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**Session 6 – Invited paper**

**ATTITUDES ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

Submitted by the Social and Cultural Planning Office and Statistics Netherlands \*

**I. INTRODUCTION**

1. Attitudes and stereotypes about the nature, behaviour and relations between men and women are considered as (one of the main) causes of the structural unequal division of power between men and women. This view is part of Dutch policies on the emancipation of women. In line with this view on the importance of attitudes, the Dutch government has launched several campaigns to change these attitudes and to raise more awareness about equality between the sexes. One of these campaigns was aimed at the prevention of sexual violence and was focussed on attitudes concerning what I call sexual manners and sexual harassment. An example of this campaign was a spot on television in which a dog has jumped up against the leg of a man who is standing next to a copy machine, whereby the dog is clearly sexually aroused. It was assumed that men would get a hint about how women feel, when men are 'coming too close'. Another example was a television spot in which one sees a boy and girl after an evening out. While hearing the song 'You can't always get what you want' (from the Stones), we see the boy pressing more and more for physical contact, while the girl clearly doesn't want this. Later on, we see the boy on the telephone, apologizing to the girl. And the next shot is that of the boy and girl, sitting on a terrace the next day, having a drink.

2. In order to measure the impact of the campaign, among other things opinions on sexual manners were canvassed. These polls all took place at the beginning of the nineties. With the development of the Emancipation monitor at the end of the 20th century, it was decided that a special survey would be carried out in order to get a picture of the opinions on several emancipation-matters among the population (EMOP<sup>1</sup>). We decided to use some of the items from the old poll on sexual manners and to add some new ones.

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<sup>1</sup> The EMOP-survey is carried out every two years among the participants to the Dutch CentERpanel. This is a telepanel with a representative sample of the Dutch population aged 15 years or older.

In this paper we will present some of the results. Besides we will go into the coherence between the items (scale) and the consistency of the attitude we measured.

## II. OPINIONS OF DUTCH WOMEN AND MEN

3. We start with a brief presentation of the different items and the ratings of the last poll. Table 1 contains the items on 'sexual manners', table 2 some items on battery. One can say that the first five of the items from table 1 refer to evaluations and opinions people have on different issues. Examples are how one interprets the behaviour of a woman offering a man a drink after going out for the evening, or that of a man gently slapping a woman on her buttock. Generally spoken, one can say that the opinions of the Dutch are rather positive (seen from a emancipation-perspective) and that the right of sexual self-determination by women is respected. But there are also less favourable outcomes. A rather large share of the men (32%) and women (17%) agree with the statement that a man who is married or who has a steady relationship, has a right to have sex with his partner.

4. The two other items (6 and 7) are more of a mixture of both an observation and an opinion. From those it is clear that relations and contact between the sexes still are a sensitive issue. Almost half of the men but also one third of the women find that women interpret men's behaviour too soon as sexual harassment.

Table 1 Some opinions of men and women on 'sexual manners', 2004 (%)

	Men			Women		
	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Agree	Neutra	Disagree
1 When a woman invites a man for a drink, after an evening out, this often means that she would like to have sexual intercourse	14	28	59	8	15	77
2 If a woman says no to sexual advances, she means no	89	8	4	93	4	2
3 If a man gives a gentle slap on the buttock of a woman, it is a compliment for her	8	15	77	3	11	86
4 In sexual intercourse a man should take the initiative	4	28	68	6	24	71
5 If a man is married or has a steady relationship with a women, he has a right to have sexual intercourse with her	32	25	43	17	20	63
6 Too often boys and men impose their will in sexual relations	49	35	16	51	34	15
7 Nowadays women interpret men's behaviour too soon as sexual harassment	45	32	23	30	35	35

Source: SCP (EMOP2004)

5. One can also see in the table that women and men often differ in their opinions on these items. Except for items 4 (In sexual intercourse a man should take the initiative) and 6 (Too often boys and men impose their will in sexual relationships) the differences between the sexes are significant.

6. Table 2 contains some items on battery of women. Again opinions of men and women are different. Women more often than men disagree with the statement that in cases of battery of women, both parties are to blame. Men more often than women find that the position of the police in cases of domestic violence should be one of reticence and less often that men who batter their wives should leave the house.

Table 2 Some opinions of men and women on battery of women, 2004 (%)

	Men			Women		
	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
When a man batters his wife, he should leave the house and not the woman (as is most often the case)	86	11	3	93	5	2
With battery of women counts: where two people fight both are to blame	19	18	63	10	17	73
In cases of domestic violence, the position of the police should be one of reticence	14	11	76	7	9	84

Source: SCP (E MOP2004)

7. In table 3 we present some findings over the years, by restricting ourselves to those items that have been part of the surveys in 1990 as well as in the three recent polls. Presented are the percentages of women and men with a positive attitude against women, or who - in other words - can be considered as 'sexually well mannered' and in favour of women's right to sexual self-determination. This means that in item 2 the percentages reflect the part of the male and female population that agree with the statement and in the other three the percentage of women and men that don't agree. In order to assess a positive trend all percentages should increase.

8. One can see that in general there is no clear progressive trend. Only the ratings at the statement '*if a woman says no to sexual advances, she means no*' show a distinct increase. Nine out of ten women and men agree with this statement. In the course of time, the percentage of men who disagree with the item that a slap on the buttock of women is a compliment has decreased. And when we disregard the poll from 1990, the same can be concluded for women. For the other two items, a progressive trend can be seen when comparing 1990 with 2004. But for the more recent three polls, the picture is different. Slight changes occur, but not always in a progressive direction. Looking especially at the poll from 2004 compared to the one from 2002, it seems that a certain backlash is taking place. Only on one item (If a woman says no to sexual advances, she means no) and then again only among men, the rates are more women friendly than before. We will come back to this issue of changes in opinions over time in the next paragraph, when we discuss the mean ratings of (different categories of respondents) on the attitude scales

Table 3 Opinions of men and women on sexual manners, 1990-2004 (%)

	men				women			
	1990	2000	2002	2004	1990	2000	2002	2004
2 If a woman says no to sexual advances, she means no (% agree)	78	80	85	89	78	92	94	93
3 If a man gives a gentle slap on the buttock of a woman, it is a compliment for her (% disagree)	84	80	78	77	85	91	87	86
4 In sexual intercourse a man should take the initiative (% disagree)	63	74	74	68	67	73	73	71
5 If a man is married or has a steady relationship with a women, he has a right to have sexual intercourse with her (% disagree)	37	39	44	43	44	60	65	63

Source: NSS 1991; SCP (EMOP 2000, 2002, 2004)

## II. ATTITUDE SCALES 'SEXUAL MANNERS' AND 'BATTERY'

9. Scales are generally considered to be a good instrument to measure attitudes. Since (to our knowledge) no valid scale exists to measure the attitude on sexual manners between men and women, we analysed the items from our survey in order to develop such a scale. The three items concerning battery of women were left out of this first analysis and treated as a scale on their own. For all three polls a principal component analysis was carried out on the 'sexual manners' items. They all resulted in one interpretable dimension, containing five of the seven items. This enables us to create an attitude scale on sexual manners, which have the same reliability (Cronbach's  $\alpha=0.60$ ) in all years.

Table 4 Factor loadings and explained variance 'sexual manners' -items

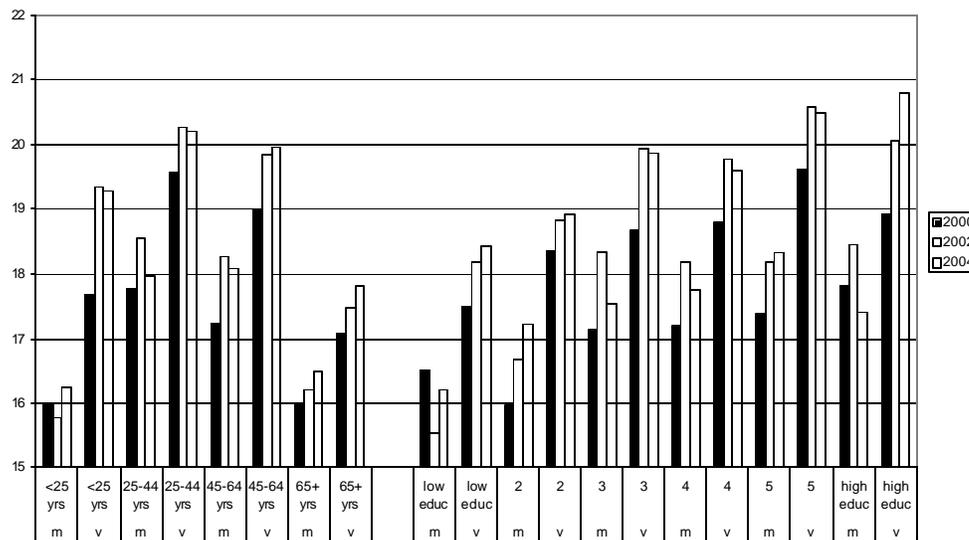
	2000	2002	2004
If a man is married or has a steady relationship with a women, he has a right to have sexual intercourse with her	0,69	0,69	0,72
When a woman invites a man for a drink, after an evening out, this often means that she would like to have sexual intercourse	0,67	0,66	0,65
In sexual intercourse a man should take the initiative	0,61	0,59	0,62
If a man gives a gentle slap on the buttock of a woman, it is a compliment for her	0,58	0,60	0,56
Nowadays women interpret men's behaviour too soon as sexual harassment	0,55	0,58	0,51
Explained variance (%)	39	39	38
Cronbach's Alpha	0,60	0,60	0,59

Source: SCP (EMOP 2000, 2002, 2004)

10. Figure 1 shows the ratings of women and men on the scales in the three years. Low scores indicate 'bad manners'. In order to emphasize the differences between the categories we have made the minimum scale value in the figure higher (the minimum value actually is 5 and the maximum 25). The differences between the categories are rather consistent in all three years: lower ratings among men, lower educated persons and younger as well as older persons. Especially, the ratings of the oldest age group are somewhat intriguing.

11. The ratings between 2000 and the later years seem to point at a progressive trend, but this might partly be explained by the differences in the answering categories that were used in the questionnaire (Keuzenkamp & Oudhof, 2002). Between 2002 and 2004 there are hardly any changes to be seen.

Figure 1 - Mean ratings on sexual manners scale by education, age and sex



Source: SCP (EMOP 2000, 2002, 2004)

12. The same procedure was followed in the analyses of the items on battery of women. Almost half of the items variance is common variance explained by the first factor, which can be denoted as a supportive attitude to women who are victims of domestic violence. The first item proves to be the most different item in the scale, which at face value might be somewhat surprising. One could possibly explain this by interpreting the scale as more related to the issue of guilt than the issue of sanctions. The reliability of this small scale is rather stable across the three years, although somewhat lower than the ‘sexual manners’-scale, in spite of the higher explained variance of the ‘battery’ -items.

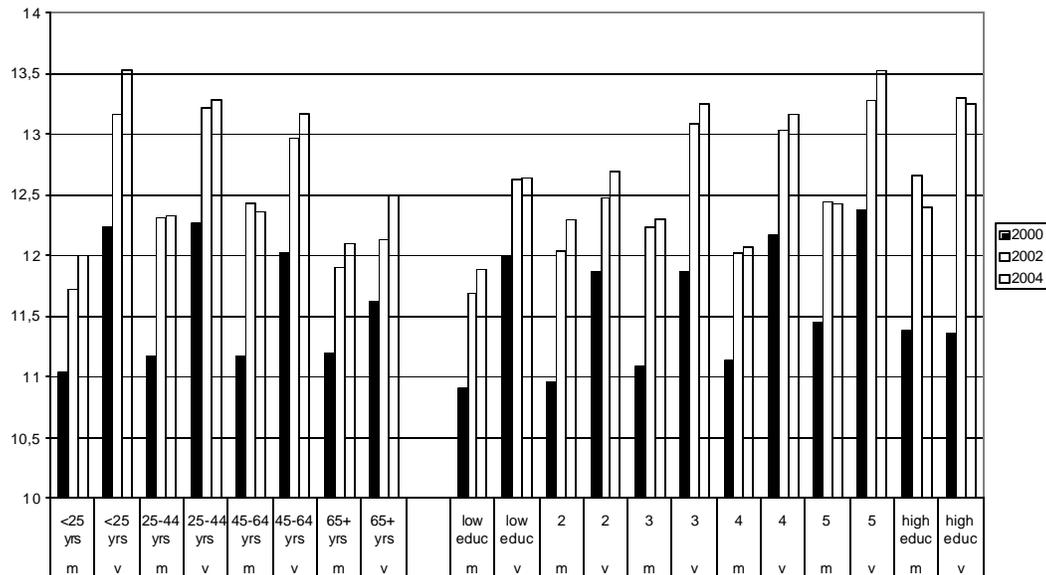
Table 5 Factor loadings and explained variance ‘battery’-items

	2000	2002	2004
When a man batters his wife, he should leave the house and not the woman (as is most often the case)	.60	.62	.61
With battery of women counts: where two people fight both are to blame	.78	.73	.71
In cases of domestic violence, the position of the police should be one of reticence	.67	.69	.70
Explained variance (%)	47	46	45
Cronbach’s Alpha	.42	.44	.40

Source: SCP (EMOP 2000, 2002, 2004)

13. The rating of the battery-scale is presented in figure 2. Higher scores indicate disapproval of battery of women. The interpretation conforms broadly speaking with the description of the results for ‘bad manners’ but with less variation.

Figure 2 - Mean ratings on battery scale by age, education and sex



Source: SCP (EMOP 2000, 2002, 2004)

14. We have used the results of these both scale analyses to throw some light on the meaning of the two items that were dropped in the first part of the analysis: ‘Too often boys and men impose their will in sexual relations’ and ‘If a woman says no to sexual advances, she means no’ (items 2 and 6 in table 1). The rotated factor loadings of a principal component analysis on the 2004 data in which both items as well as both scales (by using the factor scores) were used as variables, produced some clues on their interpretation of the items (table 6). The meaning of the item ‘If a woman says no....’ is clearly related to the attitudes to sexual manners and battery of women as represented in both scales. The other item ‘Too often boys and men...’ is hardly related to the other variables measures and clearly representing another underlying component<sup>2</sup>.

Table 6 Rotated factor loadings scales and items (varimax rotation)

	Factor 1	Factor 2
Too often boys and men impose their will in sexual relations	.644	.020
If a woman says no to sexual advances, she means no	.030	.987
Battery of women	.745	.175
Sexual manners	.784	-.111

### III. CONSISTENCY OF THE ATTITUDES

15. An interesting question is whether the attitudes of women and men are consistent over the years. Campaigns like the one we mentioned in the introduction start from the assumption that attitudes can be influenced by them. It is not possible to test this assumption, for there was no such campaign in the last ten years. But it is still interesting to see how stable the attitude of people on this issue seems to be.

16. For this aim tests for repeated measures were carried out. This was possible since the survey was carried out in a panel, and about 400 respondents participated in the survey in all

<sup>2</sup> Rather interesting might be that this item proved to have a very significant relation to the assessment of the participation of women in decision making in society.

three years. The analyses showed that the attitudes indeed are consistent over the period we studied. No significant differences in outcomes were found neither for the two attitudes, nor for the group as a whole and neither for subgroups based on variables like sex, age or education. An additional procedure was carried out to see whether there are differences when looking at paired comparison of the three measure points are looked at (in stead of looking for a trend as a whole) which also confirmed the conclusion that the attitudes are consistent<sup>3</sup>.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS

17. Measurement of opinions on sexual manners and battery of women gave reason to the conclusion that the Dutch seem to be rather well mannered, to respect the right of sexual self-determination by women and to be supportive to women who are victim of domestic violence. Most differences between women and men are relatively small. The opinions appear to be rather stable: no decline has taken place, but really no progression either.

18. It appeared very well possible to create two attitude scales out of the items, which are good, interpretable as indicating underlying attitudes that might be denoted as 'sexual manners' and 'supportive to battered women'. Although the level of the measures of homogeneity (explained variance and Cronbach's level) leave something to be desired, we can still conclude that the scales can serve very well as measurement instrument.

19. Although of course some differences in scale ratings between women and men, age groups and levels of education do exist, they are rather small and generally as expected (e.g. higher ratings for women and higher educated persons). Between 2000 and 2002 the ratings showed a general technically caused raise in level ratings arising from the use of different answering categories, but between 2002 and 2004 the results gave no change. Specific repeated measure analysis made clear that the consistency of both attitudes over time is high.

20. Looking at the substantial as well as the methodological aspects of the results, these might be qualified as encouraging. But some other considerations are needed which give reason to cautiousness in our conclusions. It should not be excluded that questions on topics like sexual manners or battery of women might elicit social desirable answers. Another argument to be cautious is the fact that no internal comparison is available. Finally, the development of measuring instruments of attitudes is only a first step. The validity as well as the value of the instrument is very dependent on the evidence that the instrument can improve the prediction of relevant behaviour. These considerations are at the same time reasons for further research and to be more specific, for research, which highlights international comparability. Until results of such research projects will be available, the Dutch should await more definite judgment.

#### V. LITERATURE

Keuzenkamp, S., & J. Oudhof, 2002, Engendering attitudes, Paper presented at the ECE Work Session on Gender Statistics, Geneva, 23-25 September 2002.

NSS (1991) *Nulmeting campagne preventie seksueel geweld. (Zero Measuring Campaign on Prevention of Sexual Violence)(In Dutch)* Den Haag: NSS Marktonderzoek.

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<sup>3</sup> The effect of the technical change in measurement by the use of different answering categories did not interfere here because standardised factor scores were used in the analysis.