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Domestic Service, Migration and the Social
Status of Women at Marriage
The Case of a Dutch Sea Province, Zeeland
1820-1935

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Abstract: Some scholars have seen female domestic service as a ‘bridging occupation’, facilitating the migration of women from the countryside to the cities and enabling them to make advantageous marriages and become upwardly socially mobile. However, previous research has yielded contradictory results with regard to the marriages of female servants. On the basis of 1800 marriage records, in this article it has been estimated how Social background, occupation and migration determined the Status at marriage of women in the province of Zeeland the Netherlands. in the period 1820-1935, When holding everything equal, just exercising the occupation of domestic Service didn’t result in marriages with men of higher social positions as could be expected given the Status of the job. However, living in a city by the time of one’s marriage, did indeed offer women greater chances on a high status marriage.

Introduction

Until the Second World War, domestic Service has been one of the most distinguishing features of West-European society. Probably going back as far as the Middle Ages, a period of Service and living-in with an employer was a quite usual part of the life-courses of many men and women. What did Service in the European past mean for the men and

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women involved? What was the effect of domestic service on the life chances of people? Different hypotheses have been formulated with regard to these questions. Generally, a division can be made between assumptions about the effect of service on the life-chances of people of on the one hand pre-industrial Service and on the other hand domestic service in the period of industrialisation.

The institution of pre-industrial service has been connected to the 'European Marriage Pattern', i.e. the relatively high age at marriage of women and the high percentage of women never marrying at all.¹ In a society where people generally married at a late age, service functioned as a distribution channel for the excess of unmarried adolescents. In this system, young men and women left the parental home and were trained in the households of employers until they were able to set up their own households. It has been shown that agricultural servants changed employers very often, but migrated over short distances within a local reservoir of countryside and cities.² This frequent change was related to a system of internal mobility within service. As servants grew older they acquired more strength and experience and accordingly rose in the service hierarchy. Although living and working in the employer household provided youth with a role model different from that of their parents, the run through the service hierarchy wasn't necessarily completed by upward mobility through work or marriage. It is assumed that pre-industrial service was more a life-course phase, preparing youth to function in society, rather than a training period which offered them chances to climb the social ladder. Basically, domestic service in pre-industrial Europe reproduced social conditions.

It has been argued by others, defending what I will call the 'bridging perspective', that during the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century, the nature of the institution of service and its effect on the life

¹ On pre-industrial service See for instance: John Hajnal, 'European Marriage Patterns in Perspective', in: D.V. Glass and D.E. Eversley (eds.), *Population in History*, London, 1965, pp. 101-14. John Hajnal, 'Two kinds of pre-industrial household formation Systems', in: Richard Wall (ed.), *Family Forms in Historic Europe*, Cambridge, 1983, pp. 79-104. Michael Mitterauer, 'Servants and Youth', *Continuity and Change*, vol. 1, 1990, pp. 11-38. Ann Kusmaul, *Servants in Husbandry in Early Modern England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981. Ann Kusmaul, 'The Ambiguous Mobility of Farm Servants', *Economic History Review* 34, 1981, pp. 222-35. Antoinette Fauve-Chamoux, 'Servants in Preindustrial Europe: Gender Differences', *Historical Social Research*, 23, 1/2, 1998, pp. 112-119.

² A good example of the geographical mobility patterns of agricultural servants gives Kusmaul, 'The Ambiguous Mobility of Farm Servants'. See also, Leslie Page Moch, *Moving Europeans. Migration in Western Europe since 1650*. Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press 1992, pp. 22-59.

chances of young men and women changed.³ Several social and economic developments lay at the basis of this change. First of all, during this period the demand for domestic servants by the growing urban middle-classes increased. On the other hand, crises in rural economies caused by the decline of rural industry, mechanisation and agricultural depression diminished the demand by farmers for regular, year-round servants. While the population in the countryside still increased, opportunities to make a living there declined. As a consequence, more and more young men and women moved permanently to the cities. The urban Service sector, so is argued, became a reservoir for the population surplus of especially rural women in the cities. It kept this function until alternative employment opportunities for women in other sectors of the labour market had broadened.

According to the bridging perspective, domestic Service not only facilitated the movement of rural women into the cities. Moreover, it also stimulated their adaptation to urban life. Through the experience of working in the homes of middle-class employers, rural women were able to acquire urban mores and values. Domestic Service thus enabled them to 'bridge' in a physical and a cultural sense to modern urban life. This process should have enabled them to make advantageous marriages and become upwardly socially mobile.

The idea of domestic service as a bridging occupation originates from the sociologists Broom and Smith.⁴ They defined bridging occupations as occupations which provide the holder of the job with the conditions and opportunities to move horizontally between occupational milieus. Such an occupation should have certain attributes: it should resocialize and redirect one's perspectives and aspirations, it should offer independence, provide access to information sources and offer financial opportunities in order to be able to change occupation. Domestic service seemed to possess all these attributes. Servants worked and lived in a different milieu than that in which they were born and came

³ On domestic service as a bridging occupation See: Theresa McBride, 'Social Mobility for the Lower Classes: Domestic Servants in France', *Journal of Social History* III, 1974, pp. 63-78 and Theresa McBride, *The Domestic Revolution. The Modernization of Household Service in England and France 1820-1920*. New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers Inc, 1976. Jannie Poelstra, 'Dienstboden tussen arbeiders en burgerstand', *Tijdschrift voor Vrouwenstudies* II, 1981, pp. 45-68. Jannie Poelstra, *Luiden van een andere beweging. Huishoudelijke arbeid in Nederland 1840-1920*. Amsterdam, Het Spinhuis, 1996, pp. 181-185. Penelope Wilcox, 'Marriage, Mobility and Domestic Service in Victorian Cambridge', *Local Population Studies* 29, 1982, pp. 19-34. Edward Higgs, 'Domestic Service and Household Production' in: Angela V. John (ed.), *Unequal opportunities. Women's Employment in England 1800-1918*. Basil Blackwell Oxford, 1986, pp. 124-50.

⁴ L. Broom and J.H. Smith, 'Bridging Occupations', *British Journal of Sociology* XIV, 1963, pp. 321-34.

in contact with the aspirations and values of the higher classes. The independence needed to take new routes was achieved because servants worked away from the parental home, had little contact with family and friends and in their work as a servant often decided independently over domestic matters. Via shop owners and colleagues, servants had access to information about other jobs. Domestic servants were particularly able to build up financial competence. They had a relative wage advantage over other female workers because they had free room and board and could probably save more of their wages. The fact that servants were regular customers at savings banks might be considered proof of this.⁵

McBride has applied the concept of the bridging occupation to nineteenth-century female domestic Service. According to her, whereas male servants might have used their job to transfer to positions outside the Service sector, female servants principally 'bridged' to higher status positions via marriage. In her study based on marriage records from Versailles for the period 1825-1853 and Bordeaux for the year 1872 she investigated the social backgrounds and the marriage patterns of French domestic servants. Most of them had rural backgrounds. Their fathers belonged to the agricultural proletariat of day workers and gardeners. Only one quarter of all servants with an agricultural origin had fathers who belonged to the independent class of farmers. In contrast to their backgrounds, these girls generally married men in non-agricultural occupations such as artisans and urban working-class men. On average one-third to a half of all domestic servants in Versailles and Bordeaux married men of a higher social Status than their fathers.⁶ Thus, it was concluded, Service functioned as a vehicle of upward mobility for rural-born girls.

McBride's bridging hypothesis has generated other research. In a study based on English marriage certificates from the city of Cambridge for the period 1847-1901, Wilcox compared the marriage patterns of English domestic servants to other female workers. Domestic servants in Cambridge significantly more often married men from social classes lower than those of their fathers than did other working women from the same social backgrounds.⁷ Contrary to McBride's conclusions, from her results it becomes clear that domestic Service was not a vehicle of upward mobility but rather a channel of downward social mobility. These negative findings were confirmed by Higgs in a study of mid-nineteenth century domestic servants in Lancashire based on marriage

⁵ McBride, 'Social Mobility for the Lower Classes', pp. 69-74. *Poelstra, Luiden van een andere beweging*, p.182.

⁶ McBride, *Social Mobility for the Lower Classes*, pp. 68-70.

⁷ Wilcox, 'Marriage, Mobility, and Domestic Service', pp. 31-2.

records from Preston covering the period 1851-1856. Servants within each of seven social economic groups tended to marry husbands of lower social standing than did other women from the same background. Again, servants did not appear to have been upwardly mobile. Thus, Higgs concluded, 'it may be too simplistic to view domestic Service as a 'bridging occupation' between the rural and urban world. It may have been a physical but not a cultural bridge'.⁸

So far, the studies based on the idea of domestic Service as a bridging occupation have generated contradictory results with regard to the marriages of female servants. However, because of the design and the applied methodological tools, the results of none of these studies are trustworthy. Since in McBride's study no comparison was made with other women it is difficult to interpret her findings. As long as one does not know anything about the social class of the fathers and the marriage partners of other working and non-working brides, results about upward or downward mobility have little value. In the study of Wilcox a comparison to other brides was made and she controlled the social background, but her study as well as that of Higgs is based on aggregate findings. Aggregate results can only uncover net changes of social status of whole groups under study but do not offer insight in the social mobility of individuals and its determinants. The question of 'which an individual female domestic servant was upwardly mobile through marriage and why' can not be answered.

Moreover, also as a consequence of their design, the above mentioned studies have not systematically included other determinants of the social status at marriage of women other than their occupation and their social background. Account should be taken more closely of the migration patterns of servants because it could well be that the variability in the distances and types of migration among servants might explain why some servants were upwardly mobile and others were not. In this article, it has been investigated from an individual-level perspective, what relative effects had the social background, the occupation and the migration patterns on the social Status at marriage of women. The research was carried out on the basis of 1800 marriage certificates from the province of Zeeland, the Netherlands.

The case of the province of Zeeland

The province of Zeeland is located in the south-western part of the Netherlands; its western part situated on the coast, and bordering on

⁸ Higgs, 'Domestic Service and Household production', pp. 141-43.

Belgium in the south. It consisted originally of several islands together with the district Zeeuws-Vlaanderen which is part of the Belgian mainland. At the turn of the century, the islands of Walcheren and Zuid-Beveland had become one long peninsular. Only Noord-Beveland, Schouwen-Duiveland and Tholen were left as proper islands.

Zeeland was a very sparsely populated province. In 1899, it had only 200,000 inhabitants out of a national population of five million people (4,24%) and was the second smallest province of the Netherlands in terms of its population.⁹

From the seventeenth century onward, Zeeland's economy was characterized by capital intensive, market-oriented agriculture specializing in the production of cash crops such as wheat, rape-seed, flax and madder. In Zeeland arable farming dominated. Some cattle was kept for the purpose of manuring but almost no butter and cheese were produced. Social structure in the countryside was far from egalitarian. A large gap existed between a small layer of rich grain-growing farmers and a mass of poor agricultural labourers, farm hands and maids. In Zeeland almost no cottage industry existed, so most labourers were dependent on wage-work. Beside agriculture, only the administration and Service sector, situated in the provincial capital Middelburg, was of some importance. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Zeeland could still be characterized as an agricultural province, without much industrialisation and a low degree of urbanisation.

Because of a major lack of connections with the rest of the Netherlands, Zeeland until far into the twentieth century remained a rather isolated area. Apart from that, the districts themselves were also relatively secluded from one another.¹⁰ Even in the first half of the twentieth century, there were still many people, especially farm labourers, who never left their island, not even their village.¹¹ The dispersed geographic setting of Zeeland had important consequences for the mobility of its population. Zeeland's rural population remained highly sedentary. In general, towns and countryside were relatively closed off from one another. Although farmers did go into the cities to sell their produce, there was no real integration between centre towns and its surrounding countryside.¹²

⁹ Michael Wintle, *Zeeland and the Churches. Religion and Society in the Province of Zeeland (Netherlands) in the Nineteenth Century*. Middelburg, 1988, p.38.

¹⁰ Jaap 't Gilde, *Zeeland met Goeree-Overflakkee*. Den Haag, 1993, p. 32.

¹¹ Jan Zwemer, *Een zekel om geit-eten te snieën. De geschiedenis van de landarbeiders op Walcheren - 1900-1940*, Middelburg: Fanoy Boeken, 1987, p. 10.

¹² Zwemer, *Een zekel om geit-eten te snieën*, 10. Maritha Jansen, 'Vrouwenarbeid in de landbouw in Groningen en Zeeland rond 1850; een vergelijking'. Doctoraalscriptie economische en sociale geschiedenis. Nijmegen, 1984, 17.

What were the most important occupations for unmarried women in nineteenth century Zeeland? The 1899 occupational census for the whole province of Zeeland registered 13381 unmarried female workers. Of this group, 51 % worked as domestic servants, 32% were employed in agriculture, 4% had an occupation in trade, 8%r were employed in industry and 5% held white-collar jobs. For the town of Middelburg separately, 1525 single women were registered: 72% (!) domestic servants, 13% in industry, 8% in white-collar jobs, 6% employed in trade and only 1% agricultural labourers.¹³ Domestic Service was both in the province and in the City of Middelburg the most important occupation for unmarried women.

Data

The data Set that was used for this paper is part of a large database called the Historical Sample of the Netherlands. The basis of the HSN database is a random Sample of 0.5% which is taken from the birth certificates in the period 1812-1922. The HSN data Set of marriages in Zeeland consists of 1169 marriages contracted in the province of Zeeland in the period 1820-1935.¹⁴ A sample of 700 marriages from the City of Middelburg for this period was added in order to be better able to examine the relation between rural-urban migration and marriage behaviour.¹⁵ Of all these marriage records, the following variables concerning bride and groom were used in the analysis: their occupations, the place of birth and the place of address at the time of the marriage, whether the certificate was signed or not, whether their parents were still alive at the moment of the marriage, the occupation of the father and whether he was able to sign the certificate.

A major problem by using marriage certificates is that only an approximately half of all marriage certificates an occupation for the bride was stated. The reasons for not recording an occupational title could be threefold. First, the bride may have been genuinely without a paid occupation. Secondly, she may have worked in the (work)shop or farm of her parents or worked only during the season and was therefore not considered by herself or by the registering clerk as being occupied. A third reason could be that she had given up her job before marriage. So unless we know more about the work histories of these brides from

¹³ *Uitkomsten der beroepstelling in het koninkrijk der Nederlanden gehouden op den een en dertigsten December 1899*. Vijfde deel: provincie Zeeland. 's-Gravenhage: Gebrs. Belinfante (CBS).

¹⁴ Historische Steekproef Nederlandse Bevolking (HSN), datarelease Zeeland 98.2.

¹⁵ Steekproef Middelburgse Huwelijksakten 97.1.

other sources, such as the population registers, we cannot be sure that they did have an occupation prior to marriage and thus have to mark them as having no occupation. Another difficulty regarding domestic servants is the fact that no distinction is made between servants working for the comfort of their employer (reproductive) and productive servants in the households of farmers and retailers.

Characteristics of Female Servants

Before we will assess what were the relative effects of social background, occupation and migration on the status at marriage of Zeeland women, an insight will be given in the specific characteristics of Zeeland domestic servants in comparison to other women in that province. What were their family backgrounds, their migration and marriage patterns? And were there any differences between domestic servants and other brides? And within each group were there changes in the respective distributions over time?

In order to describe the characteristics of Zeeland domestic servants in comparison to other brides, each time the distribution concerning domestic servants is compared to the distribution concerning other brides. Within each table, a distinction is made between two periods, namely 1820-1880 and 1881-1935. The first period represents the pre-industrial situation while the second period represents a period in which a wider array of occupations and possibilities opened up because of industrialisation. For each group of brides, the distributions for both time periods are also compared.¹⁶ Finally, separate tables are made for the provincial capital Middelburg and for the rest of the mainly agricultural province including some small towns.

Social class of fathers

Table 1 gives an indication of the social backgrounds of Zeeland brides in terms of the social class of their fathers. For this purpose, use has been made of an occupational hierarchy developed by Giele and Van Oenen in a version which was slightly adapted by van Poppel.¹⁷ It is an

¹⁶ Chi-square tests have been done in order to determine whether there indeed existed a significant difference between these distributions. It will only be explicitly noted when this was not the case.

¹⁷ J.J. Giele and G.J. van Oenen, 'De sociale structuur van de Nederlandse samenleving rond 1850', *Mededelingen van de Nederlandse Vereniging voor Sociale Geschiedenis*, 45, 1974, pp. 2-32; F. van Poppel, *Trouwen in Nederland: Een histo-*

ordinal classification consisting of five main groups: upper class, middle class, the independent farming class and the skilled and unskilled lower classes. In this paper the upper and middle classes have been regrouped together.

It is striking a fact that in the provincial capital of Middelburg, domestic servant brides came from all layers of society. Surprisingly, in the first period, one-fifth of all servants had an upper or middle class background. More than half of them were of working class origin and only 15% originated from a farm family. During this period the variation in the social backgrounds of domestic servants closely resembles that of other brides.¹⁸ During the second period, the average occupational status of the fathers of servant brides drops, overall half of all Middelburg servants comes from lower working-class backgrounds. Apparently around the turn of the century, the Status of domestic Service in the household decreased. Probably this happened because a wider Set of Service and administrative positions opened up for women in Middelburg, jobs which were both better paid and implied more independence and leisure time. These were the first years of the so-called 'Servant Question' when employers experienced it to be increasingly difficult to find domestic servants. Thus employers had to make do with girls from lower-Status backgrounds.

Domestic servants in rural Zeeland are more often from lower working-class backgrounds than their colleagues in Middelburg (See table 2). In both periods, more than half of these servants are daughters of unskilled workers, that is agricultural labourers and farm hands. The decline in status of social origin over time is also visible here but less pronounced than in Middelburg. The other brides are in both periods an average from higher class backgrounds than servants.

Social class of husbands

The Social classes of the husbands of Zeeland brides are portrayed in tables 3 and 4. During the first period, the husbands of Middelburg domestic servants, like their fathers, are broadly spread over all Social classes. Although in the Middelburg group a decrease in the Social backgrounds of the servant population was noticed, the Status of their marriage partners over the two periods remained largely the same.¹⁹

risch-demografische Studie van de 19e en vroeg 20e eeuw. Wageningen, 1992, pp. 137-140.

¹⁸ The chi-square test shows that there is a significant association between the distributions of domestic servants and other brides.

¹⁹ The chi-square test shows that there is a significant association between the distributions of domestic servants in both periods.

This might point to the mechanism of Service as a bridging occupation. However, it is the group of other brides that stands out even more because over time an average they experienced a rise in the social class of their husbands.

Table 1: Distribution of social class of fathers – city of Middelburg

	Domestic Servants				Other brides			
	1820-1880		1881-1935		1820-1880		1881-1935	
Middle and upper class	49	20%	27	14%	29	26%	29	28%
Farmers	36	15%	23	12%	15	14%	2	2%
Skilled workers	94	39%	48	25%	37	34%	47	45%
Unskilled workers	63	26%	93	49%	29	26%	27	25%
<i>N</i>	242	100%	191	100%	110	100%	105	100%

Sources: HSN-release Zeeland 98.2 & Steekproef Middelburgse Huwelijksakten 97.1

Table 2: Distribution of social class of fathers – Rural Zeeland

	Domestic Servants				Other brides			
	1820-1880		1881-1935		1820-1880		1881-1935	
Middle and upper class	12	12%	4	4%	40	25%	57	15%
Farmers	15	16%	15	16%	50	31%	68	18%
Skilled workers	12	12%	1	10%	17	11%	75	20%
Unskilled workers	58	60%	69	70%	53	33%	177	47%
<i>N</i>	97	100%	89	100%	160	100%	377	100%

Sources: HSN-release Zeeland 98.2 & Steekproef Middelburgse Huwelijksakten 97.1

Table 3: Distribution of social class of husbands– city of Middelburg

	Domestic Servants				Other brides			
	1820-1880		1881-1935		1820-1880		1881-1935	
Middle and upper class	47	19%	39	20%	28	24%	35	28%
Farmers	15	6%	13	7%	1	1%	1	1%
Skilled workers	121	49%	81	42%	35	30%	74	60%
Unskilled workers	64	26%	60	31%	53	45%	14	11%
<i>Total</i>	247	100%	193	100%	117	100%	124	100%

Sources: HSN-release Zeeland 98.2 & Steekproef Middelburgse Huwelijksakten 97.1

Table 4: Distribution of social class of fathers – Rural Zeeland

	Domestic Servants				Other brides			
	1820-1880		1881-1935		1820-1880		1881-1935	
Middle and upper class	20	8%	11	8%	46	17%	105	21%
Farmers	10	4%	16	12%	27	10%	75	15%
Skilled workers	34	14%	19	14%	52	19%	70	14%
Unskilled workers	183	74%	89	66%	147	54%	249	50%
<i>Total</i>	247	100%	135	100%	272	100%	499	100%

Sources: HSN-release Zeeland 98.2 & Steekproef Middelburgse Huwelijksakten 97.1

How can marriage patterns in Middelburg be compared to those in Zeeland province? On average servants in the province marry more

with men holding jobs in the lower regions of the working-class than do domestics in Zeeland's capital. During the first period, three-quarters of the servants in the province married unskilled workers. Although the average social class of husbands increased somewhat at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, on the whole, marriage chances were better in the city of Middelburg than in the rest of Zeeland. The same applies for the group of other brides.

Migration patterns

The migration distances of brides can be found in tables 5 and 6. Migration distance is defined as the distance between place of birth and address at the time of marriage. Of course this is a very rough measure for it does not take account of all intermediate moves. To measure distance of birth-marriage migration it is taken account of the particular geographical situation of the province of Zeeland. Because of the isolated position of the different districts, distance has been measured in terms of 'cultural distance' rather than in terms of geographical distance. Taking the place of marriage as point of departure, brides were coded in one of the following four groups: non-migrant (born in marriage place), same district (marriage address in birth district but not in birthplace), same province (marriage address in birth province, but not in district of birth) and outside province (marriage address outside province of birth).

From an overall look at those tables, it can be noticed that the rates of non-migration are extremely high. Both for Middelburg and for the Zeeland province the percentage of brides who married in the same place as where they were born is for both groups in both periods at least 50%. These high numbers might have been due to the nature of our data. Women might actually have migrated to places further away during the period before marriage but have returned to their parental homes to marry.

But even apart from these objections, it is nevertheless clear that the picture that arises here is one of local migration. Although a not insignificant part of the servant population in both capital and province remained largely composed of autochthonous servants, we see during the second period that relatively more servants in Middelburg but also in the Test of Zeeland came from the surrounding countryside. Those servants and other brides, who had migrated, came for the largest part from places within the same district or island of birth. This situation, in which a centre town is served by nearby villages has been characterised as a 'demographic basin'.²⁰ The different districts seem to have set the

²⁰ Moch, *Moving Europeans*, p. 47.

boundaries of these demographic basins. Only Middelburg drew more servants from farther away, 16% of all servant brides in Middelburg originated from other districts in and outside Zeeland, while the domestic group in the rest of Zeeland consists for only 5% of brides from farther away. Middelburg thus seemed to have attracted the larger share of the longer-distance migrants which is not surprising given its larger share of employment opportunities.

In tables 7 and 8 the distribution of the types of migration of the different groups of brides are displayed. The migration type was defined as the difference in degree of Urbanisation between the municipality of birth and the municipality of residence at the time of marriage. Municipalities were categorized as either rural or urban. Towns which had a population of 20,000 or more in 1880 were categorized as urban. For Zeeland the urban places were Middelburg, Vlissingen, Goes, Zierikzee and Terneuzen. The rest of the municipalities were categorised as rural. Subsequently, four types of migration were distinguished: rural → urban (from a rural to an urban place), urban → rural, rural → rural and urban → urban.²¹

In table 7, migration types of Middelburg brides are displayed. It is clear from this table that at least three-quarters of all Middelburg brides were born in a city. Servants, however, more often than other brides were from rural origin. While, during the first period, only one quarter of the servants in Middelburg were rural-urban migrants, the percentage of migrant brides with rural origins among the domestic servant population increased to almost 40% during the second period. Thus, domestic Service in Middelburg might have indeed become a bridge between countryside and City in the last decades of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century.

Zeeland province shows reverse migration types (see table 8). It is evident that rural-rural migration is the most important type of migration here. It is interesting to note that here too rural-urban migration among servants relatively increased from the first to the second period.

²¹ The figures for the last two types should be watched carefully for they also include non-migrant brides.

Table 5: Distribution of geographical origins of brides in the city of Middelburg

	Domestic Servants		Other brides	
	1820-1880	1881-1935	1820-1880	1881-1935
From Middelburg	154 61%	11 53%	94 82%	103 84%
From Walcheren	57 23%	16 32%	13 11%	4 3%
From other district in Zeeland	20 8%	19 10%	3 3%	9 7%
From outside Zeeland	19 8%	89 5%	5 4%	7 6%
Total	250 100%	193 100%	115 100%	123 100%

Sources: HSN-release Zeeland 98.2 & Steekproef Middelburgse Huwelijksakten 97.1

Table 6: Distribution of geographical origins of brides in rural Zeeland

	Domestic Servants		Other brides	
	1820-1880	1881-1935	1820-1880	1881-1935
From same place	109 59%	74 54%	225 81%	398 79%
From same district	66 36%	52 38%	44 16%	51 10%
From other district	7 4%	5 4%	6 2%	40 8%
From outside Zeeland	2 1%	5 4%	3 1%	15 3%
Total	184 100%	136 100%	278 100%	504 100%

Sources: HSN-release Zeeland 98.2 & Steekproef Middelburgse Huwelijksakten 97.1

Table 7: Distribution of migration types of brides – city of Middelburg

	Domestic Servants		Other brides	
	1820-1880	1881-1935	1820-1880	1881-1935
Rural => Urban	60 24%	75 39%	13 12%	17 10%
Urban => Urban	190 76%	118 61%	102 88%	106 90%
Total	250 100%	193 100%	115 100%	123 100%

Sources: HSN-release Zeeland 98.2 & Steekproef Middelburgse Huwelijksakten 97.1

Table 8: Distribution of migration types of brides – Rural Zeeland

	Domestic Servants		Other brides	
	1820-1880	1881-1935	1820-1880	1881-1935
Rural => Rural	168 92%	110 82%	222 81%	418 83%
Rural => Urban	1 1%	10 7%	5 2%	13 3%
Urban => Rural	6 3%	6 4%	4 1%	11 2%
Urban => Urban	8 4%	10 7%	42 16%	58 2%
Total	183 100%	136 100%	273 100%	500 100%

Sources: HSN-release Zeeland 98.2 & Steekproef Middelburgse Huwelijksakten 97.1

Determinants of Social Status at Marriage

That there were indeed differences in the marriage and migration patterns of domestic servants in comparison to those of other brides has become clear evident from the descriptive tables above. But what was, if there really was any, the effect of social background, type and dis-

tance of migration and a woman's occupation on the chance of making an advantageous marriage'. Multivariate regression analysis was used in order to determine what have been the relative effects of these determinants on the status of women at marriage.

The status at marriage has been measured in terms of the occupational status of a woman's husband. For this purpose, an occupational status scale was constructed ranging from zero to a hundred. On the basis of the five main groups of the Giele and Van Oenen/Van Poppel classification, the literacy rates of each occupational group were used as an indicator to place occupations on the scale. By this way, a continuous occupational scale was constructed.²²

The independent variables used in the regression are the social background, a woman's occupation before marriage, and the distance and type of her birth-marriage migration. The social background has been measured in terms of the occupational status of the father. Besides, account is taken of whether the father was still living at the time of marriage. In order to test whether a woman's occupation had an effect on her status at marriage, dummy variables were created for four occupational groups: the group above servants (skilled workers such as seamstresses and higher occupations such as teaching, nursing and retailing), domestic servants, the group below servants (unskilled workers) and those with 'no occupation' on their marriage certificate. Migration patterns of brides included distance and type of migration. Two interaction terms (for the interaction of migration and social background) were added in order to estimate how the effects of father's occupational status and having a living father were moderated by migration. As control variables of the bride's ability to sign her marriage certificate which is an indicator of literacy was included. Also her age at marriage, and the period in which she married were included.²³

The results from the multiple regression analyses are presented in table 9. Two models were tested. Model 1 includes the family and working characteristics of the bride, while model 2 also includes the bride's migration characteristics. In model 2 about 22% of the variation in the occupational status of husbands is explained by the variation in the different explanatory variables as compared to 19% in the first model. Moreover, if we compare individual parameters over the two models, it is clear that the second model also generates more precise estimates for several of the parameters. What do the individual parameters in the

²² This was done by looking at the percentages of people in each occupational group that could sign its marriage record.

²³ Period is a dichotomous variable; 0 for the period 1820-1880 and 1 for the period 1881-1935.

Table 9: Determinants of Social Status at Marriage (in husband's occupational status), province of Zeeland, 1830-1930

	Model 1		Model 2	
Social Background				
Fathers' occupation (0..100)	0.24	(0.03)***	0.25	(0.03)***
Father present	6.20	(1.97)**	10.06	(2.18)***
Work				
Occupation of woman				
- Unskilled	0		0	
- Domestic Servant	17.42	(2.16)***	13.91	(2.19)***
- Skilled and higher	27.53	(2.80)***	22.28	(2.85)***
- No occupation	21.95	(2.33)***	21.86	(2.30)***
Migration				
Migration distance			4.04	(1.39)**
Migration type				
- Rural => Rural			0	
- Rural => Urban			9.38	(2.45)***
- Urban =>Urban			10.22	(1.47)***
- Urban => Rural			0.97	(5.13)
Migrant* Father's occupation			-0.11	(0.04)*
Migrant * Father present			-7.05	(3.33)*
Control variables				
Woman's signature	9.66	(1.86)***	8.55	(1.84)***
Marriage age	0.15	(0.12)	0.05	(0.11)
Period	2.80	(1.37)*	3.19	(1.34)*
Intercept	29.52		24.55	
N	1765		1765	
Adj. R ²	0.196		0.223	
<i>Notes:</i> Numbers in parentheses are standard errors. * p<.05 level ** p<.01 level *** p<.001 level.				
<i>Sources:</i> HSN-release Zeeland 98.2 & Steekproef Middelburgse Huwelijksakten 97.1				

second model reveal about the strength and direction of the relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable.²⁴

First of all, the Social background characteristics 'father's occupational status' and 'father present' have positive effects on the status at marriage and (both are highly significant ($p < .001$)). Father's occupational status runs from zero to a hundred. Therefore, the higher the occupational status of the father the higher the coefficient for this variable. Regarding the bride's own work the following can be said. The effects of working as a domestic servant, having a skilled or higher occupation and not having an occupation prior to marriage are all positive compared to the reference category of unskilled workers. Of these

²⁴ A father with an occupation of for instance 70 on the occupational scale would add $0.24 \times 70 = 16.8$ points in the status at marriage.

three, working in a skilled or higher occupation resulted in the highest status at marriage. Next are those women who didn't hold an occupation, at least of whom 'no occupation' was stated on their marriage record. Most likely this category consisted of a mixed group of women of whom some did work before marriage at home, in the family shop or farm or whose occupation for another reason wasn't recorded while for the other part it consisted of daughters of the upper and middle classes who were genuinely unemployed before marriage. The domestic servants follow as a third category. Thus, when holding everything equal, just exercising the occupation of domestic Service didn't result in marriages with men in higher social positions than could be expected given the Status of the job.

Almost all the coefficients for the migration characteristics of the brides are significant. Migration distance has a positive effect. The farther a woman had moved away from her birth place at the time of her wedding, the higher is her status at marriage. The type of migration played an even more important role. Compared to the reference category rural-rural (moving around or staying in the countryside), migration to a town improved a woman's chances on an ambitious marriage. However, being born and marrying in a town gave women given better chances on a high status marriage. Moving from town to countryside gave just slightly better chances than the rural-rural base category, but its coefficient is not significant. The interaction term migration 'father's occupational status shows how the effect of father's occupational status on the status at marriage is moderated for those women who migrated from their birthplace. This is based on the assumption that migrant women are less able to profit from their father's cultural, financial and social capital than women who stayed at the parental home. The significant effect here means that brides who had migrated at the time of their marriage indeed lost part of their father's resources associated with his occupational status. The second interaction term shows how the effect of having a living father on the status at marriage is moderated by migration. The answer is clear from the negative significant coefficient. Those brides who have migrated and whose father is still alive at the time of their marriage, profit less from their father's resources.²⁵

As far as the control variables are concerned, the parameter estimate for the variable 'woman's signature' also had a quite large positive effect on the Status at marriage and is highly significant. In nineteenth and early twentieth century Zeeland, literacy was not so wide-spread and being able to read and write might have enhanced the Status of

²⁵ For those brides who had migrated by the time of their marriage, the positive effect of 'father's occupation' had declined to 0.25-0.11=0.14 and the effect of 'father present' to 10.06-7.05=3.01.

prospective brides and their ability to contract an advantageous marriage. Marriage age has a small positive effect but is not statistically significant. Finally, the parameter for the control variable 'period' shows that the chances of contracting a marriage are better during the second period (1881-1935). Most likely this is caused by the increase in higher status skilled jobs for men during this period, for instance in the Service and trading sector.

To summarize, what were the relative effects of social background, work and migration on the status at marriage? A father with a high occupational status was by far the greatest help for a bride in finding a high status spouse. The bride's own occupation also influenced her marriage chances. In the case of working women, a skilled job such as teacher, seamstress or hat maker gave better chances to marry higher status men than being employed as a domestic servant. But servants married higher status husbands than women in unskilled occupations. Next in importance were migration characteristics. Of these, type of migration mattered more than distance of migration. Especially migration to an urban environment promoted chances of marriage mobility considerably. However, migration also had an opposite effect in that it diminished the positive effect of her father's resources on the attainment of a high Status spouse.

Conclusion

In this paper it has been shown that the social status at marriage of women was connected to different social backgrounds, occupations and migration characteristics. However from our findings we cannot conclude that domestic service in the province of Zeeland was a bridging occupation.

First of all, domestic service was not a bridge between countryside and City. Overall, the high incidence of autochthonous servants and servants who moved only locally is outstanding. Although employment opportunities for unmarried women in rural Zeeland declined at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century because of the mechanisation and agricultural depression, a very striking fact is that only a small percentage of domestic servants migrated to the growing Cities outside Zeeland. For the province of Zeeland at least, the image of long distance rural-urban female migration does not seem to fit. It can be argued that the nature of the data had an effect on the results. Migrants could actually have migrated to places further away during the period before marriage but have returned to their parental homes in order to marry and Set up their households. But even apart from these

objections, the findings in this article emphasise that in nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the two different types of service, namely pre-industrial rural service and reproductive urban service co-existed in Zeeland one beside the other. Since the countryside and the centre towns in the different districts of Zeeland were not well integrated, the exchange between rural and urban Service remained only minimal.

Nevertheless, for those women with rural origins who did move to the city, domestic Service was indeed a bridging occupation in a social sense, leading to more advantageous marriages. It has been shown that rural-urban migration contributed to the social status at marriage of women. However, it became also clear from the results that those women who were born and married in a city had an even greater advantage. Thus, it was not the process of migration itself but the residence in an urban environment which contributed to a higher social Status at marriage.

Therefore, the whole idea of bridging seems to have more to do with shifts in occupational structures than with the process of integration of rural women into the city. At the end of the nineteenth and in early twentieth century the array of male occupations and especially skilled jobs outside the agrarian sector broadened. Especially during the second period (1881-1935) we saw that the status of husbands of domestic servants remained the same being an average from lower social classes than during the earlier period. The average occupational Status of the husbands of other brides even increased. All this points to a general upward shift of the status of male occupations.

Although Service might not have been a bridging occupation, the results in this article suggest that it is important to investigate in more detail the differences between rural and urban servants and the internal mobility channels within each Service system. Future research should thus differentiate more carefully among servant positions within rural and urban servant hierarchies. Secondly, considering the high rate of migration among female adolescents, more subtle measures of migration should be used. Our measure, namely migration between place of birth and address at marriage, can only scratch the surface of the underlying patterns of geographical mobility. Therefore, in order to reconstruct and explain patterns of geographical and social mobility of servants over the early life-course, a longitudinal design should be employed.