

Spoken for or Speaking Up?

*The Influence of Motherhood on the Labour Force
Participation of Dutch women with a Turkish or
Moroccan Descent.*

Master's thesis – final version

MA1: Comparative Women's Studies in Culture and Politics

By: Ilse van der Caaij

Student number: 3131718

Date: 06-12-2012

First reader: Eva Midden

Second reader: Iris van der Tuin

Introduction	3
Education	9
Labour force participation of Dutch women	10
Economic independence	12
Who cares who works?	13
Amsterdam.....	14
Chapter 2: Theory.....	16
Standpoint theory	17
Intersectionality.....	18
Situated Knowledges	20
Subjectivity and Agency	21
Chapter 3: Methodology	25
Kiezen voor Werk?.....	25
Focus groups	26
Interviews.....	28
An alternative discourse analysis	30
Chapter 4: Analysis	32
Introduction.....	32
Influence on Turkish and Moroccan women.....	34
Gender roles.....	36
Gender roles: rights, obligations and options.....	37
A supportive husband	40
Parents	43
A good mother that takes care of her children and works?.....	44
Children come first.....	44
The mother as transmitter of culture and religion.....	46
Some solutions for combining childcare with (paid) labour.....	48
“Ambition... But how much do you earn?”	50
Professional ambition	51
Conclusion.....	53

Introduction

“Your diploma is like a chip card, you have to charge it otherwise it expires.”

(Darifa)

“When I heard it, I didn’t want to believe it.. that so many girls with a higher education leave their diploma in a drawer somewhere and just stay at home after they are married.. until I met these two girls a couple days ago. They had a good education but didn’t want to work, they wanted to be with their baby girls. ‘My husband should work’, they said.” (Darifa)

The quotes mentioned above are from Fatima, a Dutch woman of Moroccan descent who works as a coordinator of an activity centre in a multicultural neighbourhood in Amsterdam. What she reflects upon are the surprisingly low numbers of young Dutch women of Turkish and Moroccan descent participating in the labour market in Amsterdam. 58% of young Turkish and Moroccan women between the age of 24 and 35 and 74% of the Turkish and Moroccan women between the age of 36 and 64 in Amsterdam do not have paid employment (Servicepunt Emancipatie Amsterdam). Only 24% of the young (24-35) women with Turkish or Moroccan descent living in Amsterdam are economically independent compared to 71% of the young autochthon women and 65% of the Surinamese and Antillean women (Gemeente Amsterdam 14). Even though these young Turkish and Moroccan women are mostly second-generation immigrants, born, raised and educated (middle or higher education) in the Netherlands, their labour force participation is low.

Why are these low numbers so alarming? First of all, the participation of Turkish and Moroccan women in society and especially on the labour market is important for their economic independence. Economic independence increases the self-determination of women and their ability and possibility to make free and conscious decisions. Financial dependence can keep women locked up in a bad relationship or left in poverty and without options in case of a divorce. Secondly, due to economical growth in combination with the aging population in the Netherlands the society needs all the people they can get to meet the demand of labour. Because the people of non-Dutch descent have on average a lower age, they make up a big part of the potential labour force of the future. Thirdly, (higher) education is highly subsidized in the Netherlands and I would even consider it “a destruction of capital”, to not participate in any way in society. Finally, the emancipation and participation of

women with a non-Dutch descent is important for the integration and their involvement in society (Gemeente Amsterdam, 7) (Merens et al. 23).

The lacking labour force participation of women in general and Turkish and Moroccan women in particular has received a great deal of attention in public emancipation policy on the national and on the local level and in the media. Because of this, several social agencies and women's organisations started projects to stimulate these women and to lower the threshold to participate in the labour market and aim to increase the self-reliance and personal development of girls and women of ethnic minorities by using the help of coaches and mentors (Merens et al. 17). I introduce several of them shortly to show the current importance and attention this subject is getting on local and national level. A big national project 'Duizend en één Kracht' (Thousand and one force) stimulated 50.000 migrant women to do voluntary jobs. Recently Women Inc has started 'de Tafel van 1' (Table of one), stimulating lower educated women to feel more confident about their abilities and showing them their possibilities on the labour market (Tafel van 1 – WomenInc). Furthermore, the lack of labour participation of young women of Turkish and Moroccan descent have motivated the Amsterdam based organisation Woman at Work to start a project called 'Kiezen voor Werk?' (Deciding to work?) This project aims to inspire a dialogue within the Turkish and Moroccan community about the decision of young women with Turkish and Moroccan descent to participate on the labour market, their expectations of a woman, their values of work, marriage and motherhood. A variety of women have been brought together to listen to each other's stories and decisions, which might work inspiring and stimulating for them. Participation on the labour market should become a topic that is discussed more often so that young women of Turkish and Moroccan descent can make a calculated and well-informed decision (Woman at Work). This thesis is based on this project.

Every two years a Census of Women's Emancipation is published that outlines the progress of the emancipation and thereby checks if the emancipation process develops in the direction the public policy on emancipation pursues. Formulated targets from various emancipation policy documents from national government and local authorities are the foundation of abovementioned direction (Merens et al. 17). Connected to existing projects to stimulate women's participation, social research has been conducted on the factors that influence these women's step to the labour market. Among others, Trees Pels and Marjan de Gruijter state in their research on the labour

force participation of second-generation migrants that girls and women of Moroccan and Turkish descent grow up in between two seemingly opposed cultures. The Dutch individualistic culture where labour participation and independence is regarded highly and the more 'traditional' cultural heritage of collectivism where marriage and motherhood are important factors in women's lives. Expectations of the family and community are described as obstacles in the way of paid employment (Pels & de Gruijter, 2006).

I think it is important to be critical of the abovementioned development where two cultures are only considered as each other's opposites. When looking at this from a gender perspective we see that this binary opposition is biased towards the Dutch culture and it is important to be aware of the power structure at work by looking critically at what is regarded normative in the public debate and the public policy. Projects that activate women of non-western descent to participate in society and on the labour market can have a strong civilizing message. These projects can have the tendency to only look at what is wrong with the 'other' or what is lacking and trying to fix that, trying to teach 'them' how to be like 'us' (Van den Berg and Duyvendak, 2012). A certain practice, the practice of the white middle-class majority is normalized. The public opinion that is largely shared by media such as women's magazines is that the emancipation of the autochthon women is completed. The ideal of parental sharing where man and women equally divide paid labour and care tasks remains an ideal division of labour because the reality is that women often do less paid labour and more care tasks. When looking at the numbers, the autochthon Dutch women more often have paid employment than women of non-western descent but most of it part-time. Many women work small part-time jobs in order to combine their paid labour with their mothering tasks. This results in a lower number of economically independent women compared to Surinamese women, who more often have full-time jobs (Merens et al. 2010). In Dutch commonsensical media discourse and policy making regarding migrant women's labour participation, autochthon Dutch very often look at traditional values regarding the gendered division of labour and motherhood that are seen as backwards and old-fashioned. However all women struggle from their own particular position with the influence of motherhood on their labour force participation and that this fact should not be culturalized and made into a characteristic of a particular group of women. What gender studies can add to this discussion is an intersectional analysis of these particular positions with a focus on

women's agency and subjectivity which will create a more nuanced and complex picture of the insights and motivations behind women's educational and employment decisions.

In this research I will be focussing on women of Turkish and Moroccan descent and their ideas about motherhood and work. For the last 8 months I have been involved in the project 'Kiezen voor Werk?' and I have met a range of different Turkish and Moroccan women. Their stories have broadened my understanding of their decisions in life and what they consider important. This made me realize once more that the division between 'them' and 'us' is absolutely not as black and white as it is represented in media and public policy. A more nuanced vision is needed. For this research the main question is: *How do Turkish and Moroccan women in the Netherlands navigate their way between their own cultural heritage and their experiences in Dutch culture in relation to motherhood and labour force participation?* I will focus particularly on *the influence motherhood has on the labour force participation of these women*. With this thesis I would first of all like to contribute a more nuanced version of the story to the popular debate about the lacking labour force participation of Turkish and Moroccan women. I will look at the viewpoints of young women with a Turkish or Moroccan descent that follow from the data collected from four large focus groups held for the project 'Kiezen voor Werk?' and two additional interviews with Moroccan women. Analysing the data I could distinguish three influential factors on these women's opinions on motherhood and labour force participation; religion, family and societal factors. Influence of family was most often highlighted by these women and could exist of negative or positive influence of the husband, parents, parents-in-law and other family members. Their focus and therefore mine lays on the influence of family. Furthermore, I will focus on the possible solutions they named for negative influences on women's labour force participation and on solutions that can be extracted from their experiences. Those solutions show the agency and subjectivity of these women and will help increase the labour participation of women of Turkish and Moroccan descent while respecting their own viewpoints.

Before starting this research it is important to explain something about my own position in this research. In "Notes towards a Politics of Location" (1984), Adrienne Rich states that the researcher is a product of his or her society's social structures and institutions just as much as the researched is. The researcher's feelings,

beliefs and social, economic and political background are part of the process of knowledge production (Rich 10). By practicing reflexivity a researcher recognizes, examines and understands how his or her social background, lived experience and assumptions affect the research process, the research questions and the approach to the material (Hesse-Biber 192). A part of practicing reflexivity is trying to avoid generalizations and instead to reflect when, where and under what conditions the statements that you make as a researcher are true (Rich 10). Practicing reflexivity I will start with reflecting on my choice of topic. Despite the fact that I grew up in a white middle class environment and never had much contact with Turkish and Moroccan people I was always critical of the media representations and notions of common sense about them. Being pushed in one of society's pigeonholes at a young age I started to reflect on this practice and I came to resent this narrow minded way of thinking and have ever since supported more nuanced and open minded visions of groups of people and relationships between people. I could recognize this vision in theories on gender and ethnicity I learned in my education in gender studies and I happily broadened my vision with the tools and theories I acquired. However, prior and during this research I have found it difficult to fully empathize with my participants. The questions I prepared beforehand weren't always applicable to the situations my participants were in. For example, in Noura's case, one of the two women I interviewed, I didn't think of the possibility of her being a single mother without a basic level of education. I became aware of the boundary of my own imagination during the interview. This has affected my research because I could have prepared myself better for the interview had I thought of this possibility. On the other hand, encountering stories that go beyond your own imagination prior to the research and truly listening to your participants and their point of view is what makes this research valuable and more interesting for me as a researcher.

I will start this research with outlining the current status of emancipation in the Netherlands, focussing especially on Turkish and Moroccan and only pointing out relevant issues for my research. In the second chapter I will explain my theoretical basis and the gender theories of intersectionality, standpoint theory and subjectivity and agency that will help me give depth to my analysis. In the following methodology chapter I will explain where I got my material and which methods I used gaining this and analysing this material. Finally the fourth chapter, which is my analysis, will be divided into main themes all connected to influence of the family.

Chapter 1: Context

In this chapter I will create the basis for the rest of my research by sketching the emancipation status of women with a Turkish and Moroccan descent¹ in the Netherlands as given in the biennial Census of Women's Emancipation.² The 'Emancipatiemonitor' from 2010³ shows the status of emancipation and checks if the emancipation develops in the direction that is appointed by the government in public policies on emancipation. The first and oldest target of the public policy on emancipation is increasing the labour force participation of women. Paid employment and a personal income are seen as preconditions of an independent existence. Focus has shifted towards the fact that women should have paid employment for more hours a week. Besides emancipatory arguments the economic arguments are named. To pay for the costs of population ageing an increase of female labour force participation is necessary (Merens et al. 18). The census of 2010 shows that the labour force participation and the economic independence of all women has increased over the last two years but large differences between ethnicity groups remain. Despite this increase the high number of women working part-time and the opinions about responsibilities within the family related to this, haven't changed much (Merens et al. 17).

I will briefly outline the demographic characteristics of the multicultural society of the Netherlands. During the 1950s and 1960s, mostly men from Morocco and Turkey came to the Netherlands as guest workers. In the 80s family reunifications of Turkish and Moroccan workers and marriages of young Turkish and Moroccan people to a partner from their country of origin gave rise to the Turkish and Moroccan population in the Netherlands (Prins, 2002 366). Demographical statistics from the Dutch 'Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek' show that on October 18th 2011 20,6% of the Dutch population of 16,65 million people had at least one parent that wasn't born in the Netherlands. Half of these people are born in the Netherlands and are labelled second generation. The percentage of the non-autochthon people that have their roots in non-western countries has grown rapidly over the last decade (Merens et al.

¹ The participants in this research often referred to themselves as Turkish and Moroccan women, even though some were born in the Netherlands. For this reason and for reasons of readability I will use this term from now on throughout my thesis.

² Providing a complete picture of the situation of Turkish and Moroccan women in the Netherlands isn't always possible because many facts in the 'Emancipatiemonitor' are not specified for different ethnicity groups living in the Netherlands. When not further specified I will use data on all women to give a general idea of the ideas and practices of women in the Netherlands. Furthermore, I will set data on Turkish and Moroccan women against the data of autochthon women or Surinamese and Antillean/Aruban women not with the purpose to see autochthon women as the norm of emancipation, as is often done in public policy or public opinion, but rather to show the complexity of the situation and the different emancipation processes that exist.

³ Due to a fast changing world and the economic crisis that has worsened the last two years in the Netherlands, data might be slightly out-dated. The 'Emancipatiemonitor' of 2010 is the last published census, using data on 2009.

25)(CBS 2011). People of non-Western descent are called ethnic minority groups or more commonly 'allochtonen', which means 'not from here' (Prins, 2002 366).

Ethnic minority and 'allochtoon' are terms that are more and more rejected by the people to whom it is supposed to apply because they are rather racialised terms⁴. Of the 1,9 million people of non-western descent, 75% belongs to one of the four main countries of origin. The largest group is of Turkish descent with 389.00 people, followed by people of Moroccan descent with 356.000 people, people of Surinamese descent with 345.000 people and 141.000 people with roots in the Dutch Antilles or Aruba (Merens et al. 25)(CBS 2011).

Education

Education is important for the emancipation of women because it can open up the possibility of paid employment in a desired labour market area. However, as I mentioned in the introduction, a good education doesn't necessarily have to mean that women will start working. This paragraph will introduce the status of emancipation of (Turkish and Moroccan) women in the Netherlands. The level of education of Dutch people of non-western descent is on average below that of the autochthon Dutch people and the differences in educational level between men and women are larger. Especially women of elder generations have a low educational level; 59% of elderly Turkish and Moroccan women between 45-65 years have only finished a primary school education. Young Surinamese and Antillean women are doing well, one third of these women have received a higher education⁵ (Merens et al. 63).

The census shows that over the last couple of years the educational level of girls in general has become significantly higher than that of boys. Girls of non-Dutch descent do better than their male counterparts, reach higher levels of secondary education and participate relatively more in higher education than boys from the same descent. Despite the fact that female Turkish and Moroccan students are more often enlisted in higher education than male Turkish and Moroccan students they are still lagging behind compared to male and female students with Dutch, Surinamese and Antillean/Aruban descent (Merens et al. 51). No policy measures have been taken to

⁴ Gloria Wekker and Helma Lutz (among others) point out that all terms are constructions: "Ethnic majorities or minorities are not a clear and natural given in a certain society. They are the result of a social construction which defines some groups as insiders and other groups as strange, as essentially Other and problematic, on the basis of race, ethnicity or culture" (5). Concepts as ethnic minority and 'allochtoon' offer a way of talking about 'race' and class in popular, political and academic discussions without using the actual word 'race' but this doesn't mean there is no racism in Dutch society (Wekker & Lutz 4-5).

⁵ Higher education = a college (HBO) or university education (WO).

change this since the general belief is that in the field of education emancipation is accomplished. However, public policy has given attention to the gendered segregation in study choice⁶ of girls of non-western descent that reinforces the gendered division of professions in the labour market⁷ (Merens et al. 38-41). I believe that a negative point of this segregation is that it often leads to stereotyping and profiling. This evolved over the years in a self-sustaining model whereby the ‘mother’ aspects of women, care and education, are amplified and seen as the only feasible, and often underappreciated, types of job for most women. A positive aspect that is given in the Census for this segregation is that in the areas of care and education big shortages of labourers are expected in the coming years. Therefore, job prospects for many female students, regardless of their education and descent, in those fields are good (Merens et al. 60).

Labour force participation of Dutch women

In this paragraph I will investigate if the emancipation of young Turkish and Moroccan girls in the field of education is also reflected in the labour force participation. I will only include data on issues such as motives to work and working part-time that were also discussed in the focus groups and the interviews. In my analysis chapter I will compare the collected opinions with the data given below.

In general in the Netherlands the female labour force participation is very high. 71,5% of the women between 15-64 years held a paid job for more than one hour a week. This number is above the European average of 59% and just below the highest rated country Denmark, with 73,1% (Merens et al. 101). When measured with Dutch standards however this number is smaller with 60%, because only women between 15-64 years who held a job of at least 12 hours a week is counted. The younger⁸ the women are and the higher their education⁹ they are most likely to have a job (Merens et al. 77-79). The number of women working part-time in the Netherlands is very high with 75%, the highest rate in Europe (Merens et al. 83).¹⁰ To

⁶ In 2009/2010 51% of the girls in lower professional education chose a study in care and wellbeing while 46% of the boys chose a technical direction (Merens et al. 41).

⁷ There is a rise of gender segregation in certain job areas. 81% of the people working in healthcare and 60% of the people working in education are female. These numbers are followed by hospitality, trade, financial institutions, where the percentage of women working in these areas is higher than the average amount of working women in general (Merens et al. 88).

⁸ When divided in age groups 80% of the women between 25-35, 74% of the women in the age group 35-45 and 34% of the women in the age group 55-64 held a job of at least 12 hours a week (Merens et al. 77).

⁹ Women with a higher educational level work more; 80% of the women with a higher educational level had paid employment for more than 12 hours a week compared to 25% of the women with only a primary school education (Merens et al. 79).

¹⁰ According to this European definition students and other people with small part-time jobs are counted. In the Dutch definition a part-time job starts only from twelve hours a week (Merens et al. 101).

get a complete picture the census looks at the labour volume expressed in full-time equivalent (fte) as a share of the total people. For women in the Netherlands this was very low with 44,4% in 2007 compared to the 50% average for women in the 27 EU-countries (Merens et al. 101).¹¹ Qualitative research in the Census shows that both men and women name the same motivations to work; they work for pleasure, personal development, social contacts, to earn money for maintaining a family, financial independence and the possibility to contribute to society¹². In general more men (75%) than women (50%) believe their salaries are a necessity to maintain the family and more men than women consider themselves 'main provider of the family'. However, among young people the financial responsibility for a future family lies more with women (90%) than men (72%) (Merens et al. 98-100).

Non-western migrants and their children (born in the Netherlands) on average have a lower rate of labour force participation¹³. This is often due to a lower level of education, especially among first generation immigrant women of Turkish and Moroccan descent. 62% of the autochthon women, and 47% of the women of non-western descent (15-64) held a paid job for more than 12 hours a week. The variations within the group of non-western migrants are big. Even though it has relatively seen the biggest growth over the last few years Turkish and Moroccan women have had the lowest participation rate for years now; in 2009 this was 42% for Turkish women and 39% for Moroccan women (Merens et al. 77-78). Despite the fact that women of non-western descent less often have a job than autochthon women, they more often have a full-time job than autochthon women. Turkish women who work, work more (29%) full-time than autochthon women (25%) and even Moroccan women have the same amount of fulltime jobs as autochthon women (Merens et al. 85). Surinam women have both higher labour market participation and a higher percentage full-time workers than autochthon women, showing that they aren't always setting the benchmark (Merens et al. 77-78; 85).

Women work an average of 25 hours¹⁴ a week, and this number is slowly on the rise since 2005. Men work an average of 37 hours a week. Even though in 71% of the couples of 25-50 with under aged children both parents work, they hardly ever

¹¹ Finland (64%), Latvia (63%) and Denmark (63%) have the highest female labour volume (Merens et al. 103).

¹² Slightly more men think paid employment is important because they can contribute to society. Men regard financial independence higher (90%) than women (75%) (Merens et al. 98-99).

¹³ Women of non-western descent are twice as much unemployed than autochthon women (10,5%). This is especially the case for Turkish and Surinamese women. They are the first to be fired when there is an economic downfall (Merens et al. 93).

¹⁴ Under certain conditions (flexible work hours, the possibility to work from home or to take leave for a sick child more easily) 75% of the women would like to start doing paid employment or start working more hours a week (Merens et al. 135-141).

both work full time. More than half of them divide this with the ‘one-and-a-half’ model, where one person works full-time and one person, often the woman, works part-time (Merens et al. 82). In general, the labour force participation of mothers with under aged children is rising. Married mothers or mothers who live together with their partner work more often (71% in 2009) than single mothers (64% in 2009). This is explained by the relative low educational level of this group of single mothers and the great amount of non-western women within this group.¹⁵ The age of the youngest child has a big influence on the labour participation rate of single mothers, more than with non-single mothers. Women who are married or living together without having children have relatively the highest labour participation rate of 85%. For single women without children this number is 71%. Mothers with a higher education work more often (85%) compared to mothers who only went to primary school (22%) (Merens et al. 79-81). Higher educated women also hold paid employment for more hours a week than lower educated women (Merens et al. 86). Even though the percentage of Dutch women participating in society by part-time employment is almost 65% and rising, big differences among women along the lines of ethnicity and class remain and especially the labour force participation of Turkish and Moroccan women is low. The risk of either low labour participation rates or small part-time jobs is the fact that these women remain largely financially dependent on their partner or family.

Economic independence

Economic independence for women has been an important target of the emancipation policy since the 80s. It can be seen as a precondition for women to develop themselves, to maintain their independent position in relationships they might have and in case of a break-up it can be their safeguard for staying out of poverty (Merens et al. 148). Almost all young women (96%) participating in a survey for the Census, think it is important to have their own income and to be economically independent but this isn’t reflected in the numbers (Merens et al. 99-100). Within public policy everybody (15-64 years) with a paid job and an income of at least 70%

¹⁵ 13 % of the autochthone mothers with children living at home is a single parent, compared to 30% of the mothers of non-western descent. Differences within that group are big. For years in a row, half of the Surinamese and Antillean mothers are single and over the last couple of years the percentage of single Turkish and Moroccan mothers has risen the last 10 years from 13% in to 18% in 2009 (Merens et al. 30).

of the minimum wage after taxes¹⁶ can be regarded economically independent¹⁷ (Merens et al. 148). The economic independence of women has risen from 44% in 2006 to 48% in 2009. This rise wasn't enough to reach the target of 60% in 2010 that policy strives for¹⁸. Especially Turkish and Moroccan women are less often economically independent (24%) than autochthon women (50%) and Surinamese women (52%) (Merens et al. 160-164). In short, even though the value of economical independence carries broad support among all young women, this value doesn't reflect upon their actual economical independence, especially with Turkish and Moroccan women.

Who cares who works?

Even though a great majority of the Dutch people¹⁹ believe a mother working outside of the home can have a warm and loving relationship with her children as much as a mother who stays at home, motherhood remains an important reason for women to decline a paid job (18%), quit their jobs (9%)²⁰ or to start working part-time 2-3 days a week (40%) while men continue working full-time or in some cases four days a week. (Merens et al. 95; 115-116; 130-131). Marguerite van den Berg and Jan Willem Duyvendak (2012) reflect on this tendency and describe the family ideal²¹ that exists in the Netherlands at the moment, as one with a strong preference for self-care. They notice that the Dutch government has promoted parental sharing²² of care for children since the 1990s because it could contribute to the emancipation of women, the rise of employment rates and the increase of labour market flexibility. They have stimulated this parental sharing instead of providing better childcare or promoting intergenerational care (4). Van den Berg and Duyvendak describe these

¹⁶ This is the lowest social security level (called 'bijstand') of a single person; in 2009 this was 860 euro a month. Social security, allowances, alimentation and income from capital do not count. People without a job but with grand capital or people with a small part-time job and a low income aren't economically independent according to this definition (Merens et al. 148; 160).

¹⁷ Qualitative research shows that not all women give the same definition to financial independence as this official definition. Some women think of themselves as economically independent when they provide a small part in the house income or when they are capable of earning an income when they might lose out on the income of the partner (Merens et al. 175).

¹⁸ Part of the problem is the wage gap that still exists between men and women. In 2009 women earned 80% of the hourly pay of men. These differences can partly be explained by the differences in work experience, education and labour market area. However, after deducting these facts a difference in payment of roughly 8,5% remains. Differences in income between men and women are the least significant with people of non-western descent because non-western men relatively have a lower income. The average incomes from paid work for autochthon women and non-western women are roughly the same (Merens et al. 154).

¹⁹ Men and women between 16 and 64, with or without a paid job, have given their opinion about statements on these issues.

²⁰ When a first child is born, 9% of the mothers in general, 27% of the lower educated mothers and 12% and 6% of the professional or higher educated mothers quit their paid jobs (Merens et al. 115-116).

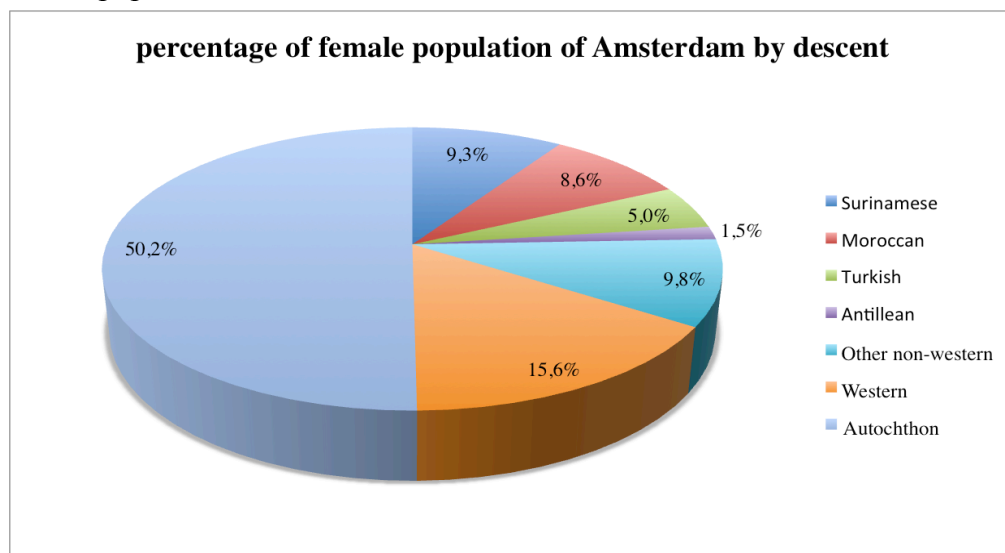
²¹ The ideal family is heteronormative and based on the nuclear family, single parents or gay parents are considered problematic (van den Berg & Duyvendak 4).

²² Data in the census shows that half of the people believe an equal division of household chores and paid work between men and women is best practice and 30% prefers the 'one-and-a-half' model (Merens et al. 134-135). However, the current division of labour shows that of the 50 hours a week spend on paid and unpaid labour women spend 75% of that time with unpaid labour while men spend 75% of their time on paid labour (Merens et al. 112-113).

large discrepancies between the gender-equal ideals of Dutch people and their more traditional practices. The majority of the care for children is a mother's responsibility and can be seen as 'mothering work'. Gender equality to many Dutch people does not necessarily mean a gender-equal division of labour or care. In the Netherlands there is a strong domestic tradition in which the father worked outside of the home earning the main family income and the mother ideally spend more time caring for the house and the children than earning money²³. For many Dutch, this division does not result in an experienced unequal distribution of power, as the mother traditionally enjoys her autonomy within the home (3-4). Although the government aims for a model where two parents work and equally share care of the children, the reality is often that the father works full-time and the mother has a part-time job for two or three days a week remaining largely dependent on the income of her partner.

Amsterdam

The previous sections focussed on national data on the labour force participation of women. In this paragraph I will focus on similar data for Amsterdam, since my research is based there. In Amsterdam, on the 1st of January 2011 a slight majority (51%) of the inhabitants is female. Together they count 396.276 women of whom 287.000 are in the age group of 15-64 and counted as the potential female labour population.



(Gemeente Amsterdam 13)

²³ Qualitative research in the census shows that women have less trouble with the fact that their children are being taken care of by somebody else that is not the mother. Men (55%) are however the ones who continue to believe it is best that from the two parents the mother takes care of her children. Even though half of the women and 70% of the men are of the opinion that children under the age of 2 years can be best taken care of by their own parents, resistance towards formal childcare has diminished and it has even become more popular over the last couple of years, especially among higher educated people (Merens et al. 132-134).

The labour participation rate²⁴ has risen from 61% of the women in Amsterdam in 1999 to 68% in 2009. There are large differences between people of different descent. Of the autochthon population 73% of the women is part of this group, 67% of the Surinamese and Antillean women, 61% of the remaining women of non-western descent, 42% of the Turkish women and 37% of the Moroccan women (Gemeente Amsterdam 20). On the national level, in 2009 67% of the women between 20 and 64 years held paid employment or was unemployed but looking for a job (Merens et al. 76). Again we see that also in Amsterdam the labour participation rate of Turkish and Moroccan women is significantly lower than that of other groups. 74% of the elderly (35-64) Turkish and Moroccan women in Amsterdam do not have any paid employment, this can partly be explained by a high number of women who only have primary school education (75%). What is even more striking is the high rate of young Turkish and Moroccan women in Amsterdam that do not participate on the labour market; 58% of the young Turkish and Moroccan women (24-34) do not have any paid employment (factsheet SPE). The educational level cannot explain this since 20% of the women of Turkish or Moroccan descent in Amsterdam have an average (MBO) or higher education (HBO/WO)²⁵ and their numbers are rising every year (Gemeente Amsterdam 13).

An average of 49% of the women from Amsterdam is economically independent²⁶ which can be divided in 56% of the autochthon women, 60% of the women with western descent, 48% of the Surinamese/Antillean women and 16% of the Turkish and 20% of the Moroccan women. The high number of elderly lower educated women who have never participated can partly explain the low number of economically independent Turkish and Moroccan women on the labour market. However, this doesn't explain why many second-generation, young (25-34) Turkish and Moroccan women, born and educated in the Netherlands are not economically independent. Only 24% of the women in this age group are, compared to 71% of the young autochthon women and 65% of the Surinamese and Antillean women (Gemeente Amsterdam 14). With my research I hope to find answers for this problem.

²⁴ The data on labour force participation in Amsterdam consists of both the number of women with paid employment and the number of women without paid employment but who are looking for a job (Gemeente Amsterdam 20).

²⁵ 50% and 30% of the autochthon population in Amsterdam has resp. a high or an average education, 25% of the Turkish and Moroccan men and 53% of the Surinamese/Antillean/Aruban women have a high or average education. The number of non-western women in higher education in Amsterdam has risen substantially over the last ten years. Of the women of non-western descent (19-24) 20% goes to college, the same percentage as autochthon women. However, participation at university is with 11% below the average of 27% (Gemeente Amsterdam 13).

²⁶ According to this definition of economic independence you are independent when you have paid employment more than one hour a week with an income of more than 1000 euros a month (Gemeente Amsterdam 14).

Chapter 2: Theory

The international debate about the incompatibility of feminism and multiculturalism that Eva Midden describes in her work *Feminism in Multicultural Societies. An analysis of Dutch Multicultural and Postsecular Developments and their Implications for Feminist Debates* (2010) has brought to the fore once again that the road to emancipation that western women have taken is made into the norm for the emancipation of all women and that divergent emancipation processes are not heard. In the Netherlands, as well as in many other countries, migrant Muslim women have become visible in the neo realistic²⁷ debate in media and politics only as unemancipated victims who are oppressed by their husbands. Baukje Prins describes that the framework used in media and politics sets the backward, uncivilized world of Islam where gender equality doesn't exist, against Western civilized society in a simplified hierarchical opposition that overlooks the diversity and complexity of the Muslim world and it's people and the perpetrated injustices and evil in the history of the Western world. The headscarf has been made into a symbol for the discussion about Islam. Muslim women have been made into the objects of discourse whose opinions are not voiced (Prins, 2002 369).

Sawitri Saharso believes that in these debates, cultures are too often described as static and unchangeable. However, the reality is more complex and nuanced and cultures cannot be seen as homogeneous and closed groups. Both in majority and minority groups there are different voices to be heard that create diversity of opinions. The Dutch culture isn't as homogeneously emancipated, free and liberal as is suggested in the general debate and minority cultures aren't as traditional, homogeneously gender unequal and non-liberal (15-19). By assuming a culture is homogenous it is easy to miss the nuances and different voices that exist within that group and are often voiced by 'weaker' members of the group. Often these are women who do not have the same access and the means as the dominant forces within that culture (Saharso 26-27).

²⁷ In the Netherlands, this discussion about feminism and multiculturalism fitted within the bigger picture of migration, Islam and integration issues. Baukje Prins describes the media discourse in the Netherlands on multiculturalism as 'neo-realist'. Already in 1991 the article of right-wing liberal Frits Bolkestein, demanding a stronger approach to the issue of integration of migrants, challenging the dominant Dutch discourse, which defined ethnic minorities as groups who occupied a marginal socioeconomic position and was in need of support (2002 367). According to Baukje Prins this was the start of a Neo-realist discourse in the Netherlands. Daring to break taboos and to speak frankly about the 'truths', representing the 'ordinary Dutch people', presenting realism as a feature of Dutch identity and criticizing the left-wing elite are all characteristics of the neo-realist discourse (2002 368).

Although these biased debates described above have become mainstream in the political and popular debate Eva Midden writes that there is a growing group of women in academia and popular media that believe culture and religion are important in people's lives and shouldn't be set aside entirely because of related problems but should be researched in relation to women's lives (54). Furthermore Midden writes that both in the work of academics and in popular media and politics there is still a lack of attention for the experiences and opinions of migrant women (53).

Eva Midden has investigated how multiculturalism and feminism can go together and should lead to different ideas about emancipation. With this thesis I will look into ideas about emancipation based on the experiences of Turkish and Moroccan women by analysing the different axes of difference that shape their identity and subjectivity. But first I will explain which theories have influenced this research and the tools I will use. The work of Eva Midden is important for this research because during my education in gender studies I have followed many courses on gender and ethnic given by her. When reading her work *Feminism in Multicultural Societies. An analysis of Dutch Multicultural and Postsecular Developments and their Implications for Feminist Debates* (2010) for this research I discovered that part of the theoretical framework she collected and put together perfectly suited my own research topic. Therefore for my own theoretical framework I have followed Midden's structure and I have also read particular works of a collection of authors like Sandra Harding, Baukje Prins, Donna Haraway, Saba Mahmood and Rosi Braidotti she refers to. I have combined insights from Midden's work with other authors like Dorthe Staunaes, Rosemarie Buikema and Iris van der Tuin, Esther Captain and Halleh Ghorashi and Sarah Bracke and Maria Puig de la Bellacasa.

Standpoint theory

Standpoint theory has been influential in my thinking and is the basis for my research and my approach. One of the important pillars behind women's studies is the importance of experience in research. Many feminists critiqued the mainstream way of doing science and showed that science wasn't objective and value-free as scientists made belief but that excluding women from science was actually the norm and deeply embedded in scientific methods. In order to change science, scientific methods had to be changed. With the emergence of gender as analytical category women's direct

experiences became very important for feminist research, feminism came up with an alternative way of doing science in the method of 'standpoint theory' (Midden 103).

The gendered division of labour in modern Western societies has determined women's social position to the sphere of reproduction. Since the 1970's, social-feminists pointed out that Marxist thought focussed only on the sphere of production and not on the economically and socially equally important sphere of reproduction (Prins, 1997 62). Thinking about the revaluation of the sphere of reproduction soon became the beginning of standpoint theory and the idea of 'thinking from women's lives'. Sandra Harding's work on standpoint theory has been very influential. She explains standpoint theory is based on the Marxist conception that knowledge is socially situated and one's social position determines what one knows and what one can know (Harding, 1991)(Prins, 1997). Standpoint theorists believe that knowledge from a marginalised point of view can be more valuable than knowledge from a dominant position because the oppressed have a more complete vision of society. Furthermore, feminist standpoint theory argue that women, because of their marginalised position, can occupy the position of the 'outsider within', the 'critical stranger' to the social order, since they are both part of the social order and at the same time, because of their marginal position within it, remote enough to criticize it. Furthermore, they have something to gain from revealing the power construction within society (Harding, 1991 123-125).

However, it does not mean that women, or other oppressed groups are always right, it does mean their arguments and their experiences are worth listening to. A standpoint is something different from an individual opinion since a standpoint is the beginning, a location from where one starts the production of knowledge in feminist research; it is a location one has to achieve by looking at the world from the perspective of the oppressed²⁸ (Harding, 1991). Experiences from a social location combined with political analysis together make up a standpoint.

Intersectionality

Standpoint theory has been critiqued for only taking into account gender as important axes of difference. When it became important feminists asked themselves from the lives of which women do we think? (Bracke & Puig de la Bellacasa 56-57).

²⁸ Because a standpoint is not something you automatically have, a man can also have a feminist standpoint when he works together to improve the conditions of women.

From the 1980s onwards, black feminists have given their critique on the feminist movement because it was shaped by the point of view from an ethnical unmarked category. White women have the privilege that they are not confronted with the consequences of their ethnicity and skin colour, and have therefore left these issues untouched. However, black feminists showed that it was relevant to consider ethnicity and race when thinking about gender inequality and oppression (Captain and Ghorashi 164). Intersectional thinking has created a complex and nuanced vision on the various axes of difference that constitute one's identity.

Intersectionality²⁹ is a term coined in the nineties by feminist lawyer Kimberlé Crenshaw. She and North American feminists of colour believed analysis on the basis of gender alone was not enough. Intersectional theory suggests that other socially and culturally constructed axes of difference co-construct and influence each other at the same time in creating identity. Axes of difference are 'race'/ethnicity, class, sexuality, disability, age and religion that can contribute together to the creation of social inequality. Different forms of oppression along the different axes construct social reality at the same time, but not in the same way. Intersectional analysis shows the interrelatedness of sexism, discrimination of religion or disability, racism and homophobia. For example, women who live in a racist society have a difference experience than men because they have to fight both racism and sexism. On a personal level intersectionality shapes a person's experience and identity while on a structural level social representations, processes and oppressive structures are intersectional and their constructions have to be examined as such (van der Caaij 13) (Buikema and van der Tuin 57; 64).

Feminist thinkers such as Chandra Talpade Mohanty and Hill Collins, Bell Hooks (1981), Angela Davis (1981) and Audre Lorde (1984) have shown that taking into account the differences between women along the lines of ethnicity, class and sexuality didn't mean the end of standpoint theory. In fact, this type of intersectional thinking actually contributed to the concept and added an extra nuanced layer and pointed to the multiple aspects of a woman's identity that should all be taken into account when researching into the mechanism of institutional power and inequalities (Bracke and Puig de la Bellacasa 56-57). This inclusive way of thinking of

²⁹ This paragraph on intersectionality is largely based on my own research *Gender, Agency and Nomadic Subjectivity in Contemporary Brazilian Film* (2011).

intersecting axes of identity has been an important theory and method in gender studies during the last decennia and has shaped my own education in gender studies.

Situated Knowledges

Going back to standpoint theory we can see the method has been criticized for other reasons as well. Critique was that it became too relativistic and lost sight of objectivity, so highly valued in science. Sandra Harding answered to this criticism by stating that objectivity is still relevant and that standpoint theory requires and generates stronger standards of objectivity. 'Strong objectivity' challenges the classical notion that objectivity is connected to neutrality and argues that claims made from partial or particular positions are more objective (Prins, 1997 70-71). Science cannot be neutral and value-free since all science is socially situated and there is not one universal truth. Only if we acknowledge that, we can produce truly stronger objective knowledge. Subjects of knowledge should be reflexive about factors that influence the process of knowledge production such as gender, race, culture, sexuality and class, and instead of eliminating all these external factors from scientific research they should be included (Prins, 1997 70-73). Eva Midden has explained Sandra Harding's 'reading against the grain' as women's ability to learn from each other's positions. Reading against the grain means that you have to 'become marginal in your thinking', although you don't have a marginal identity yourself (Midden 106).

Donna Haraway has criticized standpoint theory for the potential essentializing that can take place when the main premise is that the oppressed know best. She has taken standpoint theory a step further and has come up with the concept of situated knowledge that wants to let go of the concept of neutrality in order to obtain a new objectivity in science. All objectivity is embodied, just like vision is, therefore you cannot continue like normal science by doing 'the godtrick', a way of seeing from nowhere, without being seen and giving the illusion of neutral objectivity (Haraway, 1991 189). In order to achieve embodied objectivity you have to understand how this embodiment works, you have to position yourself and you have to be aware that you only have partial 'vision', that you can only produce knowledge from a certain location (Haraway, 1991 195). Therefore it follows that there is not one feminist standpoint. Critical positioning means taking responsibility for what you produce and reflexivity about your specific position. It is the beginning of producing partial, locatable, and critical knowledges (Haraway, 1991 193). Baukje Prins

explains that situated knowledges plays much more with the boundaries of identities and the construction of identities than standpoint theory does. Social positions are not fixed and holding a certain social position does not automatically lead to resisting the system (Prins, 1997 104-105).

Situated knowledges and standpoint theory have been and still are very influential in feminist theory. Lived experience and location have since become more important in feminist knowledge production. For this research standpoint theory has inspired me to take into account the experiences and viewpoint of people that are considered the lowest on the social ladder, in this case Turkish and Moroccan women, because listening to their experiences can teach us something about the social structures in our society or about ourselves. From theory on situated knowledges I have learned that every location can only provide partial knowledge and in order to produce accountable and objective knowledge I have to be reflective about the influence of my own location on my knowledge production.

Subjectivity and Agency

The aim of this research is to find out what we can learn from women of minority cultures in the Netherlands by looking at their lived experiences in relation to motherhood and labour force participation. How does this lived experience shape their subjectivity? In this paragraph I will move from intersectionality to subjectivity and agency, coming up with a notion of agency and subjectivity that can help answer that question.

Intersectionality³⁰ was of vital importance in identity politics but can also be used when thinking about subjectivities, agency and the lived experience of women as Dorthe Staunaes proposes (2003). Reconsidering intersectionality in relation to the post-structuralist and social constructionist concept of subjectivity will shift focus more to the lived experience of women. Staunaes claims subjectivity is “built upon a certain understanding of the relation between this sense of self and the social context in which subjectivity is in an ongoing process of becoming.” (Staunaes 103). Staunaes writes that the concept of identity fails to grasp stability as well as change and rupture, something subjectivity can do. The Foucauldian concept of subjectification Staunaes uses, reveals two sides of a human actor: “as both a subject acting upon

³⁰ This paragraph on intersectionality is largely based on my own research *Gender, Agency and Nomadic Subjectivity in Contemporary Brazilian Film* (2011).

contextual conditions and as being subject to, in the sense of being determined by, contextual conditions” (Staunaes 103). Thinking from this two-sided view of the subject, subjectivity may be different with every situation a person is in. Staunaes claims subjectivity is shaped by the lived experience; a person is both able to act upon a certain situation as well as shaped in its subjectivity by that same situation and the discourses surrounding it. Human subjectivity is shaped by the conscious and unconscious struggle and negotiation of dominant and accessible discourses they are in. A discourse can both limit what can be thought, said and done but it also enables possibilities of positioning and interacting that can create subject positions in both verbal and non-verbal ways (Staunaes 103-104) (van der Caaij 13-14).

Saba Mahmood reflects on existing theories on subjectivity and claims that feminist have not been able to put their political standpoints aside when analysing agency. She states:

“Even in instances when an explicit feminist agency is difficult to locate, there is a tendency to look for expressions and moments of resistance that may suggest a challenge to male domination. When women’s actions seem to reinscribe what appears to be “instruments of their own oppression,” the social analyst can point to moments of disruption and articulation of points of opposition to, male authority that are either located in the interstices of a woman's consciousness (often read as a nascent feminist consciousness), or in the objective effects of the women's actions, however unintended they may be.” (Mahmood 206).

Mahmood criticizes feminist researchers who have not been able to look beyond the desire of autonomy and self-expression that is so central to liberal and progressive thought and what they perceive to be a universal human desire. Being critical about the universality of this desire and thinking beyond it will help feminists to truly understand the lives, experiences and strategies of women who might not share the same liberal values as most western feminists (Mahmood 206).

Mahmood criticizes a form of agency that is only “understood as the capacity to realize one’s own interests against the weight of custom, tradition, transcendental will, or other obstacles (whether individual or collective).” (Mahmood 206). Her vision also requires a different form of agency. Mahmood argues that the current notion of human agency in feminist theory is: “one that seeks to locate the political and moral autonomy of the subject in the face of power” (Mahmood 203). In other

words, it's a form of agency that can only be manifested in a situation of subversion. Mahmood believes this notion of agency as resistance isn't sufficient to think from the lives of women involved in patriarchal religious traditions such as Islam, it only gives a limited understanding of the lives of women whose desire, affect and will have been shaped by non-liberal traditions (Mahmood 203). Mahmood states: "In order to analyse the participation of women in religious movements (...) I want to suggest we think of agency not as a synonym for resistance to relations of domination, but as a capacity for action that historically specific relations of subordination enable and create" (Mahmood 203). Important for Mahmood's notion of agency is the reconceptualization of power as a set of relations that do not only dominate the subject but also form the conditions of its possibility. This connects to Staunaes thinking on the paradox of subjectivation; the processes and conditions that create a subject's subordination are also the means by which she becomes a self-conscious identity and agent. Mahmood states:

"one may argue that the set of capacities inhering in a subject—the abilities that define its modes of agency—are not the residue of an undominated self that existed prior to the operations of power but are themselves the product of those operations. Such a conceptualization of power and subject formation also encourages us to understand agency not simply as a synonym for resistance to relations of domination, but as a capacity for action that specific relations of *subordination* create and enable" (Mahmood 210).

Although docility is most commonly understood as a loss of agency, Mahmood connects it with agency. She interprets docility in literal terms as the ability to be instructed in a particular skill or knowledge. This meaning carries an idea of struggle, physical or mental effort and achievement and less the idea of passivity. It reminds us of individuals who work on themselves to become the willing subjects of a particular discourse (Mahmood 210). Mahmood sees agency more in terms of capacities and skills required to undertake particular kind of acts (of which resistance is just one kind of act). This type of agency is inescapable bound up with historical and cultural specific discourses through which a subject is formed (Mahmood 211). The ability to effect change in the world and in oneself is historically and culturally specific, both in terms of what is meant by "change" and in the way it is brought about, then it's meaning and sense cannot be fixed a priori but can only be uncovered through an analysis of the worldview, personal desires and the power structures and discourses at

play. Agency can therefore also be found in acts that aim toward continuity, inactivity and stability, Mahmood claims (Mahmood 212).

Eva Midden suggests that the work of Rosi Braidotti provides a suiting concept of subjectivity/agency because it calls for a more nuanced analysis of the relations between feminism and religion/spirituality that interprets subjectivity not as a production of radical counter subjectivities but rather focuses on daily practices and negotiations within dominant norms (Midden 116). Braidotti explains that there is no logical necessity to link political subjectivity to oppositional consciousness and to reduce the latter to negativity. She states: “Critical theory can be just as critical and more persuasively theoretical if it embraces a philosophical monism and vital politics, and disengages the process of consciousness-raising from the logic of negativity, connecting it instead to creative affirmation.” (Braidotti 18-19). Letting go of dualities, and connecting consciousness raising to creative affirmation involves daily negotiations with dominant norms or technologies of the self (Braidotti 19).

Female agency that is seen as resistance to dominant norms is often based on the idea of a clear dichotomy between the male oppressor and the female oppressed. Even though sufficient in some cases, this limited vision of agency calls for a broader sense of subjectivity and agency. For my research project it is important to work with a concept of agency and subjectivity that takes into account different worldviews and allows me to think from the lives of all women whether they are actively changing their lives or not. Mahmood has shown that agency can also be affirmed when showing capacities and skills required to undertake particular kind of acts. I see creativity as an important skill of agency because creativity is both present in subverting hegemonic ideas and showing resistance to oppression, and can be an important skill in consciousness raising and the small changes of daily life, something Braidotti has pointed out. This notion of agency can help me in the analysis of women that might aim for continuity but also for women that gradually change parts of their lives because they come in contact with different and sometimes not easy compatible worldviews, like second generation immigrant women in the Netherlands, dealing at the same time with expectations from their cultural background and from the Dutch culture.

Chapter 3: Methodology

In this chapter I will first discuss the project ‘Kiezen voor Werk?’ which provided me with my main data and I’ll explain the focus groups we did during the project and the extra interviews I held. Furthermore I will discuss why focus groups and in-depth interviewing are relevant methodologies to use when investigating the lived experience of women. The second part of this chapter will consist of a description of the methodology used to interpret and process the data.

Kiezen voor Werk?

Most of my primary material for this research I gathered during dialogue sessions with young Dutch women with a Turkish or Moroccan descent. These dialogue sessions were part of a bigger action-research project ‘Kiezen voor Werk?’ conducted by the social project agency Diversion, discussing these women’s labour participation. Being an intern in this organization and helping out with this project shaped my research subject and gave me better access to these women. Their stories made me realize once more that the commonsensical representation of these women in media and public policy is extremely biased and a more nuanced vision is needed.

The reason for the need of such a project can be found in the numbers described in chapter one of this thesis. There are many women in Amsterdam who do not have a paid job and who are not financially independent. This is especially the case with young Turkish and Moroccan women between 25 and 34: 58% doesn’t have a paid job compared with 9% of the autochthon women and only 15% is financially independent (Woman at Work 5). During a pilot focus group, organized by Diversion prior to the project, Turkish and Moroccan women stated that the choice to participate on the labour market or not isn’t always made consciously and expectations from family and traditional role patterns play an important role in this. Based on these outcomes Diversion and Women at Work developed the project ‘Kiezen voor Werk?’ that aims to raise awareness on the issue of female labour force participation within the social group and to stimulate women to talk about their options with other women and share their expectations with other members of their social group like husbands or parents (Woman at Work 6-8). To inspire such an open dialogue within the own

social group Diversion has organized four dialogue sessions³¹. Based on the outcome of these focus groups a conference was organized and material for women's and migrant organizations and professionals was developed (Woman at Work 8).

Focus groups

For the project we held two focus groups with women of Turkish descent and two focus groups with women of Moroccan descent. We decided to separate Turkish and Moroccan women because our aim was that these women felt comfortable discussing these issues within their own social group. The recruitment of the women proved to be difficult at times and we decided to work together with a religious organization for Turkish women. This influenced our group diversity; most of the participants knew each other vaguely and had the same religious background. For the Moroccan women we relied on recruitment through different organizations for Moroccan women and through the personal network of one of the team members. This created more variety among the participants but not as diverse as was planned.

In the article "Focus Groups: A Feminist Method" Sue Wilkinson points out the benefits of using focus groups as a feminist research method. A focus group is one or more group discussions in which participants discuss a topic that can be presented to them as a film or images, a game or a set of questions. Focus groups rarely consist of more than twelve people (Wilkinson 222). What distinguishes the focus group from the one-to-one interview is the fact that focus groups involve the interaction of group participants with each other as well as with the researcher (Wilkinson 223).

The 'Kiezen voor Werk?' focus groups consisted of more than twelve people and the group was therefore divided into three to five smaller discussion groups. For each smaller discussion group we appointed a moderator, a young woman from the same social group plus a volunteer transcribing what was said without participating in the discussion. We briefed the moderators to make sure a safe and respecting environment was established so that participants felt safe to share their personal stories. A semi-structured questions list was given out, leaving enough time and space for the participants to talk about what they considered important besides the listed questions. Most of the women, some of whom were mothers, participating in the

³¹ In the next paragraph I will further discuss them as focus groups, although not named as such in the methodology of the project I believe they can be considered focus groups. Sue Wilkinson stated that there are many feminist researchers that "rely on conversations between groups of participants as a means of data collection but do not use the term "focus groups" or rely on the literature associated with this method" (Wilkinson 223-224). However they can be analysed in the same way.

focus groups held a paid job for a couple of days a week and some combined this with volunteer work and/or studies. For the follow-up focus group we worked with mostly the same women but this time they also brought some of their female friends. We decided to work with fictive personal case studies to avoid direct questioning into their personal experiences because we had noticed during the first sessions that this didn't take us beyond the socially acceptable answers into more profound answers.

Wilkinson names six points where the use of focus groups gives an advantage for feminist research. Firstly, even though focus groups do not arise spontaneously but are facilitated by a researcher and semi-structured in regards to the chosen topic, focus groups can tap into the 'natural' way of communicating. They build on people's normal, everyday experiences of talking and arguing with families, friends and colleagues about issues they consider important in their everyday lives (225-227). Focus group data are, however differently, just as socially constructed as any other data (237). Especially in the case of the 'Kiezen voor Werk?' focus groups I was aware of my influence on the group discussion working both as a member of the project team and as a researcher, designing the discussion topics and particular set of question. Secondly, Wilkinson states that using focus groups as a research method fits well with the gender researchers, such as myself³², who are in favour of a social-constructivist (or postmodern or discursive) view on the subject in which the self is seen as relational and socially constructed and therefore believe feminist methods should be contextual (Wilkinson 229-230). The analytical emphasis should be, and will be in this research, "on the construction and negotiation of persons and events, the functions served by different discourses and the ways in which social inequalities are produced and perpetuated through talk (Wilkinson 237). The social context of the focus group gives the opportunity to examine how people engage in the process of meaning-making, how opinions are formed, expressed, debated within the group and can be modified through constant negotiation and renegotiation (Wilkinson 227-228). As said before, this negotiation and renegotiation of ideas and beliefs because of group interaction is an important reason for the 'Kiezen voor Werk?' project to use focus groups as a method. In my analysis of the collected data I will pay attention to this group process and how this influences the construction of meaning and the elaboration of identities and subjectivities. I will do this by including in my analysis

³² Wilkinson warns the future feminist researchers to identify more clearly their epistemological framework that influences their interpretations of focus group data in order to justify their particular analysis (237).

quotations from multiple participants of the same discussion group and analyse both the content and the process of interaction. Thirdly, the focus group method meets the concern of feminist researchers to avoid problems of exploitative power relations between researcher and the research participant. Because of the number of research participants involved in a relatively free-flowing and interactive exchange of views the researcher's influence is reduced (Wilkinson 230). The opinions and conceptual worlds of research participants can be accessed more easily, taken into account and understood better by the researcher (Wilkinson 233). Furthermore, focus groups are an appropriate method to access the views of those disadvantaged social groups that are underrepresented in traditional research. This statement is in line with the idea that feminist research should pay particular attention to the needs of those who have little or no societal voice (Wilkinson 233). The above advantage is closely tied with standpoint theory and my aim for this research; giving voice to Turkish and Moroccan women and listening to their opinions on motherhood and labour force participation. The fifth and sixth advantage of focus group method Wilkinson mentions are both applicable on the 'Kiezen voor Werk?' project. The focus group method can be used to empower the research participants to change their own lives or to raise their consciousness (Wilkinson 234). Issues that seemed personal might be shared by other participants and through discussing these issues "women will develop a clearer sense of the social and political processes through which their experiences are constructed and perhaps also a desire to organize against them." (Wilkinson 235).

Interviews

Besides the focus group data my material consists of two in-depth interviews I conducted. Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber states that in-depth interviewing is issue-orientated, which means that the researcher uses this method to get information about a certain topic. Furthermore, in-depth interviewing seeks to understand the "lived experience" of the often underrepresented individual (of those marginalized in society such as women, people of colour, homosexuals or the poor) through a "subjective" view the individual brings to a given situation or set of circumstances (118).

As I said earlier, during the focus groups none of the project team members were interfering with the discussion, only appointed moderators with an 'insider position' from the same group. This had the advantage that our influence during the discussion was reduced to the set of questions and our presence only and that the

conversation could flow more freely. However, a disadvantage was that I didn't get the chance to ask more specific question about motherhood and labour participation. I decided to add two interviews in order to go more into these topics and see if I would get really different answers then we already collected during the focus groups.

At the conference I met two women whom I deemed suitable for an interview because of their seemingly different lives; a young Moroccan mother with two children, no education and no job and an elder Moroccan woman with three children and a good job. I have explained them my aims of the research and interview topics I had in mind. They both wanted to participate and agreed to meet me either at their home or at the workplace. I received their consent for recording the conversation and for using the material in my thesis. I see the interviews as small samples that show an in-depth understanding of the issues discussed more widely during the focus groups and of the way individuals attribute meaning to their experiences.

I didn't have the opportunity to get to know the women well before doing the interview but the material gathered during the focus group gave me some insight in the issues that were raised by other Moroccan women so I thought it wisely to go with a semi-structured interview style. I prepared a list with questions, which were inspired by the questions we used during the focus groups. However, my focus was more on the topics of motherhood, shared parenthood, labour participation and childcare. During the interviews I was aware of my own position and background and I have tried to listen carefully during the interviews and only interfered with a new topic or question when I thought it didn't interrupt the flow of her story. I have tried to ask my questions more from their perspective than from mine so it would balance out the power and authority I have as a researcher, preparing the questions, structuring the interview, interpreting and analysing what my participants say. Hesse-Biber also points out the importance of listening to your participant, not only the content of the language but also the language used can contain important information about what is being said (131-132). I have taken this to heart during the transcribing phase and have included words or short sentences that might seem irrelevant at first glance³³.

I have transcribed my interviews shortly after having finished them. This way face expressions, body language and silences were still fresh in mind and I could include these in my transcription. I made short summaries of the interviews,

³³ I have also paid attention to the things that are not said and what might be purposely silenced. However, I have decided that I don't want to do too much with these silences in my further analysis since I want to let these women speak for themselves but by interpreting their silences I am putting words/thoughts or reasons into their mouth.

containing the most important topics discussed, which I compared to the summaries of the focus group interviews, looking for similarities as well as ambiguities. From there I noticed three important influential themes on these women's decisions: family, culture/religion and society. From my data it followed that family was the most influential and most mentioned theme so I have decided to focus my analysis on this.

An alternative discourse analysis

My methodology is directly inspired by the methodology Eva Midden used when researching the relationship between multiculturalism and feminism. Midden's research explores in depth the different discourses about multiculturalism and feminism (mainly in the Netherlands) and sets out to develop a more inclusive and nuanced redefinition of the relationship between multiculturalism and feminism. She has analysed the public debate about feminism and multiculturalism in the feminist magazine *Opzij* and organized a series of focus groups with women belonging to Dutch feminist, religious, cultural or sub-cultural organizations that are of importance in this debate but who are not represented in the public media. Her participants were asked to react to the same issues as were prominent in the public discourse. Eva Midden used a combined method of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and argumentation analysis. Her use of Critical Discourse Analysis is based on Norman Fairclough's work who claims in his book *Language and Power* (1989) that language is a form of social practice, part of society in the domain of ideology and important in the struggle for social or political power³⁴ (Midden 123-124) (Fairclough 14). Powerful participants of discourse can control less powerful participants on what is said, on the social relations people enter into discourse and on the subject positions people occupy in discourse (Fairclough 43-55). Fairclough discusses the hidden power in mass media discourse where discourse is 'one-sided' (Fairclough 43-55). The whole social order of discourse is put together and held together as a hidden effect of power, and people with access to the cultural good of free speech hold power (Fairclough 55-56; 63). The constant struggle of ideologically diverse discourse types connected to social institutions determines which ideology is dominant and becomes common sense through a process of naturalization. Ideology as common sense is most effective as ideology sustaining unequal relations of power (Fairclough 107-108). For

³⁴ Fairclough believes power is not just a dominating or oppressive power. Social struggles over power and resistance to the dominant force are a complex and ongoing process where power can work both ways (Fairclough 68-73).

Eva Midden the combination of Critical Discourse Analysis with argumentation analysis made it possible to look both at the content and the issues at stake and the structure of arguments and the interests and power relations that influence the discussion. Midden asked herself what problems and what solutions are proposed? (193-194).

Eva Midden's approach to the focus groups is important for my own approach. Her participants were all women that were related to an organization and were not new to thinking about issues of feminism and multiculturalism. Furthermore, these were all speaking on a more abstract level and less personal level about the proposed subjects with the aim to define the terms feminism and multiculturalism and see if they could go together, proposing an alternative discourse to the commonsensical discourse in media and public policy. Public discourse on the lack of emancipation of Turkish and Moroccan women is part of the wider commonsensical and neo-realistic media discourse on the incompatibility of feminism and multiculturalism. For this thesis I would like to propose another alternative discourse that deviates from Midden's use of key figures in the professional field of women's emancipation and is based instead on the experiences of "ordinary" Turkish and Moroccan women. I will investigate how Eva Midden's understanding that multiculturalism and feminism can match can lead to different and more complex ideas about emancipation, based on the everyday lived experience of Turkish and Moroccan women.

I have asked the participants questions about motherhood, family life, education and work, culture, religion and society to concretize what they considered important in their everyday lives and what affects their decisions. From what was said I could determine three types of influential factors on this relation between motherhood and labour participation, namely culture/religion, family and societal factors. I have first classified my material according to these three influential factors and due to the amount of material on influence of family; I have made this into my focus. The questions I have asked when analysing my material were always related to my main focus: what influence does motherhood have on the labour force participation of women with a Turkish or Moroccan descent. Furthermore, I have explored the influential factors on both these issues and in the next analysis chapter I will investigate how these women negotiate these different influences in different situations.

Chapter 4: Analysis

Introduction

In this paragraph I will give a short summarizing contextualization that forms the basis of what will be discussed in the following paragraphs. Many of the topics discussed here can be connected to the data on the emancipation of (Turkish and Moroccan) women in the Netherlands. As we have seen in the first chapter, Turkish and Moroccan girls are doing quite well in the field of education. I have asked myself why the labour force participation of Turkish and Moroccan women remains so low, even for young, educated, second-generation Turkish and Moroccan women. To answer this I have asked the younger participants questions on their studies and how they see their future. Many Turkish girls of the first focus group said they liked to study and learn new things (T1.2)³⁵ (T1.4). Some of these girls said they would start working after having finished their studies so they can put their study into practice and share with others what they have learned (Rukiye (23), T1.2) (Rahime (25) T1.4) but others say they don't want to work (Sumeyra (18) T1.3). By both Turkish and Moroccan women it is mentioned that a diploma gives a woman a more independent status within marriage and that it provides certain insurance for when the husband is unable to work (Sumeyra (18) T1.3) (Sanige, M2.2). However, part of the problem is that not all (young) women seem to be aware of the fact that it is not only a diploma but also working experience that will provide better chances on the labour market.

Participants of both the Turkish and the Moroccan focus groups reflected upon motives to work. Their motives largely match the motives that were given in the Census. Turkish and Moroccan participants said they would work because they have to, they work to earn money, money to support their family and pay their bills and to go on an occasional holiday (Yusra (16) & Sumeyra (18), T1.3) (Meral (31) & Yasemin (20), T1.4). Work also teaches the value of money, how to handle stress and difficult colleagues or clients (Rukiye (23), T1.2). Furthermore, working is also a way to put your study into practice (Esra (19) T1.3), a way to become more financially independent from your parents or husband (Fadime (24), T1.4) and to become more self-confident (Hatice (17) T1.4). For this self-confidence it is important that there is appreciation for your work, and that you gain regard and respect. Some women also

³⁵ For practical reasons and for the readability of this thesis I have shorten my descriptions of the focus groups. T stands for Turkish, M for Moroccan and the numbers behind the letter stand for the different groups.

pointed out they don't want to do work below their educational level like cleaning (Selma, T1.1) (Noura). Many of the participants said that working is good for enhancing social contacts outside of the family. These social contacts broaden your horizon (Rahime (25), T1.4), change your way of thinking, make you practice your empathy and make you learn to look ahead (Rukiye (23), T1.2). Colleagues can become friends and this closeness gives an outlet for emotions (Btissame (24) & Hakima (31), M1.2). Furthermore, working gives a goal to your life and it can give you pleasure. But most importantly, what stood out for me is that most of the participants mentioned they find it really important to contribute something to society and mean something for other people, take care of people, make them happy, and teach them something. Only then they feel like they have achieved something. Some women noticed that this fits with the basic principles of Islamic religion (Rukiye (23), T1.2) (Huriyet (33) T1) (Fadime (24) & Rahime (25), T1.4) (Kamille, T1.3). The gendered segregation of the labour market that I mentioned in chapter one shows that many women opt for a job in the care and education sector. The job choices and motives to work named by the Turkish and Moroccan participants confirm this. Dismissing this gendered segregation as problematic, as the Dutch government does, overlooks the fact that, like the participants mentioned, contributing to society via the cares and education sector is important for many women. However, the gendered segregation affirms a traditional division of labour that is rejected by Western feminists that strictly hold on to the theory of equality. I agree that this gendered segregation often leads to stereotyping and I am not a proponent of fixing job categories as only female or only male however what I believe the underlying problem here is as standpoint theory thinkers have already pointed out that the "female" domain of reproduction which often consists of unpaid labour around the house or for the care of children but in this case consists of care and education jobs, are structurally undervalued in society. This means not only certain paid jobs are undervalued, also unpaid labour like volunteer work is regarded lowest in a hierarchical participation and emancipation ladder where fulltime paid employment is considered best for women. However, for many of the Turkish and Moroccan participants money isn't a vital motive to start working, the idea of helping people is. Therefore, work doesn't necessarily have to be paid employment; a voluntary job can be done for the same reasons (T1)(M1). Economic independence is important for women's emancipation but we should be critical that this doesn't turn into the only

form of emancipation since participating in society via volunteer jobs can give some women the same satisfaction and gratification.

Besides substantive motivations for work, the participants also named certain conditions that a job must meet. These conditions follow from the particular position these women occupy as Muslim women in a secular Dutch society. For many of the participants a requirement to start working is if the employment organization suits their religion and that there is space to practice it. Personal beliefs and cultural norms and values dictate what it exactly meant by this; it can mean praying at work, wearing a headscarf, the possibility of eating halal, being able to take days off during Ramadan, not working with men, not obliged to shake hands of men etc. (Kamille & Sumeyra (18), T1.3) (Emine & Kubra (21), T1.5) (Imane, M2.2). It can be hard to find a place where they accept women wearing a headscarf for example. Moroccan women think, and I agree, this has to do with the stereotypes that popular media upholds (Imane, M2.2) (Sobiha, M2.1). Sometimes women create their own space for their religion by talking with people who have a problem with it. Some women justly point out women in general can experience difficulties working in a male environment (Sobiha, M2.1). These last two remarks are important since they show that women want to step out of the role as victim that is appointed to them by popular media and confront their colleagues with the limited visions they might have. Furthermore, they identify issues like sexism that many women suffer from at work but that are usually overlooked in popular media in order to uphold a so-called gender equality.

Influence on Turkish and Moroccan women

Taking into account what influences these women's decisions is part of an intersectional and situated analysis. Women are never just women but are always influenced by their social, cultural and political background; these factors shape their subjectivity. During the focus groups the participants discussed by what or whom they are influenced and to what extent. Meral, a Turkish woman in her thirties with her own drivers school stated: "Even though you are influenced, it is still you're own choice. You know best for yourself but you can ask other people's opinions. Experience counts"³⁶. Meral says she would only let herself be affected by the opinion of other people who have more experience on the particular situation. In other

³⁶ "Ook al wordt je beïnvloed, het is toch je eigen keuze. Jij weet wat het beste voor jezelf is maar je kunt wel de mening van anderen vragen. Ervaring spreekt." (Meral, T1).

words, in her decision making Meral maintains a lot of her own agency and subjectivity. However, Asuman explains the influence on woman's decisions differently. She states: "A woman should also discuss with her surroundings, otherwise she and her choices will not be accepted. Especially young girls need their mother to help them decide"³⁷. Asuman talks about a more deeply rooted and direct socio-cultural influence where a woman who resists the advice of her surroundings would risk the chance of not being accepted. As Asuman points out, the mother plays an important role in the decision-making process of young girls. Whereas other participants have shown that the husband also is a big influence. Therefore I will focus my analysis on the influence of family where childcare, married life and influence of parents and parents-in-law are important issues raised by participants.

Furthermore, I would like to point out that it is not possible to take influence of family apart from broader influences in the lives of these women through culture, religion and society. Women are never 'just' individuals, nor are they only a pawn in the bigger scheme of their collectivities; their identities and subjectivities are multiplex and multidimensional. As Nira Yuval-Davis has point out they: "are also members of national, ethnic, and racial collectivities, as well as of a specific class, sexuality, and stage in the life cycle." (23). Culture and religion are not essentialist and static concepts but can be better seen as a "rich resource" not fixed and homogeneous but rather full of internal contradictions, and always linked with and shaped for each different person by particular situation situated within specific power relations (Yuval-Davis 23). Dirka, a Moroccan woman says about religion: "The problem is that we ourselves are already divided over religion. It is multi-interpretable, so everybody makes up the rules for themselves."³⁸ This remark leads back to family since family can play a role in communicating a particular interpretation of culture and religion. This multi-interpretable side of religion can also be put into practice as a benefit for women. Sobiha suggests that when a woman studies Islam she would always have an answer ready when judged by other Muslims who believe they know what is right and wrong according to Islam³⁹. The women participating in my research have occasionally raised cultural and religious themes as

³⁷ "Niet altijd." Een vrouw moet ook overleggen met haar omgeving anders wordt zij en haar keuze niet geaccepteerd. Vooral jonge meiden hebben hun moeder nodig om te helpen kiezen." (Asuman, T1).

³⁸ "Het probleem is dat we zelf al verdeeld zijn over het geloof. Het is multi interpretabel, dus iedereen bedenkt het voor zichzelf." (Dikra, M2.2)

³⁹ For example, she could explain that a woman is allowed to work according to Islam, because the wife of the Prophet also worked (Sobiha, M2.1).

issues that influence and co-construct their lives, therefore I will intertwine those influences in my main analysis.

I have identified certain major themes when looking into the influence of family on women's ideas about motherhood and labour participation and I have structured the following chapter accordingly. I will start by looking into ideas about gender roles, looking into the options women feel they have for participating on the labour market within this framework of gender roles. Secondly I will look into the difficulties and solutions that are brought to the fore when it comes to combining childcare with a job. Finally, I will discuss and analyse what the participants have said about ambition.

Gender roles

When asked what they thought of women, not specifically mothers, who worked most of the young Turkish respondents immediately assumed the women to be mothers, already hinting at the importance given to that particular female role. 22-year-old Kamille said: "I am proud of women who work and take care of their children. Working isn't easy, and you need determination. When you want to combine work and children, you have to handle it well."⁴⁰ Most of the women agree that the woman is better in caring because she likes to care, besides her caring duties she can choose to work as well, while the man has to take care of the main income, he has no choice (T1.3) (T1.1)(T2.1)(T2.3) (Btissame, M1). Most of the women discussing mothers who work immediately assume that the mother is also the one taking care of the children and the house and that a job only adds to her workload, which, for some women, makes it difficult to combine the two. The participants are talking about a gendered division of labour where the woman is responsible for the household and the children and the man is the breadwinner. This is different from the ideal of parental sharing and women's emancipation that is propagated by the Dutch government but as we have seen it doesn't differ much from the actual practice and division of labour of most Dutch people. Most of the women grew up or are growing up in families where this division of labour is in play (Melek, (17), T2.2). Many participants explain the need for a division of labour by fact that there are biological differences between male and female characteristics; men are stronger than women and therefore better

⁴⁰ "Ik ben trots op vrouwen die werken én voor de kinderen zorgen. Werken is niet makkelijk, en je hebt doorzettingsvermogen nodig. Als je werk en kinderen wil combineren moet je het goed aanpakken." (Kamille (22), T1.3).

able to work, while women are born with the ability to care and men aren't (Hayat, M1) (Taoussa, M1.1). Important to note is that they say this caring comes naturally for them (M1) (Salima (32), Btissame (24) & Hakima (31), M1.2). Women are taking care of the household, their children, their husbands, their siblings, their friends and their employees and they often also take care of their parents (Dikra, M1). For some Turkish women it was clear that the role of breadwinner earns the man the right to speak (T2.3). Granting the men this right to partly control the women's lives can have consequences for the women's possibilities to work outside the home. The Moroccan women present at the first focus group agreed that the role of breadwinner didn't give the man the right to boss his wife around. Breadwinner only indicates for them that he is the main provider and has responsibilities just like his wife (M1). Even though a certain practice is shared among these participants, it is interpreted according to different standards of gender equality.

Gender roles: rights, obligations and options

This male-breadwinner model does not only restrict women and empowers men, the model also holds obligations for men and rights for women. The moderator of a group of Turkish women in their twenties asked if they would still support this male breadwinner model when their husband would earn less than they would. Kamille answered giggling: "But I will select my husband! I will not marry a lower educated man. I will not marry just any man that walks by"⁴¹ 19 year old Esra adds to that: "Love is only for a couple of months: you need to plan your future well. Because you never know what awaits you"⁴². Planning a future Esra means picking the right husband that has a good education and the prospect of a good job, a decent income and can financially support her and their children. For Esra, planning a future is immediately linked with married life and having children instead of doing something related to her study, pursuing a career or contributing to society. Within this model, as a woman she has the right to pick a suitable man and reject unfit men. Men have the obligation to comply with this picture in order to find a woman for marriage and the responsibility to continue to meet these conditions during marriage life. Noura's husband wasn't fulfilling his duties as a husband because he was never there for her

⁴¹ "Ik ga wel mijn man selecteren! Ik ga niet met een laagopgeleide man trouwen (giechelend): Ik trouw niet zomaar met de eerste de beste die voorbijloopt!" (Kamille (22), T1.3).

⁴² "Liefde is maar een paar maandjes: je moet je toekomst goed plannen. Want je weet nooit wat je te wachten staat." (Esra (19), T1.3).

and their three children and didn't have a job to provide them with money and at the same time he didn't allow Noura to study and work. She subverted his authority and divorced him. Even though she believed she was in her right to do so, her father didn't appreciate her affirmation of agency through an act of resistance to male authority which makes me doubt these rights women seem to have are actually contributing to their gender equality. Not only for Turkish but also for Moroccan women this is a known situation. One of the Moroccan discussion groups⁴³ concluded that girls are stimulated to study and get a good education but when they have graduated they are stimulated to marry and get children (M2.2). Btissame said: "Girls from my generation (under 25 years old) have a couple of advantages, but they don't use them because they want to marry. They have a good education, they know how to think logically, and they are independent. But they are prepared to give this up for a man."⁴⁴ Important to note here is that girls are not only stimulated and maybe influenced in their decision to marry, they also seem to want to marry and have children. Their agency in this situation cannot be seen as a synonym for resistance to relations of domination but it is rather located outside of this framework of submission and subversion in what Mahmood calls docile agency. These women are not passive but work on themselves to become the willing subjects of a particular discourse, which in this case is shaped by the importance of the female role of mother. However, in fulfilling this role of mother woman might depart from a motherhood model transmitted through more traditional cultural movements where a mother is only a mother and adapt this model to their own norms that are often also shaped by their experience in Dutch society. The following examples will show that women often do not see motherhood and participation on the labour market not as mutually exclusive roles for themselves.

Where for men it is an obligation to work, for married women with children, working and earning money is not a requirement, it is a luxury, an option they have besides their main role as a mother when their religious beliefs, social surroundings and their husband agree with it (Huriyet (33), T1.2). Many of the Moroccan mothers present seemed to opt for a combination of motherhood and work because this different experience adds a certain depth to their life where they can continue

⁴³ Smaller group of participants within a focus group guided by a moderator.

⁴⁴ "Meisjes van mijn generatie (onder 25) hebben een aantal voordelen, maar gebruiken ze niet. Omdat ze zo graag willen trouwen. Opgeleid, logisch nadenken, zelfstandig. Maar bereid om dit op te geven voor een man." (Btissame (24), M2.1).

developing themselves and participate and contribute to society (Kamille (22) & Esra (19), T1.3). Dikra, a Moroccan mother in her thirties said:

“It is nice to assume various roles. Not that you are only mother/wife and that you are at home. Being a mother is the leading role, around which you plan what you want to do to move forward in life. Work doesn’t have to be paid. Engaging in something and contribute to society is the most important.”⁴⁵

Single mother Noura agrees with that and says: “My whole life isn’t only to [give birth to] children and cleaning, cooking, this, that isn’t a life. You have a lot of things to do. I would like to do other things, not the usual things. It is really normal to get married, have children, that’s true. But not only that, more than that.”⁴⁶ Even though most women consider motherhood the most important role of a woman, the above examples and many others show that for many women only being a mother isn’t fulfilling enough and they can also envision a role for themselves outside of the family that can enrich their lives, including their lived experience as mother.

Envisioning different roles for yourself and being able to experience these is good for women’s self-esteem. 23-year-old Turkish Rukiye has two children and would like to start working and explains: “I wanted to be a doctor, a musician and a dancer at the same time. But now I have become nothing. I am a mother. I would like to do something with [being] a doctor’s assistant. Only then will I have the idea that I am something.”⁴⁷ The example that Rukiye gives is rather extreme, Rukiye is clearly unhappy with the current situation where her husband forbids her to work and her role as a mother doesn’t give her confidence, while she thinks working as a doctor’s assistant can provide her with self-esteem. Braidotti has point out that connecting consciousness raising to creative affirmation involves daily negotiations with dominant norms (Braidotti, 2008, 19). The process of consciousness raising Rukiye goes through while discussing her discontent about the situation with other women and seeing how other women might deal with this can be seen as a creative affirmation of agency.

⁴⁵ “Het ontwikkelt je in het leven, heeft toegevoegde waarde. Het is leuk om verschillende rollen te kunnen aannemen. Niet dat je alleen moeder/vrouw bent en thuis zit. Moeder zijn is de hoofdrol, daaromheen plan je wat je wilt doen om verder te komen in het leven. Werk hoeft niet betaald te zijn. Bezig zijn en een steentje bijdragen aan maatschappij is het belangrijkste.” (Dikra, M1.1).

⁴⁶ “Het hele leven is niet om kinderen te ba.. dinges.. kinderen en schoonmaken, koken dit, dat is geen leven. Je hebt een heleboel dingen te doen. Ik zou wel graag andere dingen willen doen, geen standaard dingen. Het is heel normaal trouwen, kinderen te krijgen, klopt. Maar niet alleen dat, wel wat anders doen. (Noura)

⁴⁷ “Ik wilde graag dokter worden, muzikante en dans tegelijk. Maar nu ben ik niks geworden. Ik ben moeder. Ik zou graag ook iets met doktersassistente doen. Dan pas heb ik het gevoel dat ik iets ben” (Rukiye (23), T2.3).

A supportive husband

Most of the participants indicated that the requirement for women to work is that their husband is supportive of their decision. Having a husband who is supportive (after renegotiation of gender roles) isn't the case for every woman as we have seen in the case of Rukiye (Rukiye (23), T2.3) and a husband can hold an influential power over his wife and can even forbid her to work. Huriyet, a Turkish mother working part-time, talks from her own experience when she says: "I started working to add to the house income. It was my own initiative to start working. (...) I have the support of my husband. If he wouldn't agree then I couldn't have done it."⁴⁸ Many women are aware of the objections raised by men who do not support their wife's labour participation, but seem to have enough arguments to refute these objections. Moroccan Sobiha explains what these objections might be: "They are afraid their wives work with men, they are afraid of gossip that says the woman is in charge at home, afraid of his honour, his family honour, image, masculinity."⁴⁹ Many women point out that men are often stimulated by what other members of his family, often his mother, might say (Btissame (24) & Sobiha, M2.1) (Darifa) (Noura). Young Turkish women think it is all a question of trust between husband and wife and they point out that if you build up a family with your husband he should have faith in your ability to not to bring shame on him or undermine his masculinity. The woman should trust her husband to know his boundaries as well when he works with other women (Rukiye & Sulenur (16), T2.3). This ability not to bring shame on your husband can be seen as an act that aims towards stability and continuity and might seem submissive but instead this ability affirms agency. It creates a situation of trust between husband and wife that provides these women support of their husband, which in turn enables them to start working. Even though these Turkish women developed this argumentation is by within the safe environment of the focus group women could raise the abovementioned argument against their husbands objectifications. Some Moroccan women point out that there are always possibilities to turn the oppressive power of the husband around when women try to find a compromise through negotiation with and persuasion of their husband if only the women is persistent and doesn't always give in (Darifa) (Sobiha, M2.2). The ability to combine negotiation with resistance without

⁴⁸ "Ik ben ooit met werken begonnen om het huisinkomen bij te houden. Ik ben uit eigen initiatief begonnen. Ik heb de steun van mijn man. Als hij het er niet mee eens zou zijn dan had ik dat niet kunnen doen" (Huriyet (33), T1.2).

⁴⁹ "Ze zijn bang dat hun vrouw met mannen werkt, ze zijn bang voor roddels dat de vrouw thuis de broek aan heeft, bang voor zijn eer, zijn familie eer, imago, mannelijkheid" (Sobiah, M2.1).

fully challenging oppressive power can help women secure their place within a more gender equal marriage and allows them more leeway to find a way of combining motherhood and paid labour.

Women have found different strategies of dealing with unsupportive husbands. The women from one of the Moroccan discussion groups that you should prepare your future husband for the fact that you would like to continue working when married and having children. 24-year old Btissame says: “Sometimes I ask my friends: did you talk to him about working? No, no, I’ll wait and see what he wants. What message do you convey if you already give in.”⁵⁰ and Fassia reacts to that: “Then it’s your own fault, you cannot claim what you want three years later. It’s not always the man’s fault.”⁵¹ Btissame realizes this as well, that you have to fight for what you want as a woman, you have to negotiate from the start and make compromises (Btissame (24), M2.1) and you have to communicate more about these issues, something that rarely happens in the Moroccan culture, Sobiha suggests. Moroccan Darifa has successfully applied the above strategy and has negotiated over her labour participation before getting married and continued to discuss gender roles during her marriage. However, after her first child was born, she felt so dependent of her husband and wanted to start working again but her mother-in-law⁵² and her husband objected. She said: “But it isn’t a surprise, I could always go back to what I had said [before getting married] because you talked about it, you named it, naming is very important. I went back to that, we talked about it and it was ok then, why not now?”⁵³ Darifa’s story exemplifies that the hypothetic solution raised by the Moroccan women can affirm agency in the ability to look ahead and it shows how this skill can help in changing the everyday life of women. Within their marriage Darifa has also found a creative way of dealing with her conservative husbands claim to power. She explains that she is in control at home because she has more knowledge but she has to pretend her husband is in charge: “I let him keep his dignity (...) I am wearing the pants at home. He might think he has the pants at home but I let him think

⁵⁰ “Ik vraag wel eens aan vriendinnen: heb je het gehad over werken? Nee nee, ik kijk wel wat hij wil. Als je nu al toegeeft wat voor boodschap geef je hem dan? (Btissame (24), M2.1).

⁵¹ “Dan doe je het zelf, dan kun je niet drie jaar later gaan eisen wat je wilt. Ligt niet altijd aan de man (Fassia, M2.1).

⁵² Some Turkish and Moroccan women point out the importance of the opinion of the family and family-in-law that is part of their culture. Mothers in law can be a big influence on their sons. Discussing the meaning of gender roles and working with family-in-law is suggested by some women (Meral, Turks 2.1)(Darifa) (Btissame M2.1) (Noura).

⁵³ “Maar het is geen verrassing he.. ik kan nog altijd terugpakken op wat ik al gezegd had want je hebt het besproken, je hebt het benoemd, benoemen is heel belangrijk. Daar ging ik naar terug, wij hebben dat besproken en het was ook ok, waarom nu niet?” (Darifa).

that.”⁵⁴ When she wants something and needs his approval she will propose that idea to him in a nuanced way and make him believe he came up with the idea. She says: “You have to know how to combine, manage, navigate and coordinate. I am really good at managing. I give a push but I am not the one doing it, you have to do it, not me.”⁵⁵ Furthermore, she said: “What I also don’t do is bring him down among his family when he says something weird or an idea I totally disagree with. No I don’t do that. I let him remain his status when among his family.”⁵⁶ Darifa believes some men don’t want their wives to develop themselves because they might rise above them and that is not socially accepted in Moroccan culture. Darifa wants her and her partner to be equals but she knows her ideal of gender equality isn’t an achievable goal and adjusts her goals to her particular situation. The change Darifa effects with this should be investigated using intersectionality through an analysis of the worldview, personal desires and the power structures and discourses at play because the processes and conditions that create a subject’s subordination are also the means by which she becomes a self-conscious identity and agent (Mahmood, 2001, 212) (Staunaes, 2003). Darifa’s intelligence, open minded upbringing, supportive parents and experiences in life have made her conscious of the workings of gender inequality within her own culture. In her relationship with her husband she has chosen not to go “against the weight of custom” as Mahmood has connected with agency as the capacity for resistance. Instead, Darifa has showed the ability to be instructed in a particular knowledge and she has used this knowledge to affect change in her daily situation. She shows the capacity to accept the authority of her husband, even though she disagrees with the gender inequality it stands for and she scarifies her own norms and values when she is among her family-in-law because she knows when she lets her husband keep his dignity, she can have more power at home. Darifa shows the skill to “make him believe he is in control”, which helps her affirm her own creative agency in daily negotiations. Her agency is complex and it’s meaning carries the idea of struggle, physical and mental effort, Mahmood refers to.

⁵⁴ “Ik laat hem wel in zijn waarde hoor (...) Ik heb de broek aan in huis. Hij denkt wel dat hij de broek in huis heeft maar dat laat ik hem denken.” (Darifa).

⁵⁵ “Je moet het wel kunnen combineren, managen, navigeren, coördineren. Ik ben heel goed in leiding geven. Ik geef een duwtje maar ik ga het echt niet doen, jij moet het doen, niet ik.” (Darifa).

⁵⁶ “Wat ik ook niet doe is hem bij familieleden naar beneden halen als hij iets raars zegt, of een opvatting waar ik totaal niet mee eens ben. Nee dat doe ik niet. Zijn status laat ik wel bij zijn familie.” (Darifa)

Parents

Besides husbands also parents and family-in-law play an important role in women's lives by transmitting certain gender roles and might consider it their business to check whether certain gender roles are respected. Some women say they feel this ongoing pressure from others, to get married, to have children or to stop working when having children (Btissame (24) M1.2) (Hayat, M1.2). Other women say they ignore these kinds of comments from strangers or consider only what close family says (Salima (32), M1.2)(Hakima (31), M1.2). Some women, like Fazilet for example, take up other people's advice or gossip and thereby limit their own options for paid employment. Fazilet's only option to combine childcare with a job was leaving her children with her grandmother. When other family members gossiped that her grandmother didn't want to babysit, Fazilet decided to stop working. Only later she found out it was just gossip and her grandmother didn't mind babysitting. Fazilet says she cannot find a job anymore and she regrets her decision (T2.1). Fazilet didn't resist the control her surroundings believed they could play over her life and she was forced into a situation she didn't choose for herself.

The power parents hold over (young) women can forbid them or discourage them to work but they don't have to comply with these restrictions. Turkish Fadime and Meral are both women who resisted their parents power by disobeying their restrictions and start working anyway. Fadime speaks rather forcefully that she started working when she was 16 and has never stopped working since (T1.4) and Meral claims she always did what she wanted without listening to others, not even her parents (T1.4). Following Mahmood I want to think of agency "as a capacity for action that historically specific relations of subordination enable and create" (Mahmood, 2001, 203). Meral and Fadime's agency lies in their resistance to the dominant power that is represented by their parents; it is enabled and created by that parental power. Their resistance is what affirms their agency and shapes their subjectivity and since their resistance is closely linked to their decision to work they seem to consider this an important aspect of their lives and their self-esteem.

Parental influence does not only play a role in affirming widespread cultural notion of gender roles, it can also play an important role in discouraging these existing gender roles. Darifa's parents for example have always supported her and according to her they are proud of her and her job: "You see, a woman can do that.

You have a good position and you never know what comes next. You are independent!”⁵⁷ Economic and emotional independence is something that is important within their family and is passed on: “My father has till today endowed his daughters: be independent! Stand on your own two feet. Never become dependent of others.”⁵⁸ The open minded and gender equal attitude of her parents has influenced Darifa’s own opinion on gender roles and has shaped her subjectivity and agency as described earlier. She beliefs change is located within the family, it is not religion that dictates Muslim lives, it is rather the ideals and the interpretation of culture that is advocated within the family. Therefore, Darifa passes the importance of a good education, independence and responsibility on to her three sons. Other Moroccan women also stress the importance of the family in educating men in the struggle for more gender equal and balanced gender roles. Btissame speaks from her experience as a teacher when she explains that you can see the difference with boys who learn to take care of their surroundings from an early age. She thinks you need a strong woman and a father with the right principles in order to achieve this with a boy (M2.1). Sobiha suggests the interpretation of religion can help this process along, when she says her father had the Prophet as an example who also joined in care tasks (Sobiha, M2.1).

Commonly seen gender roles are enforced and uphold by parents, husband or by women themselves. Gender roles aren’t only oppressive for women but also shape their possibilities to affirm agency as I will point out in the following paragraph.

A good mother cares!

Children come first

During the focus groups the participants discussed why women stop working when they have children. The answers to these questions largely have to do with the commonly seen gender roles were women are considered to be responsible for the household and the care of children. These same gender roles hold an idea of what a ‘good mother’ is supposed to be like. A mother is expected to parent her own children at home, especially when these children aren’t yet going to school (Huriyet (33),

⁵⁷ “Zie je, een vrouw kan dat. Je hebt een goede positie gekregen en je weet maar nooit waarin je verder ontwikkeld. Je bent zelfstandig!” (Darifa)

⁵⁸ “Mijn vader heeft tot aan de dag van vandaag aan al zijn dochters meegegeven. Wees zelfstandig! Sta op je eigen benen. Nooit afhankelijk van anderen worden.” (Darifa).

T1.2) (Hatice (17), T1.4) (Hilal (15), T2.1). Most women seem to accept the fact that when they have children motherhood and spending time with your children becomes more important than working (Fatima, T1.5) (Kamille (22), T1.3). A woman always comes second, a Moroccan woman said: “She is made for that and she does that automatically. But the husband doesn’t come first, children do.”⁵⁹. For Darifa this is because you can’t replace your children and neither your parents while she believes a job and a husband are replaceable (Darifa). Turkish Asuman also explains why children come first: “Children always have to come first: you are nurturing a human being. All that a child needs has to be given. (...) Of course not everybody is able to have children. So if you make the conscious decision [to have children] you also have to surrender yourself to it.”⁶⁰ For Asuman, and many women with her, children and the unconditional love a mother can feel for her children are considered gifts they are blessed with (M1) (M1.1). As Asuman describes motherhood is seen as a lifelong commitment women diligently surrender to and therefore an essential element of a woman’s everyday lives. This is also exemplified by the fact that none of the women ever considered not to become a mother (M1)(T1)(M1)(M2)(Darifa)(Noura). Even though these women’s decisions to commit their lives to their children and their compliance to more traditional gender roles can be seen as acts that aim towards continuity, inactivity and stability, in the light of Mahmood’s vision of agency we can detect agency in these acts. Women see their ability and capacity to love their children unconditionally as a very positive quality they are proud of. This affirmation of agency and creation of their subjectivities through maternal love doesn’t rule out a type of creative agency they might affirm when opting to combine motherhood and work in such a way they aren’t considered bad mothers. This is possible, as Noura says: “You are the same mother if you work, not better not worse, if you take good care of your children it doesn’t matter if you work or not”⁶¹. However, for many of the participants work is really ‘extra’, it isn’t a vital part of women’s identities; it is always secondary to their most important role: the role of a mother. Asuman says: “A

⁵⁹ “Ja, daar is de vrouw voor gemaakt en doet dat automatisch. Maar de man komt niet op de 1^e plek, de kinderen wel” (Salima (32), M1).

⁶⁰ “Kinderen moeten altijd op de eerste plaats komen: je voedt een mens op. Alles wat het kind nodig heeft moet worden gegeven. (...) Natuurlijk is het niet iedereen gegund om kinderen te krijgen. Dus als je er bewust voor kiest moet je er jezelf ook aan overgeven.” (Asuman, T1.5).

⁶¹ “Je bent gewoon dezelfde moeder als je gaat werken, niet beter niet slechter, als je goed voor je kinderen zorgt dan maakt het niet uit of je werkt of niet.” (Noura)

job can be temporary and you can be replaced there. As a mother you cannot be replaced.”⁶².

Many participants think it is hard and difficult to continue working when you have children (Esra (19), T1.3). When women do combine childcare and work they largely reject the option of bringing their child to daycare⁶³ for several reasons. First of all, they do not entrust their child in the care of strangers⁶⁴ and especially not in daycare because of a recent case of child abuse in daycare that was given a lot of media attention (Fadime (24), T1.4) (Noura). Selma, a young Turkish mother explains her distrust for daycare: “Crèches, they are all networks, strange things happen like international networks of paedophiles. I do not trust it. Even though I am just graduated, now I have a child I stay at home till he is 4 years old.”⁶⁵. Selma is a young educated woman whose vision of day care is influenced by widespread negative media images of daycare. For her and many of the participants this media image has become common sense. 31-year-old Turkish Meral is one of the few participants that think it is ridiculous that you are scared to send your children to daycare. She thinks it’s good for children’s development (T1.4). And it’s good for the mother who has to learn how to detach from her child, something that is difficult for many Turkish women. Daycare nowadays is expensive, from that standpoint she would understand why women decide to take care of their children themselves (Meral (31), T2.1). Even though many participants repeated the negative media image of daycare and their distrust of daycare as the first reason to refuse it, I believe more important explanations for rejecting daycare can be found in the mentioned gender roles and duties of a good mother as I will explain in the next paragraph.

A mother as transmitter of culture and religion

A more intrinsic motive argued against taking children to daycare is related to culture and religion. Yuval-Davis has pointed out that positionings and obligations of women to their ethnic and national collectivities can affect their reproductive rights. Often collectivities based upon ethnicity or common descent can only be joined by

⁶² “Het werk kan ook een moment zijn en je kan daar vervangen worden. Als moeder kan je niet vervangen worden.” (Asuman, T1.5).

⁶³ I use daycare here as translation for the Dutch word: “kinderopvang” or “crèche”. Furthermore, I have translated “naschoolse opvang” as afterschool care, “peuterspeelzaal” as kindergarten and “voorschool” as preschool.

⁶⁴ Noura points out that she would feel safe sending her children to daycare if they would go to the crèche where her sister works, she knows she can trust her (Noura).

⁶⁵ “Crèche zijn allemaal netwerken, er gebeuren rare dingen zoals internationale pedofielenetwerken. Ik vertrouw het niet. Ook al ben ik net afgestudeerd, nu ik een kind heb ben ik toch thuis tot hij 4 jaar is.” (Selma, T1).

being born into it (17). Especially for immigrants, maintaining a certain collectivity within their new countries can be important and therefore the reproductive role of women is vital. Yuval-Davis states that women are constructed as biological reproducers of the nation, or the collectivity. Even though in most sex/gender systems, men are dominant active agents and women are passive victims of gender inequality ideologies, (older) women can be empowered by an ideology where women are seen as biological and cultural reproducers of the nation and hold power over other women and can construct them as deviants (Yuval- Davis 23). What the Turkish and Moroccan participants have said about raising their children links closely with the role for women Yuval-Davis describes as the cultural reproducers of the collectivity. Many women mentioned it is important that their children are brought up with the Islamic religion (Dikra, M1.1) (Merve (17), T1.2). The fear exists that children in daycare cannot separate good and bad and might even turn into criminals later in life because they miss a guiding mother (Rukiye (23), T1.2). For Rukiye, this ability of the mother to teach what is right or wrong is an important part of the duties of a mother and has to do with the cultural and religious norms and values women are expected to convey. 18 years old Turkish Sumeyra comments on this: “A good woman shouldn’t disgrace her family (...) She has to raise her children with the Islam. A child has to know why he beliefs. We live together with Dutch people so he has to answer question about the religion.”⁶⁶. Not educating your children with Islamic and cultural principles is seen as a disgrace to the family and women comply to this model in order not to lose their status as a good mother. Since the status of a good mother is also linked with the social status of the husband, mothers-in-law see it as their social duty to exert control over their daughters-in-law, as some women have mentioned (Btissame (24) & Sobiha, M2.1)(Melek (17) & Rukiye (17), T2.2). Going back to the issue of rejecting daycare, some women reject this because cultural and religious norms and values are not transmitted there (Rukiye (23), T1.2) (Huriyet (33), T1.2). Realising the importance of daycare that is based on Islamic and cultural specific principles can open up possibilities for the local government wanting to encourage the labour participation of Turkish and Moroccan.

⁶⁶ “Een goede vrouw moet ook haar familie niet te schande maken (...)Ze moet ook haar kinderen opvoeden over de Islam. Een kind moet weten waarom hij gelooft. We leven samen met Nederlanders, dus moet hij antwoord kunnen geven op vragen over het geloof.” (Sumeyra (18), T1.3).

The following section will analyse different ways of dealing with the obstacles of combining children and work that are given as examples by participants drawing from their own lives or from what they see in their surroundings.

Some solutions for combining childcare with (paid) labour

One of the solutions for combining childcare with a job the participants named the most is working part-time. This fits the general pattern of women in the Netherlands; as I have shown earlier 75% of the women who work, have part-time employment. The amount of hours worked a week was very different for women, some said they thought it enough to work 10 hours while other women told stories of successfully combining paid employment for four days a week with childcare (M1)(T1). Many women thought it best to start working when children were all at school, they might have to go to after school care or a mother can combine care for her children with the husband (Noura). Other women might decide to change jobs and find a type of employment that fits the situation better because it has flexible work hours (self-employment), or that has work hours you can combine with childcare (working at night or during school hours) or where you can work from home (M1.2) (Hatice (17), T1.4) (Huriyet (33), T1.1). A problem of abovementioned solutions is that the economic independence of women often remains low when women work stop working for a couple of years, work part-time or change jobs for a more flexible but often lower paid job.

Darifa raises another solution, that of a regular babysitter, for combining childcare with a job. Darifa believes that it is important for the development of the child that there is a familiar caretaker to rely on who keeps to a certain time schedule during the first four years. She asserts children don't get the proper care they need at daycare because the ratio of caretakers versus children is too low. Letting a family member, often a mother, take care of children is an option many women consider but Darifa's mother lived too far away and didn't want to become a caretaker for all her grandchildren. Instead, Darifa found a paid babysitter where she would bring her children during weekdays. Darifa communicated her way of raising her children well and this woman knew exactly what time to feed them and when to correct them. This woman was a mother figure for her children when Darifa was at work and because she would treat them the way Darifa would they could adapt easily to this shared

caretaker role. Darifa exclaims: “It went great! In my opinion this is the ideal solution. When they went to school she would pick them up and the same pattern stayed. They still like her.”⁶⁷ Darifa has come up with a creative solution for combining childcare with a job, a solution none of the other participants have named. Her ability to come up with creative solutions has helped Darifa to affirm her agency and find a way to combine childcare with paid labour without losing sight of the norms and values she and her surroundings considered important in raising her children.

Finally, some women say they don’t see a problem in women who share childcare with their husbands and both working part-time and raise their children themselves (Kubra, T1.5) (Rahime (25), T1.4). Most of the Turkish participants, however, were negative against a division of labour that would invert the current gender roles because they believed women are better at caring than men (T1) (T2). Some would only consider it a temporary solution if the situation demands it somehow (Rahime (25), T1.4). Many Moroccan participants were more open to the idea that the husband also stays at home and takes care of the children. They point out that husband and wife decide together to have children so they equally share responsibilities for these children and a father has to do things with his children as well (M1.1)(M2). However, for Dikra being an active father does not mean going beyond the gendered division of labour. “No we are not beyond that, the traditional division of labour is good and would be good for the society. How people have interpreted it is wrong. An active and concerned father is good, not a father who withdraws from contact with his children.”⁶⁸ Hakima, however, has no problem with shared caretaking and inverting gender roles and states:

“I don’t agree that I always come second with respect to my husband and the children. Together we have decided it [to have children]. If we come home we cook together, put on the pyjamas together and brush teeth together. We talked about it, had children together so we take care of them together. This has always been self-evident. We have always discussed everything. It is lovely to arrange things like that. It doesn’t even come up who is the boss on the basis of who earns a lot. At a certain point I wanted to get my drivers licence and together we have figured out how we

⁶⁷ “Het is gewoon geweldig gegaan. In mijn ogen is dit de ideale oplossing. Toen ze naar school gingen werden ze door haar ook opgehaald dus het ritme bleef. Ze mogen haar nog steeds.” (Darifa)

⁶⁸ “Nee het is niet voorbij, de traditionele taakverdeling is goed en zou goed zijn voor de maatschappij. Hoe mensen het ingevuld hebben is verkeerd. Een actieve en betrokken vader is goed, niet een vader die zich terugtrekt” (Dikra, M1.1).

could combine and resolve this.”⁶⁹

The other women in the same discussion group all admire Hakima for having resolved things like this. Hakima’s vision of gender equality speaks from her example, she stands for shared decision-making and shared responsibilities between husband and wife and has found a way to change her life accordingly affirming her agency as a working mother. Some of the abovementioned examples show that the low labour participation of Turkish and Moroccan women cannot always be explained by a lack of possibilities of combining childcare and paid labour but that it is rather a question of the goals women set in life.

“Ambition... But how much do you earn?”

Selma notices that non-western allochthone mothers have difficulty with continuing with work after giving birth while autochthone mothers think rather nonchalantly about this (Selma (24), T1.2). Saloua doesn’t see this the same way and points out that living in the Netherlands is based on dual-earners and that it is difficult to stay at home (Saloua, T1.2). The division Selma makes between the choices of autochthon women and non-western allochthon women doesn’t follow from the data in the census on women’s emancipation. Many autochthone women stop working or start working considerably less hours after their first child is born. What is at stake here isn’t so much a question of nonchalance of mothers who continue working but rather a question of ambition. Women who do want to continue working can always find a way to combine their work with their children and this doesn’t seem to get in the way of their motherhood. What is the difference between the women who stop working and who want to continue working? Some of the focus groups touched upon this issue. Imane stated that she misses the ambition with some women; she doesn’t even know the Moroccan word for ambition. Leila agrees and says a role model that is close to the people and knows what to say to activate people, is very important in transferring and endorsing ambition. Leila says this is how she learned ambition. The women discuss that most Moroccan boys and men are also not familiar with ambition

⁶⁹ “Ik ben het er niet mee eens dat ik altijd op de tweede plaats kom ten opzichte van de man en de kinderen. We hebben er samen voor gekozen. Als we thuis komen gaan we samen koken, samen pyjama's aantrekken en samen tandenpoetsen. We hebben er samen over gepraat, samen kinderen gekregen en dus zorgen we samen. Dit is altijd vanzelfsprekend geweest. We hebben altijd met elkaar overlegd. Het is heerlijk om op die manier alles te regelen. Het komt niet eens ter sprake wie er de baas is op grond van wie er veel betaald krijgt. Op een gegeven moment ging ik mijn rijbewijs halen en toen hebben we samen gekeken hoe we dat konden combineren en oplossen” (Hakima (31) M1.2).

in their job . They conclude that for Moroccan people it is all about earning money, surviving and raising your children well (Imane, Leila, Khadija, Dikra, M2.2) Imane says: “I have the idea the focus is on what you achieve for others, to show the world, but not what you achieve for yourself. That people think: ‘ambition... but how much do you earn?’”⁷⁰. Another Moroccan discussion group concluded that the ambition to do something besides being a mother is good for a woman’s development, and it diminishes the chance of possible isolation and depression (Kubra (21), T1.5) (Dikra & Taoussa, M1.1). It can even strengthen your experience as a mother since you give a good example for her children, Dikra states. (Dikra, M1.1).

Professional ambition

Among the participants of the focus groups there were several women who clearly showed ambition in their professional lives. 21-year-old student Kubra can imagine that mothers want to take care of their children themselves: “But I love my work very much, I love designing and photographing. I cannot imagine not doing that every day.” Even though the studies and the job she likes might sometimes seem incompatible with Muslim values she has found a way to get create a space for her religion within her studies and her job:

“I look at that as well [if it matches with my religion]. I had a photo-shoot once on New Years Eve, and I asked my dad to come along. That’s how I solved that.

Another time I had a conversation with a teacher: he asked what my religion was. At that moment I was drawing people. Finally that became a problem, I was drawing people and I am not allowed to. I found a way to solve it when a teacher showed me an Iranian designer who depicted people without a face.”⁷¹

Kubra’s story shows that she had the ability and openness to learn from her experience and change her ways of doing things while pursuing her ambitions. By doing this she showed a mix of creative and docile agency.

Imane claims she doesn’t want to let her religion get in the way of her professional career. During a job interview at a school she was once asked if she would be prepared to take off her headscarf. She answered: “Well sir, I don’t ask you

⁷⁰ “Ik heb het idee dat de focus ligt op wat jij bereikt voor anderen, om aan de wereld te laten zien, maar niet op wat jij voor jezelf bereikt. Dat mensen denken: ‘ambitie... hoeveel verdien je dan?’” (Imane, M2.2)

⁷¹ “Ik kijk daar eerst ook naar. Zo had ik een keer een foto-shoot op nieuwjaarsavond, en daar ging mijn vader toen mee naartoe. Zo heb ik dat toen opgelost. Zo heb ik ook eens een gesprek gehad met een docent: hij vroeg wat ik voor geloof had. Ik was op dat moment mensen aan het natekenen. Uiteindelijk ging dat wel aan me knagen, want ik teken mensen en dat ik niet mag. Ik probeer daar een mooie draai aan te geven nadat een docent me een Iranese vormgever liet zien die mensen afbeelden zonder gezicht.” (Kubra (21), T1.5).

to take of your pants?’ He thought it was funny. But eventually I saw that this environment wasn’t fruitful, so I decided to decline the job.”⁷² By declining the job Imane showed agency and ambition. She doesn’t want her religion to get in the way of her professional career but doesn’t want to lower herself to work in an environment that doesn’t fully accept her. An important aspect of ambition is envisioning a certain future for yourself, something Imane didn’t see with the job that was offered to her. She has the ability to anticipate future obstacles in that environment where oppressive power structures are in play, working against Muslim women, and she affirms her agency declining that job.

Ambition in your career and in your personal life doesn’t have to exclude each other, Darifa shows. When I asked her how she sees her life in ten years she answers that first of all she wants her children to have a good education and a good job. Secondly she wants the community centre she is managing to be open and accessible for everybody. And she always wants to continue developing herself. In ten years she might hold a high position in her job or be an adviser. Finally, she sees herself also becoming a grandmother, but as she says directly after that, not a babysitting grandmother (Darifa). Darifa envisions a future for herself both in her professional and in her family life and she shows the two don’t have to be mutually exclusive.

⁷² ‘Nou meneer, ik vraag toch ook niet of u uw broek wilt uittrekken?’ Dat vond hij wel grappig. Maar uiteindelijk zag ik dat die omgeving niet vruchtbaar was, dus heb ik de baan zelf niet aangenomen (Imane, M2.2).

Conclusion

What I want to show with this research is that it is too easy to say that traditional cultural or religious beliefs or their oppressive husbands are holding these women back in their development as autonomous, emancipated women. My main question for this research was: *How do Turkish and Moroccan women in the Netherlands navigate their way between their own cultural heritage and their experiences in Dutch culture in relation to motherhood and labour force participation?* and I have focussed particularly on the influence motherhood has on the labour force participation of these women. What the insights given by young Turkish and Moroccan women from Amsterdam participating in the focus groups and interviews held for the project 'Kiezen voor Werk?' have shown us are much more complex situations than the commonsensical media image upholds. Many women have many different experiences and they are all influenced by different things in various ways but what stood out was that most of them named a division of labour between men and women where women are responsible for the caring tasks and men are responsible for the basic income of the family. Social pressure from parents and parents-in-law plays an important factor in retaining these gender roles. However, with parents also lies the opportunity to change certain gendered patterns within marriage that might hold women back in their wish to participate on the labour market.

Even though the possibility of changing gender roles exist, as the census of emancipation has pointed out, a more traditional gendered division of labour, the ideal of a nuclear family and the 'one-and-a-half model' are also still very persistent among most autochthon people in the Netherlands. Only Surinamese, Antillean and Aruban women seem to have actually changed gendered patterns and as a result their labour force participation is higher. The important role given to women in the reproduction of culture and religion creates difficulties in changing these gendered patterns. Using the work of Yuval-Davis I have pointed out that Turkish and Moroccan women consider themselves important in transmitting what is right and wrong, the norms and values of Islam and their culture. A lot is invested in their role as mother since this is a way of keeping alive cultural and religious heritage. Women have indicated they feel pressured by family and especially mothers-in-law to uphold a certain gender

role. For some women who would like to participate on the labour market this motherly obligation has also played a role in their resistance to daycare and therefore their inactivity on the labour market. In order to activate more women to the labour market, local government should stimulate Islamic daycare centres. This solution would work both ways since it opens up direct job possibilities for more women who would like to contribute to society working in the care industry, and on the other hand it would give other women the opportunity to safely entrust their child in daycare without risking a lowered social status of a bad mother. It would be interesting to investigate whether women don't want to change current gender roles because they don't want to lose the control and power they gain within the family as reproducer of social, cultural and religious norms and values.

Power structures that can oppress women but can also play an important role in shaping their subjectivities and agency. Turkish and Moroccan participants who have ambition in the field of labour participation have showed that it is possible to combine ambition in work with motherhood for example by working part-time, starting your own business, finding a daily babysitter or opting for shared parenting with the husband. Participants who have found ways to combine work with childcare, have convinced their husband, parents or other members of their collectivities and have affirmed agency in resistance or in the ability to negotiate and creatively change their daily lives. However, some women don't seem to have ambition in the field of labour participation. I don't want to claim they lack ambition completely and can be depicted as passive victims but I would like to propose instead that we think of ambition in their personal and family life as well. Ambition is a way of envisioning your future. Raising your children to be respectful human beings with a good education and a good job should be considered as a type of ambition as well. What remains however is the risk a stay-at-home mother has by being financially dependent on her partner. What this research has shown and what I will continue to work on in the 'Kiezen voor Werk?' project is that many women are unaware of these risks and the topics of labour participation, gender roles and emancipation of women isn't a topic that is often discussed. Discussing this topic and raising everyday consciousness about these issues could attribute to more women affirming their agency whether this is in acts that aim towards stability or acts that aim towards awareness and change.

Bibliography

Primary sources

T1: First Turkish focus group held on 18-03-2012 in Amsterdam

T1.1: Selma, Rukiye, Saloua, Hilal.

T1.2: Merve, Rukiye, Huriyet, Seyma.

T1.3: Yusra, Sumeyra, Esra, Kamile, Hanim.

T1.4: Kubra, Fadime, Yasemin, Hatice, Rahime, Meral

T1.5: Fatima, Asuman, Kubra, Rukiye, Emine

T2: Second Turkish focus group held on 25-03-2012 in Amsterdam

T2.1: Yet, Hilal, Raziye, Meral, Fazilet.

T2.2: Reyhan, Yasemin, Sumeyra, Melek, Kubra, Rukiye.

T2.3: Aysenur, Rukiye, Rukiye (23), Sulenur.

M1: First Moroccan focus group held on 25-03-2012 in Amsterdam

M1.1: Fatima, Taoussa, Dikra, Rosa, Fatiha.

M1.2: Btissame, Salima, Mounia, Hakima, Hayat, Houria, Hafida.

M2: Second Moroccan focus group held on 01-04-2012 in Amsterdam

M2.1: Sobiha, Angela, Fassia, Salima, Btissame.

M2.2: Imane, Sanige, Leila, Dikra, Heleen.

Interview with Darifa held 26-07-2012 in Amsterdam

Interview with Noura held 20-07-2012 in Amsterdam

Secondary sources

Berg, Marguerite van den; Duyvendak, Jan Willem. "Paternalizing Mothers: Feminist repertoires in contemporary Dutch civilizing offensives" in: *Critical Social Policy* (2012): 1-21.

Bracke, Sarah and Puig de la Bellacasa, Maria. "Kennis als strijdtoneel: Antigone en het feministische standpuntdenken" in: Buikema, Rosemarie and van der Tuin, Iris. *Gender in media, kunst en cultuur*. Bussum: Uitgeverij Coutinho, 2007: 49-60.

Braidotti Rosi. "In Spite of the Times: The Postsecular Turn in Feminism". In: *Theory, Culture, and Society*. (2008) 25.6: 1-24.

Buikema, Rosemarie and Tuin, Iris van der. (eds). *Gender in Media, kunst en cultuur*. Bussum: Uitgeverij Coutinho b.v. 2007: 61-77.

Caaij, Ilse van der. *Gender, Agency and Nomadic Subjectivity in Contemporary Brazilian Film*. Bachelor Thesis, University of Utrecht. July 2011.

Captain, Esther and Ghorashi, Halleh. "Tot behoud van mijn identiteit.' Identiteitsvorming binnen de zmv-vrouwenbeweging" in: Botman, Maayke; Jouwe, Nancy and Wekker, Gloria. *Caleidoscopische visies. De zwarte, migranten- en vluchtelingenvrouwenbeweging in Nederland*. Amsterdam: Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen. 2001: 153-185.

Engelen, Madelon. "Wat is De tafel van één?" *WOMEN Inc.* 2012. Web. 30 Nov. 2012. <http://www.womeninc.nl/page/33021/nl>

Fairclough, Norman. *Language and Power*. Essex: Longman Group UK Limited, 1989.

Gemeente Amsterdam. *Vrouwenemancipatie in Amsterdam: Naar economische zelfstandigheid en zelfbeschikking. Beleidsplan 2011-2014*. Amsterdam, 2011: 1-47.

Haraway, Donna. "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the privilege of Partial Perspective". In: Haraway, Donna. *Simians, Cyborgs and Women. The Reinvention of Nature*. London: Free Association Books, 1991: 183-203.

Harding Sandra. *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge? Thinking from Women's Lives*. 1991. Ithaca/New York: Cornell University Press.

Hesse-Biber, S. "The Practice of Feminist In-Depth Interviewing" In: Nagy, Hesse-Biber and Leavy (eds). 2007. *Feminist Research Practice: a primer*. London: Sage: 111-149.

Mahmood, Saba. "Feminist Theory, Embodiment, and the Docile Agent: Some Reflections on the Egyptian Islamic Revival." in: *Cultural Anthropology* (2001) 16.2: 202-236.

Merens, Ans; Brakel, Marion van den; Hartgers, Marijke and Hermans, Brigitte. *Emancipatiemonitor 2010*. Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau. Den Haag, 2011: 1-258.

Midden, Eva. *Feminism in Multicultural Societies. An analysis of Dutch Multicultural and Postsecular Developments and their Implications for Feminist Debates*. Phd. University of Central Lancashire. May 2010.

Pels, Trees and De Gruijter, Marjan. *Emancipatie van de tweede generatie. Keuzen en kansen in de levensloop van jonge moeders van Marokkaanse en Turkse afkomst*. 2006. Assen: Koninklijke Van Gorcum Uitgeverij.

Prins, Baukje. "The Nerve to Break Taboos: New Realism in the Dutch Discourse on Multiculturalism" in: *Journal of International Migration and Integration* (2002) 3.3: 363-379.

Prins, Baukje. "The achievement of a standpoint: feminist epistemologies" in: *The standpoint in question. Situated knowledges and the Dutch minorities discourse*. Ph.D.dissertation, Utrecht University 1997: 61-75.

Rich, Adrienne. "Notes towards a politics of location" in Diaz-Diocaretz, Myriam and Zavala, Iris (eds.). *Women Feminist Identity and Society in the 1980s*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1985: 7-22.

Saharso Sawitri. *Feminisme versus Multiculturalisme?* 2000. Utrecht: Forum.

Servicepunt Emancipatie Amsterdam. "Factsheet economische zelfstandigheid van vrouwen in Amsterdam" Spe-amsterdam.nl. March 2011. Web. 30 Nov. 2012.

<http://www.spe-amsterdam.nl/images/stories/pdf/factsheeteconomischezelfstandigheid.pdf>

Staunaes, Dorthe. "Where have all the subjects gone? Bringing together the concepts of intersectionality and subjectification" *Nora* (2003) 11.2: 101-110.

Statline Bevolking: 'kerncijfers' Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek. 8 Aug. 2012.

Web. 22 Sept. 2012.

[http://statline.cbs.nl/StatWeb/publication/?VW=T&DM=SLNL&PA=37296ned&D1=a&D2=0,10,20,30,40,50,\(l-1\)-l&HD=121030-1604&HDR=G1&STB=T](http://statline.cbs.nl/StatWeb/publication/?VW=T&DM=SLNL&PA=37296ned&D1=a&D2=0,10,20,30,40,50,(l-1)-l&HD=121030-1604&HDR=G1&STB=T)

Yuval-Davis, Nira. "Women and the Biological Reproduction of "The Nation"."

Women's Studies International Forum (1996) 19:1/2: 17-24.

Wekker, Gloria. and Lutz, Helma. 'Een hoogvlakte met koude winden. De geschiedenis van het gender- en ethniciteitsdenken in Nederland'. in: Botman, Maayke; Jouwe, Nancy and Wekker, Gloria. *Caleidoscopische visies. De zwarte, migranten- en vluchtelingen vrouwenbeweging in Nederland*. Amsterdam: Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen. 2001: 25-51.

Wilkinson, Sue. "Focus Groups: A Feminist Method". In: Hesse-Biber and Yaiser (eds). *Feminist Perspectives on Social Research*. 2004. Oxford: Oxford University Press: 271-296

Women at Work – "Kiezen voor Werk. Jonge Marokkaanse en Turkse vrouwen activeren voor de arbeidsmarkt". 2011.