Balancing work and family life in Japan and four European countries: econometric analyses on mothers' employment and timing of maternity

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Preface

Before I first met Siv Gustafsson at the University of Amsterdam, I was already well acquainted with her research on day care, tax policies and women’s employment in Sweden and some other countries. I enthusiastically read her articles, which combine institutional aspects in various countries with economic and econometric analyses of women’s employment and fertility in a well-balanced way. I was very much inspired by her work, especially when detecting, for instance, a surprisingly close resemblance in the historical development of Dutch child-care policy to the Japanese one. Reading her studies gave me the idea to thoroughly compare Japanese family policies with those of European countries. I therefore contacted Siv who subsequently offered me the opportunity to pursue my research interests by working intensively with her at the University of Amsterdam.

We have written several papers on European countries, most of which have by now turned into publications. We also share many interests in the field of theoretical and empirical approaches to research on population and labour economics and our discussions also touch various other fields of academic and professional life. Our collaboration has over the years also developed into a nice and rewarding friendship, which ranges from regular visits to concerts in Amsterdam to excursions following participation in conferences. I would like to express my utmost gratitude to Siv for her expert supervision, assistance and intellectual comradeship.

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Working on the project ‘Standard and Non-standard Work in Japan, Europe and the United States’ widened the scope of my thesis. I would like to express my appreciation to Susan Houseman and Machiko Osawa, who organised this project and invited me to the conferences in Tokyo and Kalamazoo (United States). The contribution to this project led to Gustafsson, Kenjoh and Wetzels (2003) and Kenjoh, Gustafsson and Wetzels (2003), of which a revised version appears in Chapter 4 of this thesis. Chapter 5 is also based on a joint paper, namely Gustafsson, Kenjoh and Wetzels (2002a). The comments of Elisabetta Ruspini and Angela Dale to the paper are greatly acknowledged.

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I would like to reserve these last lines to express my deepest gratitude to my family. Without their continuous encouragement and support, I could not have completed my work on the thesis.

Eiko Kenjoh
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