shaped for individuals or groups. As pointed out above, this is also the case here, which is why the focus is more or less limited to access to the arenas, and the relationship between work and family.

Ringen's perspective can be further expanded to this particular case; women, work and family, by including a perspective on the relationship between the two arenas family and labour market, and the resources needed to invest in both of them, in particular time. Although this does not provide a full picture of available opportunities, as only two arenas are included, precisely these two arenas are among the most important, as most people divide the bulk of their time between work and family. In this sense, for most people, this is where life is actually lived. Policies and social provision has a very important role in shaping the characteristics of arenas with respect to access and distribution mechanisms, and the relationship between work and family in particular, as both arenas require the basic resource of time.

The relationship between work and family

The advantage in including a more dynamic relationship between the work and family arenas and to open for seeing women as actors, choosing between the two arenas when considering where to invest their time, could be better explanatory power in relation to the developments in many of the former socialist countries in the 1990s. It could also offer a perspective on the at least partial failure in predictions made in much of the research stemming from the early part of the last decade. This research seems to rest on quite strong presumptions about the direction of causality in the relationship between state provision, the labour market and family obligations of women. The research gave many interesting and important perspectives on why social provision deteriorated. However, when estimating the effects of this deterioration, the causal relationships seemed to be taken as predetermined.

The underlying arguments in this research seemed to take inspiration from a strong theoretical direction within welfare state research. One of the most influential contributions in the work on women and the welfare state is Ann Shola Orloff's (1993) feminist criticism of Gösta Esping Andersen (1990). It is also reflected in later Esping-Andersen publications (1999), and also in Walter Korpi's work (2000). One of Orloff's central arguments is that state welfare provision can play a crucial role in securing women's access to the labour market arena, by alleviating the conflict between work and family obligations. This is due to the role women play as unpaid providers of welfare through their care-work in families. Orloff states that to secure women's access to the labour

market policies must be used to move care away from the family to the state, or from women to men within the family, and in her view, this type of policy ‘...*further*s women’s *gender interests*’ (Orloff 1993:312), as it would provide women with more independence and power in personal relationships. The same argument is repeated by Walter Korpi, as a way of overcoming the equality vs. difference debate. Korpi, however, argues that the first step would be to increase women’s labour market participation, in order to increase women’s bargaining power within the family, and also a potential change in public policy as well as “...*gradual deconstruction of gender roles in the sharing of caring work.*” (Korpi 2000:141).

This presumption about the direction of causality is very pronounced in Gornick et al (1998) in an analysis of the effect of childcare and parental leave policies on the employment patterns of mothers with young children. The presence of children in the home will have an impact on women’s employment decisions by changing the value they place on their time outside of paid work. This model presupposes a freedom to make choices regarding employment, and takes having children as the given factor. The causality direction is from the family structure (presence of children) to outcomes in the labour market, with state provision as an intervening variable. Further, the change in value put on family and work by individual women in different phases of life indicates that less preference is put on time at work when more preference is put on time outside it, i.e. having children will make women want to work less.

However, in a strained economic situation, it seems evident that the value placed on work by the individual contains several elements, with varying degrees of choice attached to them. The values obtained from paid work can range from satisfaction with participating in an environment outside the home and a feeling of self-worth, to the fulfilment of basic economic needs. Obviously, the latter is not as negotiable as the former. This means that the causality direction of effects of deteriorating state provision could also be imagined to go the other way; if giving up work is not an option, the state provision (or lack of provision) can affect women’s choices with regards to reproduction. This is what Jaqueline Heinen (1997) points to when she refers examples of young women in Poland and elsewhere committing themselves not to become pregnant during a given period in fear of losing their jobs (Heinen 1997:585).

What the approaches to gender and welfare provision outlined above seem to have in common is that they include children and family obligations more or less as a given in the equation, when considering the relationship between work and family. As in much of the research on Eastern Europe discussed in chapter 3, the expectation is that if state provision is weak, or weakened, consequences will be seen in women’s labour market participation. Ironically, this is leaning towards an essentialist understanding of women as mothers; that women will have children almost regardless of economic and structural conditions. A focus on the opportunity to have children, or to enter the family sphere as a free choice is rarely included, seemingly since women’s labour market participation is seen as more important.

Chafetz and Hagan (1996) take a different approach when they develop a model for explaining women’s labour market participation and the simultaneous family change occurring in industrialised countries in the post-war decades. They argue that women’s

increased labour market participation is paralleled by changes in the family, in particular in the birth rates and in marriage and divorce.

The core of the process in the countries they analyse is that the demand for women's labour force participation, in particular in the growing service sector, has led to women becoming increasingly similar to men in their labour force participation rates. This has happened within a context where men have not become more similar to women in terms of participation in domestic and familial work (Chafetz & Hagan 1996:188). Parallel to this, there has been a change in the family, primarily in terms of decreasing fertility rates, and deferral of childbirth and marriage.

Through an analysis of change processes from 1960 to 1990 in 21 countries the authors show the direction of family change as women's labour market participation has increased. In order to achieve success in the labour market, women may postpone childbirth and in other ways adjust their family situation. They also assert that women's values change over time and reflect the values in society, and for instance that women gradually come to value the personal and economic revenues they obtain from paid labour.

Chafetz and Hagan's argument is based on some assumptions about women and their behaviour. The authors assume that women hold values reflecting those prevalent in society. Further, that women assess their opportunities in achieving their valued goals, and the costs and rewards connected with them. To the extent that information about available options is reasonably correct, women will act in a goal-oriented and rational way to obtain their valued ends (Chafetz & Hagan 1996:200). So far this approach does not differ from most Rational Choice theory. Their assumptions are also in line with Ringen's specification of his starting point; which he calls a loose assumption of rational behaviour: "*People are thought of as actors who seek well-being through the choices they make in life and are assumed, generally, to know what is good for themselves and to try to make the most out of their circumstances in relation to whatever it is that they want to achieve.*" (Ringen 1995:5)

Chafetz and Hagan further argue that given that women are confronted with two socially valued goal-sets, i.e. those of success in the family sphere and in the labour market sphere, women will not opt for a maximising strategy, but will try to achieve a reasonably high level of success in both; a satisficing strategy (Chafetz & Hagan 1996:201). This includes not only adjustment in the labour market, e.g. through working part-time, but also adjustment of family obligations, primarily by having fewer children and at a later stage. In assuming that women apply a satisficing rather than maximising strategy the authors diverge from the pure Rational Choice theory.

The model Chafetz and Hagan develop is to a large extent based on the values in predominantly western societies, where work and family are assumed to involve two conflicting roles. In Eastern Europe it may be that these roles are in a way less problematic at the value level, given the long experience of women's full-time labour market participation. The model may still have relevance, since even though it is not so much the values that make the spheres hard to combine; both spheres require the basic resource of *time* for action in the arenas. Further, the outcome generated in the labour market arena, income, is converted to a basic resource for action in the family arena.

We should expect that under current economic circumstances, the efforts to satisfice success in the labour market in Latvia would be relatively great, even the energy required to fulfil basic economic needs must for quite a few people be assumed considerable. As labour force roles are in general subject to more externally imposed constraints (Chafetz & Hagan 1996:207) it may be more feasible to adjust family life. For instance, the opportunity to satisfice both spheres by working part-time depends on this being a work arrangement provided by employers. As I will return to, the Latvian labour market seems to be relatively rigid and with little room for individual solutions, again making it more likely that there has been more room for adjustment in the family, which as an arena is subject to a larger degree of individual control.

An adjustment of family obligations?

Given that women will continue to work and that work and family have become harder to combine, one could expect that consequences would be seen in the number of children born. This would be one way of meeting the increased conflicting demands of work and family obligations. There are two elements in particular that strengthen this suggestion.

First, there is income uncertainty and how this may affect fertility. Priya Ranjan (1999) points out that most former socialist countries fall into the category of countries where fertility is demand rather than supply driven, and that factors like health, nutrition and infant mortality play little role in fertility. Actual fertility can thus be taken as the same as desired fertility; people have the number of children they choose to have given the present circumstances. One of the theories that have commonly been used to explain fertility change is Becker's (1981) theory of quantity/quality of children, in which a decline in the number of children is compensated for by increased use of time and schooling for higher 'quality' children. Easterlin (1980) developed a theory that emphasises change of taste as a very important factor in fertility change. Ranjan argues that neither can be seen as a good account for the dramatic fall in fertility in the post-socialist countries. A better explanation can be found in the income uncertainty following the decline in wages experienced by a large part of the population. Ranjan argues that given the irreversibility of having a child and an opportunity to postpone family increase to a later time, people push back having children as they hope to have better income in the near future (Ranjan 1999:27-28). Children are also contributing to a decline in financial resources, both through direct expenditure, and through opportunity costs for the mother to enter into the labour market.

Second, this development could be further strengthened by the particular state of mind that can be associated with a transition period, in which income uncertainty is only one of the aspects. The word transition itself refers to a point in the future, society is to change and reach some sort of more or less defined goal. Daina Stukuls (1999) describes one such dominant discourse in Latvian society, that of 'normality'. She claims that normality is seen as being rooted in two different narratives, a temporal one, seeing

normality as building on the past, i.e. the inter-war independence period, and a spatial narrative, referring to western capitalist modernity (Stukuls 1999:537). Although this is not Stukuls' main point, her terms indicate how normality may be seen as something situated outside the present situation, whether in time or in systems.

This means that a major social project is change leading up to a better future. In relation to fertility, this sort of state of mind could make a postponement of having children more likely, in the prospect, or even hope, of an improved situation further down the road. In more practical, "here-and-now" terms, another factor that could make a postponement more likely is that having children is one of the factors most substantially increasing the risk of poverty.

A decline in birth numbers is important in several ways. The most obvious one, and a source of great concern in Latvia, is the replacement of generations and an unfortunate development in the age composition of the population. With regards to women's labour market participation, falling birth numbers and rates may also have an effect. One result is that at the aggregate level among women as a group, there are fewer mothers with young children, and consequently fewer women who face the challenge of combining work and the presence of small children in the household. This also contributes in shaping the opportunity structure for those who have children, as there are fewer people who compete over the same resources, such as kindergartens.

Summary

In my view, the approach outlined in this chapter could be a useful way of expanding on the explanations offered by Fodor and van der Lippe as to why women have mostly retained their strong labour market position in the East European countries, in this case, Latvia. In addition to their arguments about the character of economic restructuring providing the opportunity, a perspective on family change should also be included, as it was precisely the family obligations of women that were expected to make it more difficult for women to keep working. The resources and arenas approach as described by Ringen (1995) offers a perspective both on opportunities and actors' choices, as summarised below:

The focus on resources, in particular the basic resources time and money, may prove to be useful in this connection. It shifts the focus to the actor as choosing between different options, while also providing a perspective on the deterioration of social policy in terms of both time and money, as well as the characteristics of the labour market arena and family change, considering which resources are needed to invest in these arenas. Much of the former research discussed in chapter 3 points to the closing of kindergartens as one of the main obstacles to women's continued participation in the labour market. Less state provision of time consequently made work and family harder to combine. At the same time, social provision of financial resources in terms of family benefits has also deteriorated, meaning that policies do not encourage withdrawal from the labour market. In combination with low wage levels and high living costs, meaning that most

families cannot live on a single salary, the necessity for women to invest their time in the labour market has increased. This becomes even more necessary when they have children, as neither the state nor men's salaries – in general – can compensate for the wage loss of the mother, and more financial resources are needed with an additional member of the family. In addition to the motivation for work through necessity, women's identity as tied to the labour market is also believed to be of importance, as this reflects their preference for combining work and family, and also that a large share of women have personal resources in terms of education, which can be invested in the labour market arena.

The changes in the labour market are believed to be of such a character that there is opportunity for women to invest their time in this arena, as restructuring has not necessarily made it substantially more difficult for women than for men to gain access to the arena. At the same time, in a competitive labour market arena where the 'revenue' of invested time in terms of salaries is relatively low, it is likely that quite a *lot* of time must be invested in order to satisfy basic financial needs. This puts limits to how much time can be invested in the family, as work may be given priority since the economic resources are needed in the family. Consequently, women may choose to forego or postpone having children. This may have contributed in upholding women's relatively high labour market participation and employment rates, as there are fewer women in the working age population with small children. Further, these changes in the family arena – fewer small children - in turn affect the opportunity structure for women who do have small children, as there are fewer people who compete over the use of kindergartens.

As this is an explorative study, the aim has not been to develop testable hypotheses, but more to find a perspective to illuminate what may be important traits in the combination of work and family in Latvia in the 1990s. In the next chapters I will apply this perspective in the following way:

Chapter 6 has its main focus on structural circumstances, and is divided in two parts. The first part treats the general changes in the Latvian economy and labour market in the 1990s. The main focus is on the opportunity structures or the characteristics of the labour market arena in relation to women's access, and further, the 'revenue' of time invested in the labour market, i.e. the general wage level. The second part of chapter 6 concerns state provision for families with children, in terms of financial resources through benefits, and provision of time through the availability of child care facilities.

Chapter 7 looks into the access to the labour market in terms of participation and employment rates of men and women, and also how much time is invested in this arena. Differences between women with and without children are also considered, as women without children can be presumed to have more time to invest in the labour market arena. Further, a small section on single mothers and mothers in couples is included, as these are two groups believed to have different levels of resources in terms of a partner's income, which may again influence the necessity to work.

Chapter 8 concerns the family in relation to work in terms of attitudes as a contribution to preferences, and further the financial resources of families with children, which are believed to strongly contribute to the necessity to invest time in the labour market, and also as a disincentive to have children, i.e. to invest time in the family arena rather

than in the labour market. This leads up to the final section on family change, considering whether less time is invested in the family arena.

Before moving on to the analysis, chapter 5 gives a description of the data sources and methodological considerations in this study.

5 Method

This chapter describes the data sources and methodological concerns of this study, as well as definitions central to the analysis. The Norbalt living conditions surveys, conducted by Fafo and local partners in the Baltic States in 1994 and 1999 form the basis for the analyses, and is referred to through chapters 6 to 8.

As this is a new field of research, and many of the sources readily available in for instance international academic journals have made predictions which do seem to have been somewhat hasty or lacking in documentation (as discussed in chapter 3), I have found it useful to gain access to as much recent research conducted in Latvia as possible, to illuminate the findings in the quantitative data. Other sources of information, such as official statistics and information on policies, were also necessary for the purpose of this study. Information on state provision had to be compiled from several different sources, both official documents and research reports, to get as full a picture of the situation in the two years as possible. In order to obtain the required information, I conducted two travels to Latvia during the work with this study.

One trip was made at the beginning of the process, in August 2000, to get a general overview of existing literature, both local research, and information on policies. I also found it useful to discuss the theme of my work with local researchers. This has not been done in the form of interviews, and is consequently not part of the data I analyse, but has served more as a contribution to guiding the search in the analysis. In some cases I have chosen to include comments or observations made in these conversations, when they seem to have relevance, and support or provide nuance to other findings. As the work proceeded, I found it that more information was needed in order to investigate several of the aspects considered in this study. Consequently, a second trip to Latvia was conducted in May 2001, to obtain literature and official information.

The Norbalt data

Data from the Norbalt living conditions surveys form the basis for this analysis, and provide all the information on women's employment discussed in chapter 7. The Norbalt surveys were conducted in the Baltic States in 1994 and 1999 by the Fafo Institute for Applied Social Science and local partners. These surveys were designed in order to obtain information about the welfare of households and individuals in the Baltic States, and cover a broad range of aspects.

As is common in large-scale surveys of national coverage, the design is complex, and consists of a combination of a single stage stratified sample in large cities and a two-stage stratified cluster sample in smaller cities and rural areas (Aasland & Tyldum 2001).

The response rate was high; in 1999, nine per cent of the Latvian sample were not interviewed due to refusals or no contact, and a further 4 per cent fell out due to imperfect population registers (Aasland & Fløtten 2001). In 1994 the response rate was 91 per cent (Pedersen 1996:231). The sample design of the Norbalt surveys involved three types of units of analysis; households, individuals in households and randomly selected individuals (RSI). The 1994 survey contains 3132 households and 9446 individuals living in the households, the corresponding numbers for 1999 were 3044 and 8903.

When primary sampling units had been identified within the different strata, RSI were selected within the unit. The RSI defined the address of the selected household. This was due to the constraint that only population registers consisting of individuals aged 18 or over were available. The selection probabilities are not the same for the three types of respondents, and the sample is not self-weighting. Relative weights have been used for the analysis, and unweighted N's are given in the tables. For detailed information about the sample and weights, see Pedersen 1996.

The complex design of the surveys means that tests of significance assuming simple random sampling, such as SPSS types of tests, are not applicable, and ideally, significance should be tested with the appropriate software (Cesnūyte 1997:24). Formerly, some tests of significance have been conducted by researchers at Fafo using the programme STATA, which considers specific problems tied to complex survey designs. These tests have showed almost identical results with results presuming equal selection probabilities (Aasland & Fløtten 2001). Consequently, a choice has been made in this study to include significance testing with chi-squares in the tables based on Norbalt data. As an extra precaution, critical values showing significance at the 1 per cent level are taken as indicative of significance at least on the 5 per cent level. In most cases, the tables tested are two-by-two⁶, meaning that the critical value for all chi-squares at the 1 per cent level is 6.64 with one degree of freedom, unless otherwise stated. Due to the explorative approach in this paper, too much weight is not put on significance, as the goal has not been to develop testable hypotheses, as discussed in chapter 4, but to illuminate certain recent developments and discuss further expansions on explanations for women's relatively high labour market participation by including a perspective on family change.

As mentioned above, the survey design involved three units of analysis, and the questionnaire consisted of three parts. Part one concerned general information about the households, such as housing conditions. Part two consisted of a household roster, containing information about all household members, such as demographic data and working conditions. The final and third part, concerned the RSI, and covered, among other things, social contacts, health and attitudes.

All parts of the questionnaire would normally be answered by the RSI. In some cases, when the RSI did not have sufficient information to answer the questions about the household and the individuals in the household, i.e. part one and two of the questionnaire, a responsible adult (RA) was chosen instead. This should be kept in mind in

⁶ The differences considered are in most cases between men and women within each year, and within each gender between 1994 and 1999.

the second part of chapter 7, concerning the labour market behaviour of mothers compared to women without children. Information on individuals living in households with a specific composition and with specific family relations could only be obtained through aggregating information from the household roster, or second part of the questionnaire, where family relations were defined in relation to the RA. This means that the individuals in question had to be both the RSI and the person who answered this part of the questionnaire. There is reason to believe that this group differs from the RSIs as a whole. I will return to this in chapter 7, where this has some consequences for the analysis.

In general, reliability of the data is high. In some specific cases related to particular variables, reliability is discussed in relation to the analysis. An inherent problem with the approach for this study, already described as explorative, concerns internal validity. Lack of information on the association between the elements I suggest may be related, means that causal relationships cannot be directly examined. For instance, there is a lack of data on individual decisions relating to fertility, which would have provided useful insight for the questions examined in this study. To my knowledge, at the time of writing, no such studies have been conducted in Latvia. There are, however, great advantages in using these data sources, as they provide information on very recent developments in Latvia. The changes of the 1990s in Eastern Europe are only just beginning to be incorporated in wider theoretical frameworks within sociology, for instance in the studies of the relationship between state provision and women's employment.

Definitions

The concepts used in this study are mainly internationally applied definitions. Listed below are the central definitions used in this study. Other less central definitions, are given in the relevant chapters.

State provision is one of the aspects examined in this study, with respect to how it can be presumed to influence the relationship between work and family for women. As a term, it can be defined in numerous ways. For instance, Pascall & Manning (2000), in a comparative analysis of 27 countries in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, consider gendered effects of state provision in relation to women's roles as paid employees, partners/wives, mothers, carers/providers and policymakers/citizens (Pascall & Manning 2000:241). Consequently, they apply a broad definition of welfare provision containing a wide range of policies and legislation, including policies on abortion, domestic violence, as well as family benefits and provision of public childcare, to mention but a few of the aspects they take into account.

By contrast, the definition of state provision used in this study is quite narrow. It is defined in relation to the questions I seek to examine, specifically how state provision is assumed to influence the relationship between the work and family arenas, primarily in terms of access to the resources time and money when a child is born or present in a family. State provision is consequently defined as monetary benefits (childbirth grant,

pregnancy and maternity benefit, child care benefit and family benefit) and provision of time through kindergarten coverage.

The employment categories used in this paper are defined as recommended by the International Labour Organisation:

Employed:

“... employed is defined in terms of paid employment or self-employment; paid employment denotes persons who, during the reference period, have performed at least one hour of work for a wage or salary, in cash or in kind, as well as persons with a formal attachment to a job, but temporarily not working. Self-employment covers persons who, during the reference period, have performed some work for profit or family gain, in cash or kind, or persons with an enterprise, but temporarily not at work.”

Unemployed:

“... ‘unemployment’ refers to persons who, during the reference period, were a) without work; b) currently available for work; and c) seeking work.”

Outside labour force:

“The category ‘not in the labour force’ covers persons who are not economically active, i.e. who are without paid employment, without a job affiliation, and are not seeking and/or available for work.” (Priede 1996: 113)

The reference period for both years is the week before the interview took place. Employment and unemployment rates are estimated among those in the labour force.

The working age for men is defined as 18 to 59 for men in both years and 18 to 54 for women in 1994. The retirement age for women had been changed to 58 years prior to 1999, which means that the working age for women in this year is defined as 18 to 57.

The working age applied in this study differs from the official definition, where the lower age is set to 16. This is due to the composition of the survey sample, as only registers of people 18 years or older were available for selecting the RSI.

The next three chapters contain the analysis of the data described above. Chapter 6 examines the structural changes in the Latvian economy and labour market, as well as state provision for families with children.

6 Structural opportunities and relationship between the arenas

The nature of economic restructuring is at the core of the processes discussed in this paper. The characteristics of the labour market arena in particular to a large extent shape the opportunities for the individual in choosing how to act. In the case of women in Latvia, it is of particular importance whether they were in fact in a more advantageous position compared to men with regards to the nature of macro change, as Fodor and van der Lippe suggest. The basic question relating to economic restructuring in Latvia is how it affected the labour market arena in terms of women's access. A short overview of the general economic situation during the 1990s is included to provide the background for changes.

The second part of this chapter considers state provision for families with children, in terms of money, through benefits, and time, through kindergarten coverage. These provisions are considered with respect to how they can be presumed to have affected the relationship between work and family.

Economic development and the labour market in Latvia in the 1990s

When Latvia regained its independence in 1991, the new state inherited an economic structure based on the Soviet economic system. The country consequently faced immense challenges in terms of restructuring and adaptation to a completely new situation. Enterprises had formerly been structured to fill the demands of the planned economy. This meant that they were often highly specialised, and dependent on the former 'market'. The economy as a whole was based on the Soviet regional division of labour, meaning that in some cases Latvia, one of the smallest republics, produced more than half of certain items in the Union. In short, the structure of the production industry was ill fitted to meet new demands, and problems were exacerbated when both former markets and supply of raw materials crumbled (Dreifelds 1996:111-113). There was also the problem that not only the structure of the industrial sector, but also the equipment, was out-dated. In 1991, official estimates were given that 85 to 90 per cent of industrial equipment was not suitable for modern conditions. Similar challenges faced agriculture; formerly farms had been organized in large units (*kolkhoz* or *sovkhos*). Approximately one third of these were broken down into smaller units, which contributed to the enthusiasm of the individual farmer, but unfortunately at the same time meant that the advantages of large-scale operations were lost (Dreifelds 1996:131).

Another practice inherited from Soviet times was the very low pension age, 55 years for women and 60 years for men. Particular jobs allowed for even earlier retirement. The consequence was that in the mid 1990s, more than 40 per cent of pensioners were younger than 65. In the latter half of the decade, measures were taken to gradually increase the pension age, by half a year annually, with the final goal of reaching a retirement age of 65 for both sexes (Dreifelds 1996:120-121).

The challenges faced in 1991 were met with reforms as advised by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Among measures were the ending of state subsidies to enterprises and the lifting of price controls. The consequences were expected to be grave, but the severity of the costs apparently astonished even IMF planners. In 1992 there was a drop in GDP of 32.9 per cent, real wages had decreased by 60 per cent since 1990, and inflation rose to a startling 951 per cent. The crisis was spurred by the breaking of the ties with the Soviet Union and among other things the sharp increase in export energy prices in Russia. A drought further aggravated the situation in the agricultural sector in 1992 (Dreifelds 1996:114).

By 1993, the situation was on its way to stabilising. Inflation went down to 109.2 per cent, sinking further to 36 per cent in 1994 (European Training Foundation 1999:6). In the years from 1995 to 1997 there was even a steady improvement, and there was a growth of as much as 6.5 per cent in GDP in the latter year. In these years there was a marked increase in services and industries, and the unemployment rate started to decrease (LHDR 1998:22). In 1998 the Vienna summit of the European Union decided that Latvia could be invited to start accession negotiations in the following year. Unfortunately, in 1998 crisis hit again in Russia, which resonated through the region, illustrating the fragility and interdependency of the new market economies (LHDR 1998).

Still, the general economic situation at the end of the 1990s was vastly improved compared to the situation a few years earlier. One very important factor has been the growth in foreign direct investment in Latvia. Approximately 75 per cent of investments are concentrated in Riga and the Riga region, which partly explains why this region differs from the rest of the country, also with regards to income levels and employment (LHDR 1999:37-38).

There have been large changes in the sector composition of employment. Between 1990 and 1996, manufacturing, construction, agriculture, hunting and forestry all fell with regards to the number of people employed, while services grew; the number of people employed in trade increased 1.5 times, employment in the finance sector grew 2.4 times and state administration, defence and social insurance 3.1 times (European Training Foundation 1999:14-15). With these rapid structural changes it should come as no surprise that much of the unemployment in Latvia today can be classified as structural unemployment, as there is a gap between skills held by the labour force and skills required by the market (European Training Foundation 1999:19-20). There is also the fact that new technology has been introduced, requiring different kind of specialisation and for older people, retraining (European Training Foundation 1999:30).

Norbalt data show that in the latter half of the 1990s, the labour force participation has increased from 83 per cent of the working age population in 1994, to 85 per cent in 1999. In general people have long working hours, the average working week was 43.7

hours in the main job in both years. One should bear in mind that this applies to the entire working age employed population. The standard working week is set to 40 hours in Latvian legislation. 9.4 per cent of those working 40 hours or more in 1999 report to have an extra job.

The population in Latvia experiences relatively high living costs compared to Estonia and Lithuania. Low wages have continued to be a problem, and real wages are still below the 1989 levels (European Training Foundation 1999:vii). This is partly due to problems tied to the minimum wage. According to the Labour Code, the amount may not be lower than the subsistence minimum estimated by the Ministry of Welfare. This is however not respected; from 1997 to 1999 the minimum wage has been between 42 per cent and 52 per cent of this limit. Budgetary concerns are allowed to interfere with the stipulations of the labour code, as the minimum wage forms the basis of the tariff system in the public sector. This also puts limits on the wage development in general (European Training Foundation 1999:8). This also confirms what was pointed out in the last section, that Latvia has definitely not adopted a single breadwinner system, as real wages are lower than they were during the pronounced two-earner system of Soviet times. It is difficult to obtain reliable data on wages and income, as it is widely believed that partial payment of wages “under the table” is common in the private sector. According to the European Training Foundation, the State Revenue Board has estimated that 40 per cent of private enterprises are involved in tax evasion (European Training Foundation 1999:9).

Changes in the employment sectors

Table 1 below shows the number of employed persons in various activity sectors of the economy in 1990 and in the two years this study focuses on, 1994 and 1999. As will be clear from the last row, the absolute number of people employed has declined with almost 400.000 from 1990 to 1999. While this is obviously connected with the end of full employment, as was the policy during Soviet times, this was also influenced by the rather massive emigration from Latvia, mostly ethnic Russians moving to Russia. 175.437 people emigrated from Latvia from 1991 to 1999. Immigration was at a much lower level, 41.438 people arrived in Latvia in the same period (Latvijas Statistikas Gadagramata 2000:55). In combination with a negative natural increase in the entire decade, the resident population of Latvia consisted of 243.720 fewer people in 1999 than it did in 1991 (Latvijas Statistikas Gadagramata 2000:39-40).

Table 1: Employed persons (annual average) in the economy by kind of activity

| | 1990 thsd. | % of total employed | 1994 thsd. | % of total employed | Change, thsd. 1990-94 | 1999 thsd. | % of total employed | Change, thsd. 1994-99 |
|--|---------------|---------------------------|---------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Agriculture | 233 | 16.5 % | 224 | 18.6 % | -9 | 171 | 16.5 % | -53 |
| Industry | 391 | 27.8 % | 253 | 21.0 % | -138 | 184 | 17.7 % | -69 |
| Construction | 136 | 9.7 % | 62 | 5.1 % | -74 | 64 | 6.2 % | +2 |
| Trade and repairs | 109 | 7.7 % | 162 | 13.4 % | +53 | 170 | 16.4 % | +8 |
| Hotels and restaurants | 61 | 4.3 % | 36 | 3.0 % | -25 | 24 | 2.3 % | -12 |
| Transport and communication | 106 | 7.5 % | 106 | 8.8 % | 0 | 88 | 8.5 % | -18 |
| Financial intermediation | 7 | 0.5 % | 12 | 1.0 % | +5 | 16 | 1.5 % | +4 |
| Real estate, renting and business activities | 81 | 5.7 % | 61 | 5.1 % | -20 | 53 | 5.1 % | -8 |
| Public adm and defence, social security | 21 | 1.5 % | 50 | 4.1 % | +29 | 64 | 6.2 % | +14 |
| Education | 101 | 7.2 % | 92 | 7.6 % | -9 | 89 | 8.6 % | -3 |
| Health and social work | 68 | 4.8 % | 74 | 6.1 % | +6 | 61 | 5.9 % | -13 |
| Other service | 83 | 5.9 % | 65 | 5.4 % | -18 | 49 | 4.7 % | -16 |
| Total | 1409 | 100 % | 1205 | 100 % | -204 | 1038 | 100 % | -167 |

Sources: Latvijas Statistikas Gadagramata 1995:84-85, Latvijas Statistikas Gadagramata 2000:60-61

Comparing 1999 to 1990, there were 269.000 fewer people employed in agriculture and industry, and 113.000 people more employed in trade and repairs, public administration, defence and social security and financial intermediation. In relative terms, in 1990, industry was by far the biggest sector in terms of employment, with 27.8 per cent of the employees. The trade and repairs sector employed 7.7 per cent of the total in this year. In 1999, industry was only marginally the bigger sector, with 17.7 per cent of the employees; trade and repairs came a close second with 16.4 per cent. This illustrates the extent of structural changes in the labour market, taking place in less than a decade. A majority of those working in the industry and agriculture are male, while the sectors trade and repairs, education, and health and social work are female dominated.

So far, the general picture outlined by Fodor and van der Lippe seems to be reflected in Latvia as well, and also in the latter half of the 1990s. The restructuring necessitated by the inefficiency of the existing system in meeting new demands did not hit hardest in the female dominated professions or sectors, and in addition, a large growth occurred in trade and repairs, which is a female dominated sector. In other sectors with a large share of female employees, i.e. education and health and social work, there has been a decline in the number of people employed, while in relative terms the sizes of these sectors have remained quite stable. Women's access to the labour market arena did not deteriorate – as compared with men - as a consequence of economic reforms. However, the access did deteriorate for the population as a whole, reflected in the decline in number of people employed. Further, the revenue on time invested in the arena did also go down, as wages in 1999 were still below 1989 level. Chapter 7 treats differences between men and women in the labour market in more detail, and also considers how much time is invested in the labour market arena. Before moving on to the labour market, the sec-

ond part of this chapter considers effects of certain aspects of welfare provision on the relationship between the labour market and family arenas.

State provision for families with children

State provision can be seen as a provision of resources, and as such can substantially shape the opportunities for action in an arena, and the relationship between arenas. In the relationship between the work and family arenas, provision provides two main resources, regulating the opportunities for action in each arena. First, it provides financial resources as in the case of maternity or childcare benefits, which substitutes what would otherwise have to be a generated outcome through activity in the labour market arena. This resource is a necessity for 'action' in the family arena, and state benefits are of particular importance in a situation where one salary is not sufficient. Secondly, it can also provide time, as in the time freed up by the availability of childcare provision. This is the basic resource needed for action in the labour market arena. For women in particular, state provision contributes strongly in shaping the framework within which they can move between the two arenas.

This section treats various benefits and provisions tied to families and children. The system of child-care leave gives an indication of the possibility for taking time off work when a child is born, while the level of the various benefits indicate the economic consequences of having children in Latvia today. The last section considers kindergartens, as this is an important way of making it possible to combine the presence of small children with mothers' labour market participation.

Maternity and childcare leave and benefits – provision of financial resources

Welfare in the Soviet Union was in general marked by high spending on social sectors, aimed at ensuring a minimum standard of living and a relatively flat income distribution. Provisions were not necessarily given in the shape of cash transfers, as benefits-in-kind provided by the state-run enterprises played an important role. These benefits included facilities for child and health care, housing and recreation. Many of these welfare provisions were tied to large-scale industrial complexes, several of which were closed after 1991. (Grønningsæter et al 2001:14, Dreifelds 1996:111).

Latvia today cannot be said to have a strong family support model. Looking at the various benefits available in the event of childbirth, they are at a very low level. This is the case for both 1994 and 1999. These benefits are universal, i.e. not means tested. Figure 1 below summarises the general benefits that are available when children are born. The amounts refer to monthly payments, apart from the childbirth grant, which is a one-time payment. The minimum consumer basket, calculated by the Latvian Ministry of Welfare, is included to give a perspective on the relative sizes of the benefits. The numbers in brackets indicate the relationship with the size of the minimum consumer

basket, when the value of the basket is set to 100. The childbirth grant is kept outside this estimation, as the amount was based on the value of the same items in 1994 and in 1999, and the increase consequently reflects the higher price level in the latter year.

There has been relative increase in all benefits apart from the child-care benefit given when the child is between 18 and 36 months old. However, the level in 1999 is still very low when considered in relation to the minimum consumer basket.

Figure 1: Family support in Latvia, and minimum consumer basket

| | 1994 | 1999 |
|------------------------------------|--|---|
| Childbirth grant | LVL 86 | LVL 196 |
| Maternity benefit | Full wage replacement, or LVL 22 (minimum wage) [42,7] | Full wage replacement, or LVL 50 (minimum wage) [60,2] |
| Childcare benefit, < 18 months | LVL 12 [23,3] | LVL 30 [36,1] |
| Childcare benefit, 18 to 36 months | LVL 7.5 [14,6] | LVL 7.5 [9,0] |
| Family allowance | Data not available | First child: LVL 4.25 [5,1] 2 nd child: LVL 5.1 [6,1] 3 rd child: LVL 6,8 [8,2] 4 th and consecutive child: LVL 7.65 [9,2] |
| Minimum consumer basket | LVL 51.5 [100] | LVL 83 [100] |

Sources: Ministry of Welfare 1999, Loza 2000, European Training Foundation 1999, Eglite 1995, Phare 1998, Latvijas Statistikas Gadagramata 1995, Latvijas Statistikas Gadagramata 2000, Latvijas Demografijas Gadagramata 2000.

The childbirth grant is given to all new mothers. The size of this benefit is based on the estimated cash value of items deemed necessary to purchase when a child is born. The amount above refers to the full amount of the estimated value, and is received only if mother has followed medical program for pregnant women with regular check-ups. If the medical program has not been followed, the mother will receive half of the amount. In 1994, the amount was 86 Ls (Eglite 1995:30); at present the full amount available is 196 Ls (Loza 2000:14).

A mother who has been employed at least six months prior to eligibility can receive a maternity benefit based on her income for a total of 112 days with full wage replacement (56 days of pregnancy leave and 56 of birth leave). For many women, it is quite likely to be a problem if they have had hidden income, as the maternity leave is based on the contribution wage. 14 days are added to the pregnancy leave if medical checkups are started before the 12th week of pregnancy (Ministry of Welfare 1999:47). Since 1 January 2001, limits have been set to the size of the benefit; which cannot exceed 1000 Ls per month, even if the mother's contribution wage was higher. This only has consequences for approximately 1.7 per cent of the women, who do not get full wage replacement (Diena 4 January 2001).

Mothers who have not been employed, receive a maternity benefit based on the minimum wage (Loza 2000:6). The minimum wage was in 1994 22 Ls, in 1999 50 Ls. As

pointed out in the last section, and as is also evident in figure 1 above, the minimum wage was well below the subsistence minimum in both years.

In principle, employers are obliged to keep the job open for female employees for up to three years. This is the same principle that applied during Soviet times, when it was instated in the late 1980s as one of the measures to raise fertility. During the child-care leave, a child-care benefit is available. There are different rates depending on the age of the child (see figure 1). Until 1996 this benefit was only available to the mother (Eglite 2000:84). The receiver of this benefit is not allowed to work full time, the limits set to 20 hours per week for children under 18 months, 34 hours for children under 36 months (Phare 1998:39).

During the first 18 months of childcare leave, social tax payments are made by the state for the receiver calculated on the basis of the minimum wage. This obviously has a negative impact for a large number of the receivers (usually women) on future pensions, sickness benefits or in the event of the birth of another child (Eglite 2000:84). If the receiver's job is not available after the period of leave is over, she or he is entitled to unemployment benefits, but only at 70 per cent of the minimum wage, not 90 per cent, as in the case of "ordinary" unemployment (Eglite 2000:84). The presence of children gives the right to a small income tax deductment, which was 11.5 Ls per dependent in the mid-90s (Eglite 1997:51). In addition, there is a family allowance, to which one is entitled until the child has reached 15 years of age, or up to 18 if the child is still at school.

In 1994, the child-care benefit for children up to 1.5 years was 12 Ls, and for children up to 3 years it was 7.5 Ls (Latvijas Statistikas Gadagramata 1995:71). At that point it had not been adjusted since November 1992, meaning that it had greatly lost value due to inflation (Eglite 1995:31), which was still substantial in 1993. Consequently, there was a clear deterioration in benefits compared to earlier years. Even the highest amount, for children up to 18 months, was far from sufficient to sustain a living. The minimum consumer basket, as calculated by the Ministry of Welfare in the same year, was 51.5 Ls. This means that the childcare benefit was 23.3 % of the consumer basket.

Looking at 1999, a woman who had not had employment for the six months required to qualify for wage replacement during pregnancy and maternity leave, with a newborn first child, would during the 56 days after delivery receive 50 Ls in maternity benefit and 4.25 Ls in family allowance. The total amount of 54.25 Ls is 65.4 per cent of the minimum consumer basket for one adult. For all first-time mothers after 56 days of maternity leave, and until the child reaches the age of 18 months, the total amount of support available is 34.25 Ls. This is 41.3 per cent of the 1999 consumer basket, and is obviously not enough to sustain an independent living. For instance, the average amount spent per household member per month on housing, water, electricity and other fuels in Riga in 1999 was 15.17 Ls, or nearly half of that amount (Majsaimniecibas budzets 1999:46). The childbirth grant is kept outside these calculations, as it is meant to cover the basic costs of items necessary to purchase when a child is born.

The problem of the low level of provisions is illustrated in relation to various income poverty lines. Fanziska Gassmann (2000) discusses various poverty lines in her study on Latvia. The highest threshold would be the minimum consumer basket estimated by the

Ministry of Welfare. This is a prescriptive poverty line, in as much as it describes the level no one should fall below. Gassmann argues that it does not really make sense to apply this as a poverty line in Latvia today, as a large majority of the population would have an income below this line. The lowest threshold would be 50 per cent of the median per capita household income. In 1999, Norbalt data set this amount to 28 Ls. Those who fall below this poverty line must be considered the very poor. An intermediate measure can be found in the official minimum wage (Gassmann 2000:53). Looking at the amount available in 1999 for a child between two and 18 months; 34.25 Ls, this amount is well below the two highest poverty lines, and in fact only just above 6 Ls more than the lowest poverty line identifying the very poor. Although income poverty is not an exhaustive measure of real poverty (Aasland & Tyldum 2000a:2), it must be considered a problem if having a three-month-old infant automatically places you close to the lowest poverty line, and even more so if the person does not have a provider. Feminist theory on the welfare state has sensitised us to questions regarding dependency and power relations in the household in relation to welfare provision. In this case, questions of basic survival sadly also seem to have renewed relevance. The low level of benefits must be assumed to create a substantial financial dependency for women on a partner, and on the other hand, a great deal of pressure on men who need to provide for their families.

There are no special provisions for single parents, in spite of the fact that 27 per cent of the families in Latvia with children under sixteen are female headed single parent households (Eglite 2000:83), and that they run a higher risk of being poor than other household types (Aasland & Tyldum 2000a:6). Daina Stukuls claims that there is a higher incidence of children being born to single mothers in the Russian part of the population, and suggests that this is a segment of the population in which the government has little interest in encouraging higher fertility rates (Stukuls 1999:548). This claim is however not supported by the Norbalt data, of single mothers between 18 and 45, 62 per cent are Latvian, 29 per cent are Russian, and 9 per cent have another nationality. The ethnic composition of all women in the same age group is as follows; 58 per cent are Latvian, 29 are Russian, and 13 per cent report other nationality. This seems to indicate that if anything, Latvian women may be slightly over represented, and there are not more Russian single mothers than in other nationalities. The fertility rates are lower among Russian women than Latvian women. This is probably mostly due to the fact that they more often live in cities, although it could also be that they perceive their situation as being more insecure than Latvian women do. The potential interplay between gender and ethnicity is not widely researched in Latvia.

The principles in this legislation would seemingly encourage childbirth, while the level of benefits must be a disincentive. Consequently, there is a certain level of inconsistency in these policies, which seems inevitable considering that the principles have been kept from Soviet times with a command economy while the new system is marked by competition in a market. With regards to discrimination in the labour market, it could be a potential problem that employers are obliged to keep jobs open for up to three years, while the actual possibility for women to use this right is severely limited by the level of support provided in this period. Unfortunately, data on how many women actu-

ally take full child-care leave are not available. The problems of making use of this right were mentioned in an article in a Latvian parenting journal; *Mans Mazais* (“My little one”), in which a feature was printed on the combination of work and family, interviewing four mothers with small children. One of them told that it was a part of her contract when she was employed that in the case that she should have children, she would be obliged to return to work after the two months of mandatory maternity leave. This clause was standard for all female employees. At the point of signing this contract she had no qualms, since, as she says, she had “accepted the rules of the game” and did not want to miss the opportunity of an interesting and stable job (Mans Mazais no. 5 1999).

The level of benefits effectively makes children a private responsibility, and must also be expected to create a substantial dependency for women on a provider when a child is born, and a pressure on the economy of families with children in general. In short, the economic consequences of having children in Latvia are for many people quite bleak. This is confirmed in an article by Parsla Eglite, who claims that surveys show that the falling fertility rates have little to do with changes in values or a lack of desire to have children. Rather, she says, “... *families in Latvia have taken a hard look at the financial realities which are involved in the raising of a child.*” (Eglite 1997:47)

Kindergartens – provision of time

After 1991, many kindergartens were closed. The number of establishments went from 1123 in 1990 to 608 in 1995, declining further to 573 in 1999 (Latvijas Statistikas Gada-gramata 2000:89). The Norbalt data seem to indicate that there has been a rather strong increase in the enrolment of children, from 23 per cent of all 0-5 year olds in 1994 to almost 40 per cent in the same age group in 1999, as shown in table 2. This applies mostly to public kindergartens; private kindergartens are not a factor, which is why they are not separated in the analysis. According to data from the Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, there were 561 state owned kindergartens in Latvia in 1999, with a total enrolment of 59.207 children, while there were only 12 privately owned kindergartens, attended by 316 children (Izglitibas Iestades Latvija 2000:29). Table 2 also shows that the increase in the share of children attending kindergartens was paralleled by a decline in the share of children looked after by a relative in the household, which in most cases can be presumed to be the mother.

Table 2: How are children aged 0-5 years looked after during the day? 1994 and 1999

| | 1994 | 1999 |
|---|------------------|------------------|
| Kindergarten | 23,0 | 39,7 |
| Relative in household | 67,0 | 49,5 |
| Relative outside household | 7,2 | 7,0 |
| Other person outside household (94), nanny (99) | 2,3 | 1,2 |
| Other | 0,5 | 2,6 |
| Total (N) | 100 (553) | 100 (445) |

Source: Norbalt data. $\chi^2 = 44.49$, $df = 4$, critical value at 1 % level = 13.28

The impression of a rapid increase changes noticeably if we consider the actual number of children within the relevant age group. Looking at how many children were born in

the six years preceding 1994 and 1999, the difference is telling. In the period between 1989 and 1994, 193.949 children were born. Between 1994 and 1999, the corresponding number was 122.229. With an absolute decline of almost 72.000 children, the number in the last period is only about 63 percent of the first period. This means that the real increase in kindergarten enrolment can be somewhere in the vicinity of 3000 children.

If the number of children born had remained the same in the last period as in the first, the increase in use of kindergartens would have been from 23 per cent to approximately 24.5 per cent, and this increase would not have been significant. I wish to underline that these are not precise data, but they are to a large extent confirmed by official statistics on kindergarten enrolment (Izglitibas Iestades Latvija 2000:28). This illustrates that it is the decline in births that account for the increase in use of kindergartens, and as such the seeming easement in the combination of work and family, not a drastically improved availability through increased state spending. In addition, kindergartens are relatively expensive; the average price paid for public childcare in 1999, 15 Ls, was at 23 per cent of the mean individual income, and therefore the most expensive in the Baltic countries (Aasland & Tyldum 2000b:21). Looking at the household economy as a whole, Norbalt data show that the mean total household income of those families who used public childcare in 1999 was 237 Ls, leaving the kindergarten expenses at 6 per cent of this amount. However, single parents using public childcare had a mean household income of 82 Ls, and paid on average 13 Ls for kindergartens. This group thus spent on average almost 16 per cent of the total income on childcare.

Conclusions on structural circumstances

The combined picture of benefits and kindergarten provision does leave a rather puzzling impression, considering that the extremely low fertility rates and situation of families with children are a grave concern. It seems that either this concern has little practical importance in the shaping of policies, or that it is presumed that families will have children almost irrespective of economic consequences. The policy also implies a traditional and outdated understanding of the family, as in the presence of a provider, which is not reflected in present-day Latvian society. This is to a certain extent mirrored in the language used in official documents, for instance in the Ministry of Welfare. In a document outlining plans for families with children, the Ministry states that it will primarily direct action towards the traditional family, although not exclude 'incomplete' families and other family forms ("Konceptija 'Par atbalstu gimenem ar berniem' ", www.lm.gov.lv). The new conception may, however, represent an interesting development with regards to family policy, as it is to focus not only on income maintenance, but also on family functions. This may be a change of direction in Latvian family policy, which has formerly been criticised for being more or less absent in terms of a consistent policy approach. For instance, Ausma Tabuna has observed that the family has been seen as a private matter, as a reaction to the past, when the state intervened in all matters (Tabuna

1997:288. See also Eglite 1995). On the other hand, at the time of writing, it remains to be seen if and how these plans are put into practice.

In particular the provisions available when children are born or very young must be based on some sort of a provider model. The presence of a provider seems to be an absolute necessity when a child is born, as the period of full wage replacement is very short, and there is virtually no opportunity to find childcare for an infant of two months, should this be a desired solution. This means that the opportunity for a new mother to earn a wage, even if she should wish to do so only two months after giving birth, is almost non-existent. Aside from presupposing the presence of a provider, the model also seems to presume that the income of the provider should be *sufficient* to sustain a living for himself, his partner and at least one child. Due to low wages and widespread unemployment, this is for many people far from the case.

A point raised by Jane Lewis (1992) in her criticism of Esping-Andersen has been that decommodification, the lessening of dependency on the market, for women is likely to result in spending more time doing unpaid care work in the family, if benefits encourage a withdrawal from the labour market (Lewis 1992:161). Looking at the low level of benefits in combination with the low wage level, decommodification in this sense does not seem to be a big 'problem' in Latvia, which would rather be marked by a great deal of dependency on the market. The provision of financial resources does not seem sufficient to make a withdrawal from the labour market a viable option for the majority of people. This, however, is contingent on the fact that most families cannot sustain a reasonable living standard on only one salary. If this changes, and the necessity for married or cohabiting women to work diminishes, it could be that more women would perceive that they have the opportunity to withdraw from the labour market. While withdrawal from the labour market is presently not encouraged by the provision of financial resources, the provision of time through kindergarten dramatically decreased, and the combination of work and family is not eased through an effort from the state.

Chapter 7 examines the labour market with respect to differences between men and women, and women in different family arrangements.

7 Access to the labour market arena

Chapter 6 showed that the opportunities for women to enter into the labour market arena, as compared to men were not necessarily negatively affected by the economic restructuring. Further, it showed that benefits do not provide enough financial resources to encourage a withdrawal from the labour market, but also that work and family are hard to combine, as lack of time must be considered a problem because of the low kindergarten coverage. The main question in this chapter is consequently, given that women have the opportunity to work and also that they need to work, but that work is hard to combine with the presence of children; what do they do? While chapter 6 analysed the structural circumstances characterising the economy and labour market, and how social policy affects the relationship between them through provision of time and money, chapters 7 and 8 focus on the actors within the arenas.

This chapter primarily treats differences between men and women in the labour market in Latvia with regards to resources and participation as an expression of access to the arena. Most weight will be put on access, as it is more complicated to get a full picture of individual resources apart from the easily measurable variables on education. Resources such as personal networks or relevant experience are difficult to measure.

The concept of basic resources is relevant in the section on differences between women with and without children, and single mothers and mothers living in couples. Women without children are believed to have more of the basic resource of time to invest in the labour market arena, and the question remains as to whether this leads to differences in labour market participation between these two groups. The differences between single mothers and mothers living in couples also have a resource aspect, as mothers living in couples at least theoretically may have access to greater resources in terms of their partners' income. Consequently, they may experience greater freedom to choose when and how to enter the labour market given the presence of children in the household. All tables and figures in this chapter are based on analysis of Norbalt data.

The data used in this section on labour market participation will at times differ substantially from official statistics. This is due to the nature of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) definitions that are used (see chapter 5). These definitions are quite 'strict', in the sense that anyone who has worked at least one hour in the reference period is defined as employed. The advantage with using these definitions is that they reflect the actual level of activity better than whether one is officially registered as unemployed. However, the definitions also imply that the employed category must be analysed in connection with working hours.

Women and men in the labour market

Education resources

Already in the inter-war independence period women in Latvia did have a relatively high level of education and participation in the labour market (Eglite 1997:45). This development was further strengthened after the incorporation into the Soviet Union. Several sources testify to the strong connection women in Latvia today feel towards their jobs (see for instance Zepa et al 1998, Zarina 1997). Women's ties to the labour market are also reflected in the level of education among working age women in Latvia in 1999, as shown in table 3.

Table 3: Highest level of completed education, men and women in working age, 1999

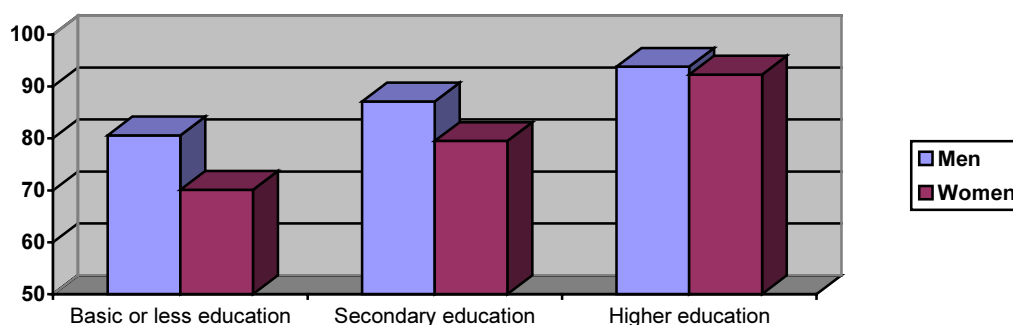
| | Men | Women |
|---------------|-----------|------------|
| Basic or less | 29,4 | 16,5 |
| Secondary | 46,4 | 45,3 |
| Higher | 24,2 | 38,1 |
| Total (N) | 100 (879) | 100 (1106) |

$\chi^2 = 66,07$, $df = 2$, critical value at 1 % level: 9.21

This very simple educational measure shows clearly that working age women have on average higher education than men have.

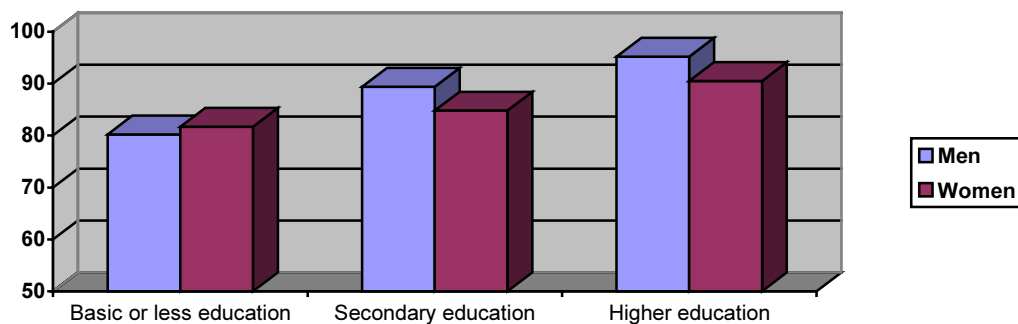
Having basic or secondary education seems to be more important for women than for men in determining whether they participate in the labour force, although there is a clear connection between educational level and labour force participation both for men and women. Women with basic or lower education are, however, more often than men in the same group outside the labour force. The gender difference diminishes with higher levels of education, and there is practically no difference in labour force participation of men and women with higher levels of education, as shown in figure 2.

Figure 2: Percentage of men and women of working age who are in the labour force, by highest level of completed education, 1999



There are greater differences in terms of employment rates, as indicated in figure 3. While there is a clear association between education and employment for both men and women, the relationship between gender and education is almost reversed as compared to labour force participation. While the employment rates of men and women with basic education is more or less the same, unemployment declines more for men than for women with secondary and higher education.

Figure 3: Percentage of men and women of working age who are employed by highest level of completed education, 1999



The larger difference between men and women's employment rates with increased educational levels could indicate that there are distribution mechanisms within the labour market arena that are to women's disadvantage.

Labour force participation and employment

As previously mentioned, the differences between men and women in the labour market in Latvia are surprisingly small, considering the massive changes in the structural circumstances, and in particular since work and family have become harder to combine. The following section treats some general differences in labour market participation and employment. Table 4 shows the relative size and gender composition of the labour force in Latvia and how this has changed in the five years in question.

Table 4: Labour force participation by gender in working age population in 1994 and 1999.

| | 1994 | | 1999 | |
|----------------------|------------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| | Men | Women | Men | Women |
| In labour force | 85,5 | 80,4 | 86,8 | 82,8 |
| Outside labour force | 14,5 | 19,6 | 13,2 | 17,2 |
| Total (N) | 100 (969) | 100 (1038) | 100 (879) | 100 (1104) |

1994: $\chi^2 = 9,5$, 1999: $\chi^2 = 6,19$, difference men 1994 and 1999: $\chi^2 = 0,63$, difference women 1994 and 1999: $\chi^2 = 2,08$.

There has been an increase in the relative size of the labour force, and a decrease among both men and women in the share outside the labour force. This is particularly interesting in the case of women, as the retirement age has been changed from 55 years for

women in 1994 to 58 years in 1999, meaning that there are somewhat more older women classified as being of working age in 1999. Removing the women aged 55 to 57 from the analysis does not change the result much, ending at 82,4 per cent of women being classified as in the labour force, and 17,6 per cent outside.

Furthermore, among those in the labour force, the gender differences in employment and unemployment are so small in 1999 that they are not significant, as shown in table 5.

Table 5: Employment and unemployment as percentage of labour force by gender in working age population in 1994 and 1999.

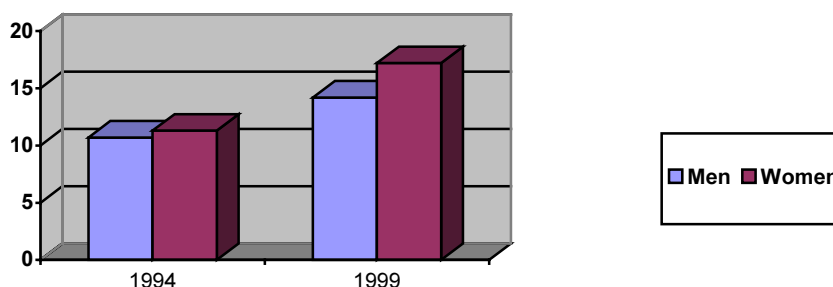
| | 1994 | | 1999 | |
|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| | Men | Women | Men | Women |
| Employed | 81,1 | 85,5 | 88,4 | 86,8 |
| Unemployed | 18,9 | 14,5 | 11,6 | 13,2 |
| Total (N) | 100 (824) | 100 (833) | 100 (759) | 100 (921) |

1994: $\chi^2 = 5.6$, 1999: $\chi^2 = 1.06$, difference men 1994 and 1999: $\chi^2 = 16.22$, difference women 1994 and 1999: $\chi^2 = 0.68$.

In 1994, however, there were gender differences quite similar to those Fodor and van der Lippe found in their analysis. It was men more than women who were exposed to unemployment, due to the restructuring of the economy, which hit harder in the male-dominated industry. This seems to confirm that gender segregation in the labour market can in some cases work to women's advantage (as argued by Fodor & van der Lippe 1998:136). While there was a significant difference in employment rates between men and women in 1994, this is not the case in 1999. Women's employment rates are essentially the same in 1994 and 1999, while there has been a clearly significant increase in the employment of men. There has also been a growth in the traditionally female dominated part of the service sector, to some degree sustaining the demand for women's labour.

While the unemployment rates for men and women are not dramatically different, there seems to be a difference between men and women who are unemployed in the length of their unemployment, as shown in figure 4.

Figure 4: Average length of unemployment by gender, months



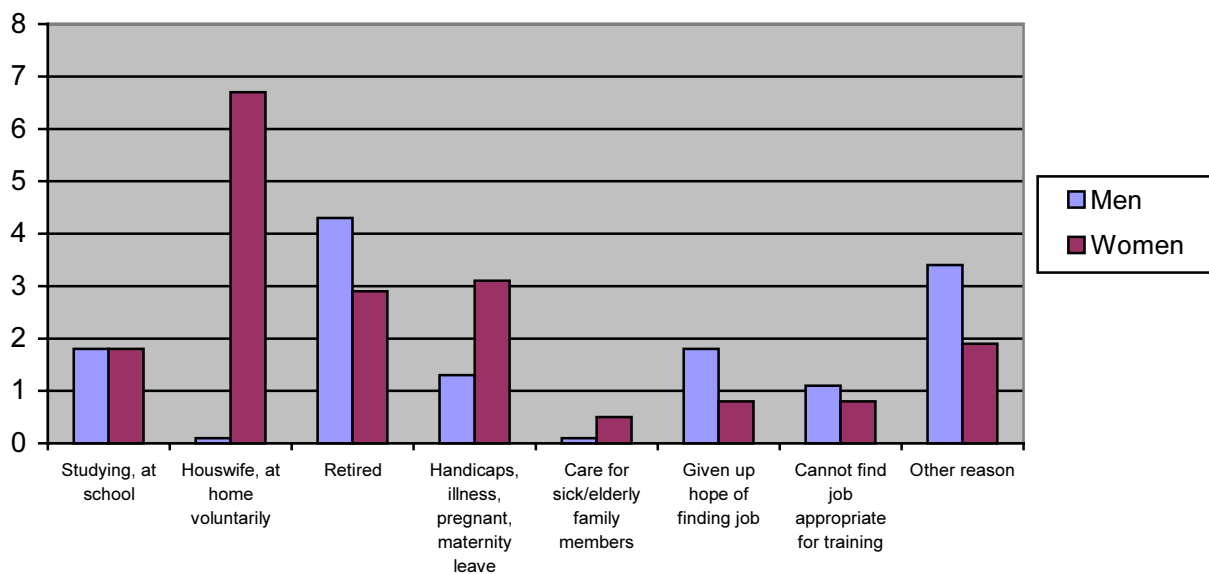
In 1994 the average length of unemployment was 10.7 months for men and 11.3 months for women. In 1999, the average length of unemployment increased for both

men and women, to 14.2 and 17.2 months respectively. The gender difference in length of unemployment has increased from half a month to three months. This could indicate that it has become harder, in particular for women, to re-enter the labour market after unemployment.

Reasons for withdrawing from the labour market

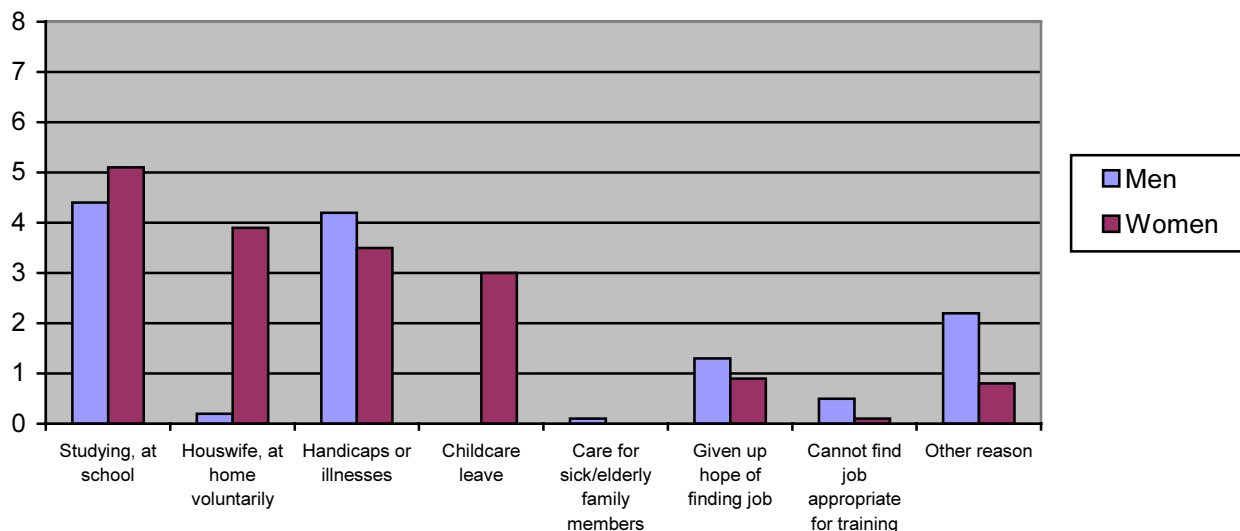
Much of the early research discussed in chapter 3 expressed a concern that women would withdraw from the labour market in favour of becoming housewives. More women than men were outside the labour force in Latvia in both years as shown in table 4. Figures 5 and 6 show the reasons reported why work is not sought, which could indicate whether women are in fact withdrawing from the labour market because they prioritise spending time in the family. The variables are not directly comparable in the two years, and are presented in separate figures.

Figure 5: Why is work not sought, men and women not working and not seeking work, as percentage of working age population, 1994



(Other reasons: Is already working/has found work, does not know how to find work, has not yet started working, other reason.)

Figure 6: Why is work not sought, men and women not working and not seeking work as percentage of working age population, 1999



(Other reasons: Waiting for answer from employer, found work already, other reason)

Problems arise with the 1994 data primarily because pregnancy/maternity leave has been classified together with handicaps and illnesses, which are very different phenomena. While handicaps may affect the individuals' relationship with the labour market for the duration of the lifetime, pregnancy and maternity leave is limited to 112 days by law. Further, childcare leave, which is different from maternity leave as described in chapter 6 on state provision, was not included as an alternative. It is hard to say whether women on childcare leave in 1994 have opted to classify themselves as housewives or fall into the group 'other reason'. It is very unlikely that they have given maternity leave as 'substitute', as the group on childcare leave combined with handicaps and illnesses in 1999 was more than 6 per cent of working age women, while maternity leave, handicaps and illnesses combined in 1994 was only 3 per cent. The birth numbers were substantially higher in 1994 and the three preceding years than in 1999 and three previous years. Consequently it is difficult to say anything about the actual percentage being on maternity leave and the actual percentage of housewives in this year. In 1999, pregnancy and maternity leave was not included as an alternative, but it seems likely that this group has been classified as being on childcare leave. The housewife category is probably more reliable in 1999. Further, the lack of maternity leave as a category should not have grave consequences, due to the fact that this group is fairly small, considering that the duration of this type of leave is only 112 days.

Still, there is in general little in these numbers indicating that women to a large extent are withdrawing in favour of spending time in the family, or being pushed out of the labour market, in comparison with men. In 1999 only 4 per cent of working age women classified themselves as housewives. Virtually no men reported to be home voluntarily, the 'male' equivalent to the housewife category. In the same year the difference between

men and women outside the labour force was only 4 percentage points. Another concern stated by for instance Jaqueline Heinen (1997) was that an erosion of welfare provision for sick or elderly people would place an extra burden on women and damage their opportunities in the labour market. Based on Norbalt data we can at least conclude that in 1999 no women reported this as a reason not to seek work, and only one man did. It may of course be that women take on more unpaid work without this having a directly visible effect in their labour market participation, while it may affect their relationship with the labour market in other ways.

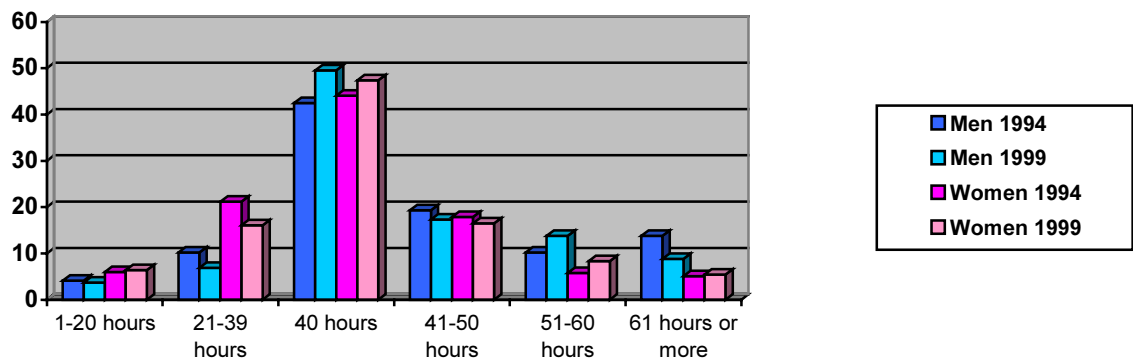
It is interesting to note that seemingly more men than women are discouraged from seeking work by not finding work that is appropriate for training or simply because they have given up. The percentages are of course very small, but should this really be the case, it could be seen as a confirmation of Ashwin's observations that men are more concerned than women with the status of their work and that it should fit with training and interests. When their expectations are not met, they are more prone to give up (Ashwin 2000b).

Finally, there seems to have been an increase in the relative number of students among both working age men and women, which also indicates that a substantial number of women plan to pursue a career and invest in their future in the labour market. The shift in the most common reason given for not seeking work is also interesting; 'housewife' was the most common answer in 1994 (although this group may include women on childcare leave as discussed above), while in 1999, being a student or at school was more common. The share of women not participating in the labour market in order to get education is marginally larger than the share spending their time in the family. Two per cent of working age women reported to be studying or at school in 1994, in 1999 the share had increased to five per cent.

Working hours and part-time work – time invested in the labour market

Returning to those who are in the labour market, employment rates may hide a weaker position in the labour market in terms of shorter working hours, which is one way of trying to combine work and family. Gornick (1998) argues that although this may help accommodate conflicting demands in the short term, part-time work can have the negative effect of lowering wages and benefits both in long term and short-term perspective. Blossfeld and Hakim claim that part-time and marginal work will probably increase in the post-socialist countries (Blossfeld & Hakim 1997:8). There is little in the Norbalt data to indicate that part-time work has been the solution for women in combining employment and family obligations. Part-time work is quite uncommon, both for men and women in Latvia. There has not been an increase in women working part time, rather, there has most probably been a decrease.

Figure 7: Work hours by gender, 1994 and 1999



The standard workweek is set to 40 hours in legislation. In 1994, 85,8 percent of men and 72,9 percent of women worked 40 hours or more. In 1999, 89,4 percent of men and 77,6 percent of women worked 40 hours or more. The average hours worked per week in the main job was in 1999 45.6 hours for men and 41,6 hours for women. Although women have strong ties to the labour market in terms of working hours, this does not necessarily reflect their wishes. It could also be a sign of a labour market where there is little room for flexibility. I will return to this in a following section on the labour market behaviour of young mothers.

Income – revenue on time invested in the labour market

Regarding income, the 1994 Norbalt data did not include information on this subject. Data on gender income differences in 1994 are not available from official sources either, as official statistics from the Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia on this topic were not broken down by gender in the 1995 statistical yearbook. Official statistics comparing 1995 and 1999 indicate that the gender wage gap has remained relatively stable, with women earning 78,5 per cent of men’s earnings in 1995, and 79,7 per cent in 1999. There are great variations along activity sectors, from public administration and defence; compulsory social security where women earn 103 per cent of men’s earnings, to financial intermediation, where the percentage is 56,3. The reliability of these data can be questioned, as the hidden economy is believed to be substantial. The analysis of self reported wage income level in the Norbalt II data indicate that employed working age women have a monthly income of approximately 80 Ls, while men report to have an average of 111 Ls per month. This sets women’s earnings to about 72 per cent of men’s. While absolute certainty about the reliability of these data cannot be obtained, they should still provide a general picture of the relative differences. Men earn on average 22 per cent more than women per hour. When controlled for educational level, place of dwelling, work experience, whether the person holds citizenship or not, and ethnicity, the gender difference increases to 24 per cent (Aasland & Tyldum 2000b:18).

The combination of work and family

In general, the differences between men and women in terms of labour market participation are surprisingly small. One particularly interesting result is that there is no significant difference in the unemployment rates of working age men and women in 1999. At the same time, Norbalt data show that 60 per cent of women above 18 in 1999 felt that women were discriminated in the labour market sometimes, often or very often. A further question consequently concerns the situation for women with children. Implied in the research in women in Eastern Europe mentioned above was a concern for mothers more than women as such. Women with children face the challenge of finding time more than other women, or in other words, can be presumed in general to have less of the time resources than women without children. The following section analyses the labour market situation of women with children in Latvia.

Women with and without children

This part of the analysis concerns the age group 18 to 35 to eliminate some of the effect of age by excluding women whose children have grown up and moved out. A negative effect of age is presumed to be considerable in the labour market (see for instance European Training Foundation 1999:12). Table 6 shows that there have been no changes in the labour force participation of women in this age group who do not have children.

Table 6: Labour force participation of women without and with children, aged 18 to 35 in 1994 and 1999

| | 1994 | | 1999 | |
|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| | Women with no child | Women with child(ren) | Women with no child | Women with child(ren) |
| In labour force | 82,0 | 76,4 | 81,5 | 84,9 |
| Outside labour force | 18,0 | 23,6 | 18,5 | 15,1 |
| Total (N) | 100 (124) | 100 (327) | 100 (130) | 100 (289) |

1994: $\chi^2 = 1.68$, 1999: $\chi^2 = 0.76$, women with no children 1994 to 1999: $\chi^2 = 0,016$, women with children 1994 to 1999: $\chi^2 = 7.09$

There has, however, been a significant increase in the labour market participation of women who have children, seemingly having a higher participation rate than women without children. This discrepancy between the groups may also be influenced by the relative increase in the number of students, meaning that more young women without children are students and as such outside the labour force. It should be noted that in the ILO definition, women, or men for that sake, on childcare leave from a job are classified as being in the labour force. This means that the data on women outside the labour force in 1994 are not entirely reliable, as discussed above, as women on maternity and childcare leave even if they had a job to return to, were wrongly classified as being outside the labour force.

Further, among those in the labour force, the employment and unemployment rates seem to have remained stable as shown in table 7. The differences between women with

and without children in 1994 may be noteworthy, as more women with children seem to have been outside the labour force in this year, and this might have absorbed some of the potential unemployment of mothers. This could partly explain why women without children seem to be unemployed more often. But still, the differences are quite small, and in fact non-existent in 1999.

Table 7: Employment and unemployment of women without and with children, aged 18 to 35 in 1994 and 1999

| | 1994 | | 1999 | |
|------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| | Women with no child | Women with child(ren) | Women with no child | Women with child(ren) |
| Employed | 79,2 | 84,4 | 83,2 | 83,4 |
| Unemployed | 20,8 | 15,6 | 16,8 | 16,6 |
| Total (N) | 100 (102) | 100 (251) | 100 (101) | 100 (241) |

1994: $\chi^2 = 1.2$, 1999: $\chi^2 = 0.001$, women with no children 1994 to 1999: $\chi^2 = 0.49$, women with children 1994 to 1999: $\chi^2 = 0.08$.

However, comparing tables 5 and 7, it seems that women in this age group are more often unemployed than the average working age population. If we compare with men in the same age group, the picture seems to be confirmed.

Table 8 and 9, which concern gender differences in the age group 18 to 35, differ from table 6 and 7 with respect to the individuals included in the analysis. Due to the structure of the data sets, described in chapter 5, information on mothers as compared to other women could only be obtained through aggregating information from the household roster. This had to be done by taking the responsible adult (RA) as the starting point, as family relations were defined in relation to this person. Consequently, the tables above concern individuals who are both RA and the randomly selected individual (RSI). In most cases, the RA in the household is the same person as the RSI, but in cases where the RSI was not able to answer the questions, a different RA was chosen. This could be a person who for instance had better insight than the RSI in the household economy or other matters covered in the household roster part of the survey questionnaire. Being both RA and RSI could be correlated with a stronger connection to the labour market. As a result, the part of the survey population included in tables 6 and 7 is not necessarily representative of the population as a whole, but can still be used to give an indication of the specific difference between women with and without children.

The impression of differences between women between 18 and 35 and men in the same age group is further strengthened when analyses are made with information based on the randomly selected individuals, comparing men and women in the same age group. The difference in labour force participation of women RSI in table 8 as compared to the RSI/RA in table 6 above does indicate that the latter group differs from the average population in terms of labour market connection.

Table 8: Labour force participation, men and women 18-35

| | 1994 | | 1999 | |
|----------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| | Men | Women | Men | Women |
| In labour force | 88.2 | 77.9 | 83.3 | 76.9 |
| Outside labour force | 11.8 | 22.1 | 16.7 | 23.1 |
| Total (N) | 100 (414) | 100 (456) | 100 (349) | 100 (433) |

1994: $\chi^2 = 15,6$, 1999: $\chi^2 = 4,93$, men 1994 to 1999: $\chi^2 = 3,55$, women 1994 to 1999: $\chi^2 = 0,01$.

The labour force participation of men seems to have declined. There has been an increase of students among men as well as women, as shown in figures 5 and 6. Far more interesting are the employment rates, as shown in table 9.

Table 9: Employment and unemployment, men and women 18-35

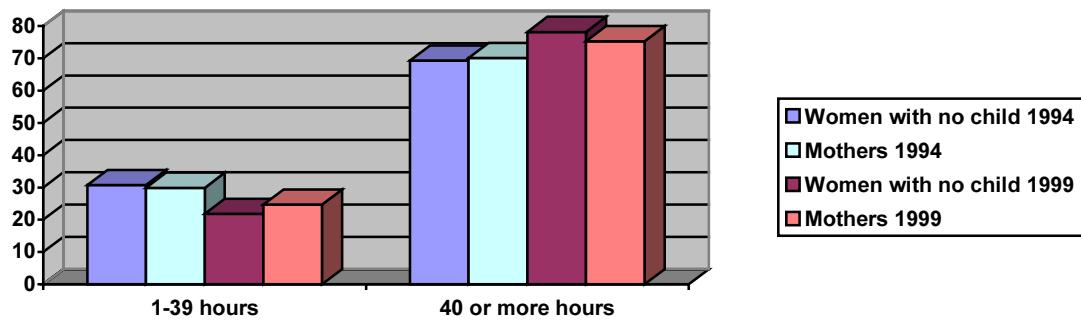
| | 1994 | | 1999 | |
|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| | Men | Women | Men | Women |
| Employed | 82.3 | 80.8 | 89.5 | 81.2 |
| Unemployed | 17.7 | 19.2 | 10.5 | 18.8 |
| Total (N) | 100 (363) | 100 (355) | 100 (289) | 100 (335) |

1994: $\chi^2 = 0,33$, 1999: $\chi^2 = 8,59$, men 1994 to 1999: $\chi^2 = 7,24$, women 1994 to 1999: $\chi^2 = 0,048$.

Men in the age 18 to 35 seem to be significantly less often unemployed than women in the same age group in 1999. This could mean that women in this age group are subject to statistical discrimination, based on presumptions that if they have children they will be less committed to their jobs, and further, that if they do not have children, they probably soon will have.

Returning to women with and without children, the work-hours of these two groups are quite similar as shown in figure 8. In 1994 the mean work-hours were 41.1 hours per week at the main job for both women with and without children, while in 1999 the corresponding numbers were 42.9 and 40.3. It is interesting that there is so little variation in the average work-hours, among those who work, the majority works full-time or more almost irrespective of their family situation. An analysis of the work-hours of women with children in different age groups not shown here, seems to confirm this; employed women with children in the youngest age-groups had average work-hours very similar to others. This could imply a relatively rigid labour market with little room for individual solutions. In addition, the average length of the working week may indicate that work and family are rather hard to combine.

Figure 8: Weekly work hours at the main job, share of employed women with and without children, aged 18-35, 1994 and 1999



The differences between women with and without children are very small, and in some cases non-existent, as in employment rates in 1999. Mothers seem to participate just as much in the labour market as women without children, and the two groups have identical employment rates in 1999. The impression given by the reasons given not to apply for work among those outside the labour force seems to be strengthened; there is little reason to believe that women in general give priority to spending their time in the family rather than the labour market.

Single mothers and mothers living in couples

The differences between single mothers and mothers living in couples are interesting with regards to how important the family situation is for women's work, and may give some indication of the dependency on a family. As pointed out in the section on state provision, the support model presupposes the presence of a provider, and consequently, the necessity to work can be presumed to be more pressing for single parents. The size of the survey population is too small for meaningful significance testing, so these results raise questions more than answer them. They are included since I have not yet seen any documentation of differences in labour market behaviour between these two groups, and the results should be seen as indicative, not conclusive.

Table 10: Labour force participation of single mothers and mothers living in couples, aged 18 to 35 in 1994 and 1999

| | 1994 | | 1999 | |
|----------------------|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| | Single mothers | Mothers in couples | Single mothers | Mothers in couples |
| In labour force | 87,0 | 76,3 | 87,4 | 73,3 |
| Outside labour force | 13,0 | 23,7 | 12,6 | 26,7 |
| Total (N) | 100 (48) | 100 (220) | 100 (55) | 100 (182) |

1994: $\chi^2 = 2,64$, 1999: $\chi^2 = 4,76$, single mothers 1994 to 1999: $\chi^2 = 0$, mothers in couples 1994 to 1999: $\chi^2 = 0,47$

However, there may still be a noteworthy difference between single mothers and mothers in couples in 1999 as shown in table 10; single mothers seem to have a much higher labour force participation. This may be indicative of less choice in whether to participate in the labour force or not, which could also be reflected in the unemployment rates that appear to be lower for single mothers, as shown in table 11. There is little reason to believe that employers would prefer single mothers to mothers in couples, so this should rather be interpreted as a consequence of the choices that women make of where to invest their time.

Table 11: Employment and unemployment of single mothers and mothers living in couples, aged 18 to 35, in 1994 and 1999

| | 1994 | | 1999 | |
|------------------|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| | Single mothers | Mothers in couples | Single mothers | Mothers in couples |
| Employed | 82,5 | 83,3 | 85,6 | 80,5 |
| Unemployed | 17,5 | 16,7 | 14,4 | 19,5 |
| Total (N) | 100 (42) | 100 (167) | 100 (48) | 100 (133) |

1994 $\chi^2: 0,04$, 1999: $\chi^2 = 0,61$, single mothers 1994 to 1999 $\chi^2 = 0,15$, mothers in couples 1994 to 1999: $\chi^2 = 0,40$.

The labour market behaviour of single mothers could indicate that the dependency on a family or on the labour market is quite strong when children are born, as state provision is hardly sufficient to sustain a living. This is reflected in the lower rates of single mothers that are outside the labour force, and most likely also in the employment rates. The higher employment rates of single mothers may indicate a larger degree of flexibility or willingness to take a job below their qualifications, while mothers in couples may more often have the opportunity to look for a job they find more suitable. On the other hand, as pointed out in the beginning of this paragraph, these results are based on too small a sample for any firm conclusions to be drawn. It does however seem that the situation of this group in Latvia should be further examined, as there are strong indications that this is a very vulnerable group. This is further discussed in chapter 8 in connection with the economic situation for families with children.

Conclusions on access to the labour market

Women in general have high labour force participation and high employment rates. There is not a significant difference between the employment and unemployment rates of men and women in 1999. Men do work significantly longer hours than women do, but both men and women work predominantly full-time. Short part-time work is relatively uncommon among women in Latvia; only 6 per cent of employed women worked less than 21 hours per week in 1999. The concern expressed by many researchers that women would withdraw in large numbers to the private sphere doing unpaid work and consequently experience a deterioration in their opportunities seems to have been unfounded in the case of Latvia.

Women with children are very similar to others with regards to labour market behaviour; they have high labour force participation, relatively high employment rates and work predominantly full-time. Young women in general are, however, more likely to be unemployed than men in the same age group. Further, the situation of single mothers may be taken to indicate that state support is not sufficient for opting out of the labour market.

In short, the findings of Fodor and van der Lippe in Eastern European labour markets in the early 1990s are to a large extent similar to Latvia in the second half of the decade; women's position in the labour market has not significantly deteriorated. The question stated at the beginning of this chapter concerned what women do, faced with the financial needs of the family and at the same time an increased difficulty in combining the two spheres. The answer seems to be that they keep working, and furthermore, that they invest quite a lot of their time in the labour market, as reflected in the average working hours.

The next chapter considers the family; in relation to attitudes towards work and family, the economic situation of families with children, and finally, fertility change.

8 The relationship between work, family and family change

So far, the analysis has aimed to establish that the opportunity for women to enter into the labour market did not necessarily deteriorate as compared to men, but that work has most likely become quite hard to combine with a family, in particular with small children, as state provision of kindergartens went down dramatically after 1991. In addition, based on the results presented in chapter 7 it seems reasonable to conclude that entry into the labour market demands a lot of time, which could also be assumed to make the combination of work and family more difficult. Further, it has been showed that women do enter into paid employment, that they do not to any large degree withdraw from the labour market in favour of spending time in the family, and that they work predominantly full time or more.

Based on assumptions outlined in chapter 4, regarding the limited nature of the time resource and the necessity of financial resources, the question in this chapter concerns family change and the family in relation to work. The necessity to work is further discussed from the perspective of family economy, and fertility changes is examined in light of whether less time is invested in the family arena at the aggregate level.

However, firstly, before moving on to family economy and fertility change, the family is considered in relation to individual attitudes to work and family. At the structural level, social provision was considered as a regulatory factor for the relationship between the two arenas, influencing the choices that can be made. At the individual level, attitudes may express preferences for choices of where to invest time. This section draws mostly on previous empirical studies from Latvia, as information on this is not obtainable through the Norbalt data, apart from one question regarding gender discrimination in the labour market, which can be seen as an indicator of consciousness of gender issues.

Secondly, the economic situation of families with children is examined. The low level of wage compensation and help to cope with extra expenses related to children means that having a child increases the necessity for mothers to work in order to provide for the family. This can be reflected in the low rates of part time work and in the low number of housewives. The family is considered as a part of the income insecurity, suggested by Ranjan (1997) as an explanation for falling fertility rates in Eastern Europe. The general situation for families provides the framework for individual actors' assessment of opportunities and how their resources or outcomes may be affected by certain choices. For families where there already are children, their practical experience of the consequences of having children also goes into their circumstances when deciding whether to have more children. This part is documented by Norbalt data, which provides detailed information about the situation of households.

Third, the family is considered as a site of change, in the perspective that women do make choices of where to invest their time. The reasoning behind this is that social provision plays an important role in meliorating the conflict between work and family, and that social provision has deteriorated during the 1990s. Consequences have not been seen to the expected degree in the labour market, so changes could be seen in the family, as a consequence of the general income insecurity and the need to invest time in the labour market.

The birth of fewer children may have the effect to strengthen women's labour market position at the aggregate level. One aspect is that there are fewer mothers among women as a group, and in particular fewer mothers with young children. For mothers *with* young children there has been a substantial increase in the availability of childcare facilities. As will be remembered, there was an increase in kindergarten enrolment of 0 to 5 year olds from 23 per cent in 1994 to 40 per cent in 1999, entirely accounted for by the drop in birth numbers. This change was paralleled by a corresponding decrease in the share of children under 6 looked after by a relative in the household, which in most cases can be presumed to be the mother. The provision of the time resource has consequently become significantly better, though not through an effort from the state, as discussed in chapter 6. This part on family change draws mostly on official statistics, with some additional information from the Norbalt data.

Attitudes to work and family

As previously pointed out, the initial concerns with women's situation in Eastern Europe seemed to some degree to be based on two aspects; presumptions about state provision's role in securing women's participation in the labour market, but also a traditionalist rhetoric which was very common in at least the beginning of the 1990s.

Among researchers, much attention has been given to various political statements in Eastern Europe about women's roles as mothers and housewives as a cure for various societal ailments. Jaqueline Heinen refers to an "...*official discourse on sending women back home to decrease unemployment levels*" (Heinen 1997:591). These kinds of statements were also quite common in Latvia, for instance former Prime Minister Valdis Birkavs did allegedly say in the early 1990s that returning women to the home would solve problems with unemployment⁷. Concerns have been expressed with regards to a political rhetoric promoting fertility in the name of the nation. Like Renner and Ule, writing about women and nationalism, Stukuls (1999) claims that (Latvian) women are primarily seen as mothers under the new auspices of nationalism. The fact that Latvians were well on the way to becoming a minority in their titular republic has underscored the primary role for women as mothers in broad segments of the population (Stukuls 1999:541) She claims that there is political support for a model in which mothers stay at home with children instead of using public child care. The question remains with regards to the strength of

⁷ Conversation with researcher Ilze Trapenciere, in Riga, May 2001.

this rhetoric. For instance, if the policy in Latvia has been aiming to raise fertility and return women to the home, it must be judged not only unsuccessful, but a spectacular failure.

Ilze Koroleva (1997) has analysed the relationship between perceptions and reality with regards to gender roles in the family among people in Latvia, based on Latvian ISSP data on the family and changing gender roles from 1996, in which respondents gave their ratings of various statements relation to the roles of husbands and wives in the family. This analysis shows that there are three dominant attitude 'clusters', but also numerous contradictory positions, when respondents gave conflicting ratings of the same value indicators. Further, the analysis showed that the lives of those who hold the attitudes were not necessarily corresponding to the views that were expressed.

The first type of attitude can be said to be traditionalist-patriarchal; reflecting a biological view of gender based on 'natural' division of labour. Those who held this view were typically quite young, while older people had a negative perception of this attitude. The majority of those who held this view were women, full-time workers and with relatively high earnings. The view was more common in rural than in urban areas, and more common among Latvians than among other nationalities. The second type of view is also traditional, but with a stronger focus on motherhood. The characteristics of those holding this attitude are quite similar to those above, and both views are more common among families without children. The last attitude is the egalitarian, more individualist view. This was typically held by people who were older than those tending towards the two first attitudes, with average or slightly higher earnings, mainly Russian or other non-Latvian groups, middle level education and typically married, with children.

In the groups holding the different views there was little variation in the distribution of household tasks, and the general tendency is that division of labour follows a 'natural' difference. Women spend almost twice as much time on housework as do men. When it comes to the handling of money, most couples pool their resources together and make joint decisions, each taking out what they need. In those families where one of the partners manages the economy, it is more common that the woman rather than the man does this.

It is interesting that younger people seem to be more 'conservative' than older generations in the view of gender roles. The author suggests that this group may be more susceptible to influence from the media, and that during the 1990s, an ideology that promoted traditional family values for women was endorsed. There is a gap between what is accepted at a theoretical level and what is possible in practical terms, and the author argues that there is a fluid view of gender roles and not one that clearly dominates. The difference between perceived ideals and reality indicates that the behaviour of individuals is more influenced by economic circumstances than by stereotypes and norms, and she says that it is hard to tell what will happen when the economic situation stabilises (Koroleva 1997:301-310). A basic comparison of changes between 1994 and 1999 suggests that a stronger economy will not push women towards a traditionalist life, as shown in chapter 7. Women seem to have at least sustained their position in the labour market in this period.

This discrepancy between expressed attitudes and practice is a very interesting aspect in, though not unique to, the transition countries. It could be that the inconsistency in gender roles and preferences indicates a change process, where the present situation is interpreted as out of the ordinary, and that normality is something to be found either with reference to the past or the future, as represented by a different system. A very interesting experiment in Estonia involved showing people pictures of families, and then asking them which picture most resembled their own. It turned out that most people pointed to a picture of a seemingly happy family, two parents and children, in nice clothes and looking healthy, even though their own situation could involve divorce, alcoholism or abuse⁸. If this is a reflection of some sort of 'transitory state of mind', we should be careful not to conclude about the present situation based on statements about values and attitudes. Simply, if politicians state that women should 'return' to the home and hearth, it should not be taken as evidence that this is actually going to happen. We need to have a close look at the policies that exist and try to evaluate their effects. As shown in chapter 6 on social provision, there is little in Latvian policies today that encourages women to withdraw from the labour market in favour of raising a family. Similarly, at the individual level, even if there were evidence saying that women wanted to become housewives, we need to look at what they actually do. Chapter 7 shows that women have high participation rates and long work hours, and also that a substantial share of women do invest in their future in the labour market by getting education, seemingly to a greater extent than men do.

Analysis of a 1997 survey (Zepa et al 1998) of employed men and women confirms women's commitment to paid work, and not only for financial reasons. In general, the attitudes of men and women are very similar in the rating of paid work – 80 per cent of women and 86 per cent of men say that work is the most important aspect of human activity. Women also tend to place high value on the social contacts they get through work, and like men, on aspects of self-fulfilment, such as feeling that the job is important to society. At the same time, more than two thirds of women expressed a wish not to work full time, rather giving preference to long part time work of between 20 and 39 hours a week if given a free choice, while 58 per cent of women say that they wish to work longer hours in order to make more money (Zepa et al 1998:34). This is most likely a reflection of the lack of time felt by a lot of women in the combination of work and family, which is also pointed out by the authors of the analysis. The same survey also shows the very interesting result that when asked whether they would like to work in a salaried job even if they did not need the money, 46 per cent of women say that they would, while 27 per cent of men say the same.

In short, women do seem to have a strong motivation to work, both out of necessity, reflected in the discrepancy between choice of working hours under ideal conditions and the wish to work more to earn more money, and as a part of their identity, as indicated in the willingness to keep working even if the salary was not needed. At present, it

⁸ As told by researcher Jørgen Lorentzen at seminar in preparation for the Norwegian delegation to the Conference WoMen and Democracy (Vilnius), at the Norwegian Ministry for Families and Children, 7 June 2001.

would be reasonable to assume that necessity is a very important factor. Eglite & Zarina (1999) conclude in their analysis of time use data:

“Women in Latvia need material security not only because of subjective considerations such as affirmation of professional skills and accomplishments, but also because they are contributors to family budgets in a country where a single salary is usually insufficient to provide for children. Women also have to provide for themselves when families collapse. The likelihood of premature death is three to four times higher among men of working age than women at the same age. Knowing this, women understand that they must preserve their jobs and their earning abilities so that they can provide for themselves and their children. This means that a reduction in the overall workload of women is unlikely to happen at the expense of paid work”. (Eglite & Zarina 1999:160-161).

Consciousness of gender issues

The Norbalt data show an interesting development in perceptions of gender discrimination in the labour market. These data are used here as an indication of attitudes and consciousness of gender issues and gender inequality in the labour market. As discrimination is a negatively valued word, as opposed to ‘natural’ or ‘voluntary’ difference, expressed awareness of discrimination may be taken as an indicator of the view that women have the right to be treated on equal terms with men in the labour market.

Table 12: In general, how often are women discriminated against at work? Men and women over 18, 1994 and 1999

| | 1994 | | 1999 | |
|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| | Men | Women | Men | Women |
| Never/seldom | 39,7 | 33,2 | 32,2 | 25,2 |
| Sometimes | 21,1 | 22,4 | 28,8 | 31,4 |
| Often/very often | 18,7 | 21,0 | 20,5 | 28,2 |
| Do not know | 20,5 | 23,4 | 18,4 | 15,1 |
| Total (N) | 100 (1275) | 100 (1825) | 100 (1195) | 100 (1847) |

Source: Norbalt data. Df = 3, critical value at 1 % level: 11,35 1994: $\chi^2 = 14.31$, 1999: $\chi^2 = 36.34$, men 1994 to 1999: $\chi^2 = 26,35$, women 1994 to 1999: $\chi^2 = 98,69$,

First, the differences between men and women were smaller in 1994 than they were in 1999. In 1994, 43,3 per cent of the women, and 39.8 per cent of the men felt that women were discriminated against at work sometimes, often or very often. In 1999, 59.6 per cent of the women, and 49.3 per cent of the men held the same view. In an analysis of this material from 1994, Birgit Jacobsen writes that it is hard to tell whether the surprisingly small difference between men and women is caused by women’s lack of gender consciousness, or that men actually understand that women are discriminated against (Jacobsen 1996: 183). There is an increase, in particular among women but also among men, in the share that feel that women are disadvantaged.

However, one of the most interesting aspects in these numbers is the share who have answered that they do not know if women are discriminated against. While there were relatively more women than men who gave this answer in 1994, in itself an interesting phenomenon, this relationship is reversed in 1999. Further, the share of women answering do not know has fallen from 23.4 per cent in 1994 to 15.1 per cent in 1999, that is by more than 8 percentage points. Men also answered 'do not know' more often in 1994, but their share has fallen by only 2 percentage points. This could indicate a growing consciousness in particular among women on issues of gender discrimination in these years. This is also in line with observations made by Astrida Neimanis, who in the period in question has worked with gender issues in Latvia, primarily through the UN system. She says that there has been a substantial change in the latter half of the 1990s with regards to gender consciousness, and that there has been a change in focus from general human rights to social inequality and injustice⁹.

Consequently, there seem to be certain traits drawing in the direction of the first alternative suggested by Jacobsen as an explanation for the small gender differences in perceptions of discrimination in 1994. As the differences between men and women have increased while at the same time, women have retained their position in the labour market, it could be an indication that women in 1994 were more seldom conscious of gender discrimination, and that there may have been a change in this area in the following years. The premise for this argument is that there has not been a substantial increase in the level of discrimination experienced by women, which is hard to say, so quite a bit of caution should be displayed. If there really has been an increased consciousness concerning gender discrimination, it is an interesting development in relation to former research, which has frequently identified a lack of interest for gender issues among women in the post-communist countries, or a tendency for women to accept that there are differences between men and women in relation to the labour market (see for instance Einhorn 1993).

The economic situation of families with children

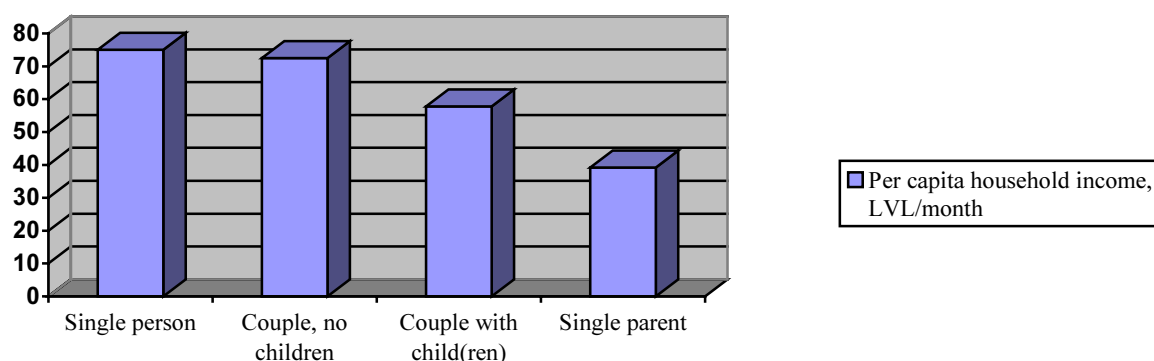
A sad fact in the development of poverty in Latvia in the 1990s is that the presence of children in the household is one of the most important factors that increase the risk of poverty. The risk also gets larger with each additional child. The connection between the presence of children in the household and an increased risk of poverty is broadly documented (see for instance Gassmann 2000, Grønningsæter et al 2001, Ministry of Welfare 2000). Norbalt data show that 30.5 per cent of households with one or two children are in the lower income quintile, as are 58.4 per cent of households with three or more children.

The mean household per capita income for all households in Latvia was in 1999 61.7 Ls. It was highest in households with no children under 18; at 75 Ls for single person

⁹ Conversation, Riga, August 2000.

households and 72.5 Ls for couples without children. In households consisting of couples with one or more children, however, it was 57.8 Ls, for single parent households it was only 39.2 Ls. For single parent households with two or more children, the mean household per capita income was 29.2 Ls, one Lat more than the lowest poverty line identifying the very poor (as discussed in chapter 6 in the section on social provision). 55.6 per cent of single parent households with two or more children have a household per capita income of 28 Ls or less.

Figure 9: Mean per capita household income in selected household types, 1999



Source: Norbalt data

Not only the presence of children, but also the number of children in a household strongly influences the household economy. While the average household per capita income in households with one child is 64.1 Ls, when the number of children increases to two, it is 53.3 Ls. The corresponding number for households with three or more children is 40.6 Ls.

According to Grønningsæter et al (2001) it is a common trait for income maintenance to be more efficient for older than younger age groups. This is also the case in Latvia. The authors analyse the poverty reduction effect of government transfers in different age groups, as shown in table 13. The table is based on measurement of the household income in the households in which individuals in the listed age groups live.

Table 13: Poverty reduction effect for different age groups

| Age groups | 0-14 | 15-24 | 25-49 | 50-64 | 65+ |
|---|------|-------|-------|-------|------|
| Proportion of poor* before transfers | 40 | 34 | 30 | 47 | 81 |
| Proportion of poor* after transfers | 26 | 20 | 17 | 9 | 3 |
| Poverty reduction coefficient (R) ¹⁰ | 35,0 | 41,2 | 43,3 | 80,9 | 96,3 |

Source: Grønningsæter et al 2001:34. *: 50 per cent of median per capita household income

¹⁰ Poverty reduction coefficient (R): Estimated as pre-transfer poverty rate minus post-transfer poverty rate divided by pre-transfer poverty rate multiplied by 100. The higher the value of R, the larger the proportion of the population that has been lifted above the poverty line by income transfers. Maximum value: 100, minimum value: 0. (Kangas 1999:34)

Table 13 shows that the highest proportion of poor after transfers is found in the youngest age group, and that consequently children are the most vulnerable group. The poverty reduction by government transfers for this group is very low and, in particular when compared with the two highest age groups, where virtually all the poor are protected by transfers (Grønningsæter et al 2001:33-34). This also supports what was pointed out in chapter 6; Latvia does not have a strong support model for families with children.

The economic situation of families with children indicates that the majority of people do not have the opportunity to choose a home-based existence. The mean household per capita income of all families with children is well below the minimum consumer basket, and much lower for single parents. It should be remembered that the vast majority of single mothers, at least in the younger age groups do have paid employment, as shown in chapter 7.

Family change

As indicated in the quote from Eglite & Zarina (1999) referred above, the family unit is not necessarily stable. As they point out, men's mortality rates have increased severely, and the gender gap in life expectancy at birth was in 1999 almost 12 years. This is a reflection of men's health and psychological troubles, and there is a considerable problem with alcoholism. Further, the divorce rate has been rather high, and growing (Trapenciere 1997:349).

Fertility in Latvia started to decline long before independence, but the development in the transition period from 1991 has been particularly disconcerting. In 1992 the number of deaths far exceeded the number of births, and this development has led to a strong negative natural increase in the population. While the number of inhabitants in Latvia was 2.670.670 in 1990, in 1999 the number had fallen to 2.431.789 (Latvijas Demografijas Gadagramata 2000:25). This was also influenced by emigration. Table 14 shows some indicators of fertility change in Latvia.

Table 14: Fertility indicators

| Year | Number of births | Birth rate per 1000 women aged 15-49 | Total fertility rate ¹¹ | Mean age of mother |
|---------|------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1978-79 | 35.534 | 53,00 | 1.87 | n.a. |
| 1985-86 | 39.751 | 64,00 (86-87). | 2.14 | n.a. |
| 1990 | 37.918 | 59,04 | 2.03 | 25,8 |
| 1991 | 34.633 | 53,92 | 1.86 | 25,3 |
| 1992 | 31.569 | 49,97 | 1.73 | 25,2 |
| 1993 | 26.759 | 43,16 | 1.51 | 25,1 |
| 1994 | 24.256 | 39,57 | 1.39 | 25,5 |
| 1995 | 21.595 | 35,44 | 1.25 | 25,5 |
| 1996 | 19.782 | 32,53 | 1.16 | 25,7 |
| 1997 | 18.830 | 31,02 | 1.11 | 26,1 |
| 1998 | 18.410 | 30,36 | 1.09 | 26,3 |
| 1999 | 19.396 | 31,99 | 1.15 | 26,4 |

Sources: Latvijas Statistikas Gadagramata 1992:64, Latvijas Demografijas Gadagramata 2000:88, 90, 145, 148, Zvidrins 1995:26. *: % of total births, ** per 1000 population aged 15 and over, n.a.: Not available.

The birth numbers, birth rate and total fertility rate all point in the same direction. All indicators have fallen by almost half during the 1990s. The birth rate per age also shows that this development is not caused by changes in the age composition of the population or by emigration. It is interesting to note that there was a small growth in all fertility indicators in 1999, but it remains to be seen whether this is the start of a new trend.

It can also be observed that the mean age of mothers at childbirth has increased somewhat. There have however been fluctuations during the decade, and comparing 1990 and 1999 the mean age of mothers are quite similar. The share of first births, not included in the table, has increased. While the share of all births that were first births in 1990 was 47 per cent, in 1999 it had increased to 50 per cent. It is primarily the drop in marital fertility that accounts for the falling birth numbers. The share of extramarital births has increased quite rapidly, as shown in table 15.

¹¹ Total fertility rate: The total fertility rate represents the average number of children that would be born to a woman during her life if the age-specific fertility rate observed in the year in question would apply for her whole life (Latvijas Statistikas Gadagramata 2000:39).

Table 15: Extra-marital births and marriage indicators

| Year | Extra-marital births* | Number of extra-marital births | Mean age at first marriage, men | Mean age at first marriage, women | First marriage rate, men ** | First marriage rate, women ** |
|---------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1980 | 12,5 | 4434 | n.a | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. |
| 1985-86 | 15,0 (86) | 6311 (86) | 23,7 (85) | 22,7 (85) | n.a. | n.a. |
| 1990 | 16,9 | 6401 | 24,0 | 22,2 | 17,7 | 15,0 |
| 1991 | 18,4 | 6368 | 23,9 | 22,2 | 16,8 | 14,1 |
| 1992 | 19,6 | 6182 | 24,0 | 22,4 | 13,9 | 11,7 |
| 1993 | 23,0 | 6151 | 24,3 | 22,5 | 10,9 | 9,0 |
| 1994 | 26,4 | 6409 | 24,5 | 22,5 | 9,2 | 7,5 |
| 1995 | 29,9 | 6452 | 24,8 | 22,8 | 8,9 | 7,2 |
| 1996 | 33,1 | 6540 | 25,1 | 23,2 | 7,6 | 6,3 |
| 1997 | 34,8 | 6553 | 25,7 | 23,6 | 7,5 | 6,2 |
| 1998 | 37,1 | 6823 | 26,0 | 24,0 | 7,4 | 6,1 |
| 1999 | 39,1 | 7576 | 26,2 | 24,2 | 7,2 | 6,0 |

Sources: Latvijas Statistikas Gadagramata 1992:64, Latvijas Demografijas Gadagramata 2000:88, 90, 145, 148, *: % of total births, ** per 1000 population aged 15 and over, n.a.: Not available

Table 15 also shows that the increase in numbers of extramarital births have not been quite as dramatic. For instance, in 1991, extra-marital births accounted for 18.4 per cent of the total number of births. In 1995, extra-marital births made up 29.9 per cent of the total number, but there were actually only born 84 more children outside of marriage in this year compared to 1991. Table 15 also shows that people marry at a later age, and that they marry less frequently. The mean age at first marriage has increased by two years for both men and women from 1991 to 1999, and the increase gained in strength from the mid 1990s. The first marriage rate per 1000 population of corresponding sex and age has fallen by more than half between 1991 and 1999.

In 1995 the number of registered marriages were half that of in 1990 (4.4 and 8.8 per 1000 population respectively). There are no official data available on the frequency of cohabitation, but the Norbalt 1999 survey included one question on this subject. Approximately 7 per cent of women in working age reported to be living with a partner other than a spouse.

A further interesting aspect is that only 45 per cent of new mothers in 1999 received the maternity benefit as based on a contribution wage. The majority of mothers were not eligible for this type of benefit (Ministry of Welfare 2000:40). This could indicate that the majority of children are born to mothers who do not work, but also that a number of those not eligible have worked, but in the grey or black economy, where social taxes are not paid. In any case, this must be considered a serious problem, as the maternity benefit based on the minimum wage (as discussed in chapter 6) places one close to poverty.

The Soviet Union was notorious for the contraceptive practice of abortions. An interesting detail in Latvia in the 1990s is that while the birth numbers have fallen, so have the number of abortions, and at a faster pace. In 1999, the number of abortions was for the first time in decades lower than the number of births, with 92 abortions per 100 births (Latvijas Demografijas Gadagramata 2000:95). This could indicate a change in the

degree of reproductive control and an improvement in the access to other methods of contraception.

Looking at the large relative increase in extra-marital births while at the same time the number has remained relatively stable, the low rate of children born to mothers who work (or are eligible for maternity benefits), the thought comes to mind that there could have been a relative increase in the number of unplanned births, and that those who do plan reproduction may have chosen to postpone having children. This is however more in the direction of guesswork, and no conclusive evidence can be presented.

There does seem to have been a change in the composition of families. The greater changes will, however, become more visible in the future, unless there is a strong increase in birth numbers. But even in the course of five years some changes *may* have become visible as shown in table 18.

Table 16: Households with children in 1994 and 1999

| | 1994 | 1999 |
|--------------------------|------|------|
| Households with children | 57,9 | 55,7 |
| Among them; 1 child | 44,4 | 48,7 |
| 2 children | 39,2 | 36,1 |
| 3 children | 11,5 | 10,2 |
| 4 or more | 4,8 | 5,1 |

Source: Norbalt data

There are fewer households with children in 1999 than there were in 1994. Among those households where there are children, to have one child has become more common. The changes in having more than three children are much smaller. It must here be remembered that the situation for these families is very difficult, which is also reflected in the actual number of households with three or more children, which are very few. Less than three per cent of Latvian households have three or more children, but among them, more than two thirds are poor (Gassmann 2000:75).

Conclusions on work and family, and family change

A higher valuing of the family over work can be found in terms of attitudes, but does not seem to a large extent to be expressed in practical consequences. Although there is indication of a 'new conservatism' in Latvia, in particular among younger people, there are also variations, and there is some indication that gender roles and expectations are under change. While the conservative attitudes that have caused concern about women's choices and possible consequences in other East European countries can be found in Latvia as well, there is little indication that this is reflected in practical choices, even among those who express support for 'conservative' gender roles.

This discrepancy between expressed preferences and the choices that are put into action may be influenced by the economic circumstances of many families with children. Since children are one of the most important factors increasing the risk of poverty, and

that in general, families cannot sustain a reasonable living standard on just one salary, there are limited opportunities to choose a home-based existence. As the household income for families with children shows, the necessity for women to work seems considerable. While chapter 7 showed that women do participate to a large extent in the labour market, this chapter has shown that in terms of having children, among the population as a whole, less time is invested in the family arena, and that this development has been quite steep and consistent during the 1990s.

9 Conclusions

The aim of this study was to illuminate the rather high labour market participation rates of women in Latvia in the 1990s, through a focus on the resources time and money, and the opportunity for access to the labour market arena. The explorative nature of the analysis sets certain limits to the strength of conclusions that can be drawn, however, several connections between the aspects considered can be suggested. The central elements that have been examined are the opportunity structure for women's entry into the labour market, and the framework provided by policy for the combination of work and family. Further, access to the labour market was considered, as reflected in women's participation rates and the time invested in the labour market arena. In addition, fertility decline has been discussed as a potential expression of less time to invest in the family arena, possibly reflecting the priority given to investment of time in the labour market due to need for financial resources.

The findings summarised

The results of this study suggest that the structural changes in the Latvian economy were not to the effect of pushing women out of the labour market as compared to men. Jobs in the male dominated parts of the industry were more at risk at the beginning of the 1990s, and throughout the decade the growth in certain sectors of services created many jobs that were seen as typically female occupations. At the same time, a decline in real wage levels increased the need for women to work, as most families could not live on a single salary. In addition, the deterioration in the level of family benefits contributed to the necessity for women to participate in the labour market. Simultaneously, work and family became harder to combine, due to the closing of kindergartens. This meant that while there were opportunities for women to enter into the labour market, both work and family demanded more of the time resource for investment, which could be presumed to have made a choice between the arenas necessary.

Regarding the expressions of a possible forced choice between work and family, this did seemingly not have the effect of leading to a decline in women's labour market participation. The results of this analysis show that women's labour market behaviour, in terms of participation rates and time invested in the labour market arena, is quite similar to that of men. General long working hours may indicate that the demand on time in the labour market can be assumed to further have made the combination of work and family difficult, and may also reflect a lack of negotiability in the labour market, due to a combination of competition and the need for financial resources.

On the other hand, it may seem that adjustments have been made in the family arena, as fertility rates have fallen dramatically during the decade. Lack of information means that no conclusive evidence with regards to the decisions behind deferring or foregoing family increase can be presented, i.e. whether fertility decline is in fact an expression of a choice between the work and family arenas. However, it could be suggested that women, when considering where to invest their time, would go for the labour market rather than the family. This suggestion would be based on the facts that financial resources of families have deteriorated, that work and family have become harder to combine because of the closing of kindergartens and the nature of a competitive labour market, also, that there is a necessity for women to invest their time in the labour market arena in order to contribute to the family budget or provide for themselves, and finally, that time is a limited resource.

Whether a prioritising of spending time in the labour market is one of the direct causes for fertility decline or not, the fact that there are born fewer children has had the effect of reducing the number of women who confront the potential conflict of combining work and family. Further, this also means that there are fewer people who compete over the resource of time provided by the state in terms of access to public childcare, which has eased the conflict between work and family for a substantial number of women with small children.

Discussion of the findings and possible implications for the future

It does seem that the opportunity for entering into the labour market is there, while the opportunity for combining paid work with a family is worsened, and consequently that choices may have to be made. In a way, this means that gender inequality is 'hidden'; it is women's own efforts and choices that alleviate the conflict between work and family. Hypothetically, if birth numbers had remained stable during the 1990s, there could have been larger gender differences in the labour market.

This also underlines the necessity of looking into other factors than women's labour market participation when considering gendered effects of the post-socialist transition. In the case of Latvia, if only women's access to the labour market is examined, the transition could be judged a relative success story compared to what was, quite reasonably, expected to happen. Taking the liberty of a small sidetrack, I would also argue that concerning the family institution, matters relating to power relations and reproduction of inequality are obviously and undeniably very important. These aspects do not, however, cover all that the family may represent. Positive effects of the family as a social anchor have been pointed to by for instance Jirina Siklova (1998), as discussed in chapter 4, in the sense that raising a family can have great importance for feelings of self-fulfilment or a sense of meaning in life. Others, for instance Sarah Ashwin (2000b), have identified the weak link of Soviet and post-Soviet men to the family and the importance of the labour market for men's identity as one potential factor in vulnerability to alcoholism,

leading to other health problems and pre-mature death, which again affects the situation of both women and children. One striking feature in a large part of the conversations I have had with people in Latvia is a widespread tendency, on the part of both men and women, to express that in many ways *men* can be seen as the losers of the transition, and that for women it has been easier to adapt to the new situation, as they are not as dependent as men on their work identity. The gendered effects of transition, for both men and women, is a complex issue that should be further examined.

Returning to the fertility decline in Latvia, several writers on gender and welfare provision have argued that in order to secure women's access to the labour market, policies must be used to move substantial parts of care away from the family and to the state, as briefly discussed in chapter 4 (see for instance Orloff 1993, Korpi 2000). What seems to some degree to have happened in Latvia is not a moving of care away from the family, but a *removal* of obligations and time constraints associated with having children, through choices made by a substantial number of individuals, most likely as a consequence of structural constraints, as surveys express a relatively large discrepancy between actual and desired family size.

If a choice to postpone having children has been an important factor in the fertility decline, this is important with regards to a future increase in fertility rates. The two elements at the ground for this decision according to Ranjan (1997) were income uncertainty and the *opportunity* to postpone the decision. Given that his assumptions were right and many people did postpone a family increase, this would mean that there are fewer people today than five or ten years ago who would perceive that they still have the opportunity to go for a postponement. This means that the recent increase in fertility does not necessarily reflect diminished income insecurity, but could also be an expression of a satisficing strategy, as a number of people may have realised that if they are going to have children at all, they have to do it now, regardless of being insecure about the future.

However, if the small increase in fertility rates is an expression of increased financial resources, and a lessening of income insecurity, this is a central aspect with regards to future developments. If more men become capable of providing for a family, it could also be that this would lead to an increased number of children born. If state provision is not improved, consequences could be seen in women's relationship with the labour market. For instance, as the share of children attending kindergartens has doubled because of falling birth numbers, the share having access to public childcare would decline correspondingly with increased birth numbers unless something is done by the state. Consequently, it could be that gender inequality in access to the labour market may become a more pressing issue if the general economic situation improves, and if children are still seen as a private responsibility. It seems that Latvia, and several other East European countries face a certain challenge, if both fertility and gender equality is to be taken seriously. Incentives to increase the birth numbers, if not followed by a critical view of developments in the labour market, may pose a certain threat to future gender equality in access to the labour market. This underscores the centrality of including the gender dimension in future studies of social developments in Eastern Europe.

In my view, this study indicates that it could be useful to focus both on actors and opportunity structure in the examination of post-socialist change and transition. The relationship between continuity and change makes predictions based on structural changes problematic, as the actors' responses to change are not necessarily given.

Another implication of the results in this study is the suggestion that policies should consider that securing women's access to the labour market could have positive effects for fertility, as there is strong indication that women both need to and want to work, but that they will often prioritise having a stable economic situation before having children. This also illustrates that what may initially be interpreted as "women's issues", such as women's access to the labour market, are also social issues, that is, issues of concern for the society as a whole, and not only for the life opportunities of individual women.

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Opportunities and Choices

This paper consists of a dissertation for the cand. polit. degree in sociology, written as a part of the project "Social Policy and Social Exclusion in the Baltic Countries". The paper concerns women's labour market participation in Latvia in the latter half of the 1990s and draws on analyses of data from the NORBALT living conditions surveys, conducted in 1994 and 1999. The subject explored is whether women were in fact pushed out of the labour market as a consequence of the vast changes in social policies during this decade. This was a common assumption in research on Eastern Europe dating mostly from the early 1990s. Later research - this paper included - has questioned whether this was really the case. A tentative explanation for women's higher than expected labour market participation rates is offered in the nature of structural changes in the labour market in the period and the dramatic changes in fertility. The question is related to general theoretical discussions on the impact of social policy on women's relationship with paid work and family obligations.



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