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Paternalizing mothers: Feminist repertoires in contemporary Dutch civilizing offensives

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Abstract

The stress in Dutch policy texts and policy practices on the emancipation of migrant women from their family and spouses goes hand in hand with a focus on precisely women's role within the family: that of the mother. In this paper, we ask the question how this is possible. We aim to shed light on this question by understanding contemporary policy texts and policy practices in the context of 1) a strong domestic motherhood ideology and 2) a Dutch tradition of paternalism. These tensions between notions of autonomy and emancipation from the family and marriage on the one hand, and motherhood on the other hand, lead to paradoxical practices of teaching migrant women to become emancipated within their role as mothers. Feminist discursive repertoires are put to work in paternalist policy practices that focus on autonomy in particular ways. In this article, we analyse these notions in policy discourses and in practices that we recorded in ethnographic research in parenting courses in Rotterdam.

Key words

feminism, gender, migrant integration, motherhood, nationalism, the Netherlands, paternalism

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The riddle: Emancipation through motherhood?

In the city of Maastricht, the Netherlands, a programme to enhance women's emancipation teaches migrant women how to mother. In Rotterdam, mothers are educated by state agents to talk to their children about sex. In Amsterdam, social workers are teaching migrant mothers how to play with their children because this way, children play and learn to be responsible citizens simultaneously. These three cases are examples of policy interventions aimed at influencing parenting practices. On the basis of an investigation of this type of policy and policy practices in Rotterdam, we aim to shed light on the following riddle: How is it possible that the stress in Dutch policy texts and practices on the emancipation of women from their family and spouses goes hand in hand with a focus on precisely women's role *within* the family, namely that of the mother?

In this article, we argue that this paradox can only be understood by looking at continuities between the researched practices and a long-standing Dutch tradition of paternalism on the one hand, and a strong domestic motherhood ideology on the other. We thus conceptualize the policy practices of parenting courses as forms of contemporary civilizing offensives. We understand a civilizing offensive to be a more or less planned effort to teach certain kinds of civility to a group of subjects that are deemed to be in lack of that civility. Civilizing offensives can be state efforts (as is the case in the practices researched here), but are often also private undertakings, for instance in the case of 19th and early 20th century charities' efforts to 'uplift' and 'normalize' the working classes (De Regt, 1984; Dercksen and Verplanke, 1987; Duyvendak, 1999). The term civilizing offensive denotes here policy regimes in a specific Dutch historical context in which civility and the ambition to civilize have continuously re-emerged as their primary focus.

Contemporary civilizing offensives in the Netherlands have two striking features: 1) they focus disproportionately on (migrant) women and 2) they simultaneously focus on the emancipation of women *and* on their role as mothers. This second feature is at the centre of our attention in this paper. The emancipation of women from tradition, family and marriage is often understood as a primary condition for integration into Dutch society. Certain forms of family and marriage are understood as 'traditional' and thus deemed not suitable for the 'individualized' Netherlands. The families and spouses of immigrant women are then conceptualized as limiting the personal freedom of the women (Van den Berg and Schinkel, 2009; Schinkel, 2011). In such arguments, feminist discursive repertoires are often put to work to determine who does and who does not belong in the Netherlands (Van den Berg and Schinkel, 2009). That is to say, that a selective reading of the intellectual heritage of the second feminist wave is used as a (sometimes opportunistic) tool or an interpretative repertoire to evaluate migrants' behaviour and to

include or exclude persons and populations. Yet, at the same time, very specific notions of motherhood are actively promoted by the state in order to integrate specific groups of women. What we will show in this article is *how* precisely the concept of emancipation is understood in the policy practices that we researched and what pivotal role the concept of autonomy plays there within a context of parenting courses.

Many elements that ignite debates on Dutchness in the Netherlands can be traced to the culturalization (Duyvendak et al., 2010) or moralization (Schinkel and Van Houdt, 2010) of citizenship. 'Being Dutch' increasingly means subscribing to 'progressive values' (such as the acceptance of homosexuality, gender equality et cetera) (Duyvendak et al., 2010; Mepschen et al., 2010). A moral majority demands that migrants share certain values and ideals, even though many of those ideals differ quite a lot from actual practices of the Dutch. This performed consensus goes hand in hand with the dismissal of other values. The 'Other', most notably in the form of the Muslim immigrant, is increasingly seen as 'an eyesore' (Van der Veer, 2006: 120). Consequently, teaching specific 'progressive values' is one of the ways in which government programmes aim to produce specific kinds of citizens as is the case in the practices we study here.

Following the above, the research questions that guide this paper are: A) How do Dutch policy practices aim at emancipating women by focusing on their motherhood? and B) How can we understand this paradoxical practice in the Dutch historical and cultural context?

We will answer these questions using three types of material: 1) literature on Dutch history and ideals of motherhood and paternalism, 2) data on policies of the Dutch local and national state, 3) ethnographic material from parenting courses in Rotterdam. On the basis of particularly this ethnographic material, we show precisely how the tensions between a focus on emancipation on the one hand and on motherhood on the other, are resolved within these policy practices.

Dutch motherhood

To many of the Dutch, gender equality does not necessarily mean a gender-equal division of labour or care. In fact, when compared to surrounding countries, the Dutch have a strong domestic tradition in which the mother ideally cared for the house and the children and the father worked outside of the home (Kremer, 2007; Kloek, 2009; Van Daalen, 2010). For the Dutch, this does not automatically result in an experienced unequal distribution of power, as the mother traditionally enjoyed much autonomy. In the following, this particular constellation of Dutch motherhood ideals is further analysed to show how 'progressive' ideas of gender equality in the Netherlands can coexist very

well with a strong motherhood ideology and family practices that leave most caring duties to mothers. In the parenting courses that are the object of study in the second part of the paper, this constellation is reflected in a dual stress on women as mothers on the one hand, and personal autonomy on the other.

Contemporary Dutch motherhood: Ideals and practices

The current family ideal in the Netherlands consists of at least three elements. First, a strong preference for *self-care*, that is to say that the Dutch government stimulates parents to take care of their children themselves, instead of providing comprehensive schemes of childcare or promoting intergenerational care. Most Dutch parents share in this ideal: they too feel that parents are the ones that should take care of their own children and that children are best taken care of in the domestic sphere (Korteweg, 2006; Kremer, 2007; Van Daalen, 2010). Second, the ideal prescribes the form of the *nuclear family*. Single parenthood is defined as a problem and, again, the division of care tasks and work is thought to be solved among the partners within the domestic sphere. Third, currently, a large portion of the Dutch and the government share the ideal of *parental sharing* (Plantenga, 2002; Kremer, 2007). The Dutch state actively engages in facilitating mothers and fathers to share the care for children. For example, employees have the legal right to change their job from full-time to part-time to have more time to spend with their children (Plantenga, 2002; Kremer, 2007). The combination of work and care duties by both parents became the goal of the Dutch government in the 1990s because of the emancipation of women, but, as Plantenga has argued (2002), also because the Dutch government more broadly focuses on part-time employment as a route to higher employment rates and labour market flexibility. In fact, the Netherlands have been termed 'part-time paradise' (Duyvendak and Stavenuiter, 2006).

It is safe to say that there are large discrepancies between the gender-equal ideals of the Dutch and their far more traditional practices (Kremer, 2007; Van Daalen, 2010). In the context of this article, it is important to note that the vast majority of care work for children in the Netherlands is the responsibility of mothers and therefore deserves the term 'mothering work' (Reay, 1998). In fact, the image of the Scandinavian countries in which much more responsibility for children is allocated with the state, often functions as a negative reference point when children's interests for the best care (as given by the mother) are played out against women's interests in paid employment (Kremer, 2007). However much the Dutch government aims for a model of two parents working and equally sharing caring duties, the everyday practice in the Netherlands turns out to be that fathers work full-time and mothers have a part-time job for two or three days a week. 73% of Dutch working women work part-time and most of them have what are called 'small jobs' (of fewer than 27 hours a week) (Duyvendak and Stavenuiter, 2006). Women's emancipation in the Netherlands

in practice thus often means a 'half-revolution' (Hochschild, 2003; Kremer, 2007) of part-time paid employment and, as a result, lower status jobs and fewer career opportunities (Duyvendak and Stavenuiter, 2006).

Historical roots of the Dutch radical family ideal

This opposition between ideals and practices is the result of a specific Dutch history of the family. Compared to what happened in other West-European countries, a rather radical interpretation of the nuclear family became dominant in the Netherlands very early on. The bourgeois ideal originated in the 17th century and prescribed a high level of domesticity and a very strong gender division of labour (Kloek, 2009; Van Daalen, 2010). Culturally, there has been a remarkable continuity in ideas and narratives about motherhood in the Netherlands (Kloek, 2009). At least in ideals, Dutch women prioritized their role of housewife: managing the household, keeping things clean and orderly. However, within this motherhood ideal, the highly gendered spheres did not necessarily mean unequal gendered relationships. In fact, Dutch housewives and mothers have historically often been depicted as bossy and entrepreneurial and in historic sources, foreign commentators stated how to them, Dutch women were strikingly equal to their spouses within the domestic sphere (Kloek, 2009).

Dutch nationalist narratives of ideal family life were very much based on the idea of the housewife and full-time mother who is equal to the father. In fact, for centuries and arguably still to some degree today, it was a measure of good taste and citizenship if women did not need to work outside the home and could spend most of their time on the household and the children (Kloek, 2009). To the Dutch, a gendered division of labour did not and still does not automatically signify inequality. Instead, *autonomy* within the household was and is an important aspect of the motherhood ideology.

To be sure, the nuclear family ideal and the separation of gendered spheres as a result of the Industrial Revolution was to be found all over Europe and the United States in the 18th and 19th centuries (Ariès, 1962; Donzelot, 1977; Abramovitz, 1988; Ehrenreich and English, 2005; Cheal, 2008). However, different authors have suggested that the Dutch maintained a particularly radical nuclear family ideal (Kloek, 2009; Van Daalen, 2010). In the Dutch system of pillarization, the breadwinner model and motherhood ideal were actively promoted by the different denominations (Van Daalen, 2010), in the form of civilizing offensives in which higher middle class women and later on professionals taught lower class mothers how to mother (De Regt, 1984; Dercksen and Verplanke, 1987). Pillarization was a vertical organization of society and social institutions into segments ('zuilen' in Dutch) along denominational or ideological lines (Lijphart, 1968). The hegemony of this motherhood ideology in the Netherlands was also reflected in the low labour participation of Dutch women when compared to women in surrounding

countries. Research shows for example that in 1920, in France 42% and in Germany 33% of women participated in paid labour, whereas only 18% of Dutch women did the same (Diederiks et al., 1994: 345).

The downfall of the breadwinner model? From the 1960s onwards

Gender relations were one of the main targets of young people in the 1960s and 70s aiming for change (Van Daalen, 2010). The dependency of women on men and women's identity as mothers were the main objects of debate for Dutch second wave feminists (Costera Meijer, 1996). They claimed a woman's right to her own subjectivity and body. Thus, besides for example reproductive rights and equal rights in the welfare state, motherhood became a much more contested issue than it was before. Motherhood, feminists maintained in the Netherlands and abroad, should not remain a 'powerless responsibility' (Rich, 1976: 52).

These profound changes did not immediately become institutionalized in the Netherlands. In fact, it took Dutch women some decades longer to increase labour market participation than women in other West-European countries. And it took the Dutch state until the 1990s to put an end to formal gender differentiated policies (Plantenga, 2002; Korteweg, 2006). The breadwinner model of the Dutch welfare state was abandoned and the Dutch state urged women to earn economic autonomy. However, the 'Dutch paradox' (Braidotti, 1991: 7) of progressive ideas about gender relations on the one hand, and traditional practices on the other, remained.

Interestingly, Dutch women are nowadays often presented (in public discourse as well as in policy) as the 'endpoint of emancipation'¹ (Wekker, 2004: 490). This presentation serves to exclude 'other' women (black, migrant and refugee) from the liberated image of the Dutch national identity (Wekker, 2004; Van den Berg and Schinkel, 2009; Ghorashi, 2010). This Dutch model of emancipation that 'other' women should appropriate, thus does not necessarily put paid labour centre stage. In fact, it is very much about autonomy in a more general sense and about equality vis-à-vis spouses. The emancipation from tradition, family and other strong ties that women might have with the help of the appropriation of ideals of autonomy and individuality, is deemed much more important (Van den Berg and Schinkel, 2009).

A Dutch tradition of paternalism

Building on a rich history of private civilizing offensives in the 19th and early 20th centuries (De Regt, 1984; Dercksen and Verplanke, 1987; Duyvendak, 1999), after the Second World War, the formation of the Dutch welfare state came with the state's supervision of citizens' behaviours. As René Boomkens

put it, in the Netherlands, the 'self-evident presence' of planning and social engineering 'became a genuinely national project after the war' (Boomkens, 2008: 10). Paternalistic policies are social policies aimed at supervising and directing lives in return for supporting them (cf. Mead, 1998). Paternalistic social policies not only set criteria of entrance into social policy schemes but enforce certain behavioural requirements through close supervision. Thus, in the 1950s, paternalism was still entirely matter-of-course. The authority of those in power (either in government or in civil society) was unquestioned. In this period, paternalism was targeted at so-called 'anti-social people' with 'social problems'. They were often housed in segregated neighbourhoods where they were taught how to run a respectable household that remained clean, quiet and orderly. Throughout the course of the 1960s, paternalism was vehemently attacked. This must be understood in the context of a new ideal of *autonomous self-development*. There was, in the words of Clecak (1983), a project mounted aimed at a 'democratization of the person-being'. As societal structures became the object of discussion and engineering, hierarchies lost legitimacy and so did paternalistic policies (Tonkens, 1999). Autonomous self-development, so the social movement for democratization argued, was not to be planned 'heteronomously' (Duyvendak, 1999).

During the 1960s and 1970s, this form of anti-paternalism was extremely successful. In the 1980s and early 1990s, anti-paternalism remained a directive for much social policy and the idea that the citizens' perspective was relevant became even more prominent. From the mid-1990s, thinking about paternalism grew increasingly ambiguous. On the one hand, the ideal of self-determinism was still very powerful, as was the anti-paternalism which it accompanied. On the other hand, a rediscovery of paternalism became apparent, now formulated in terms of 'unsolicited intervention', 'outreach programmes', and 'prevention'. This is, however, less of a contradiction than appears at first glance. Paternalist interventions are presently selectively targeting groups of inhabitants who are not *yet* considered full citizens (Schinkel and Van Houdt, 2010). They have to be helped by social professionals to *become* autonomous, modern, and progressive. The 'paradox of paternalism' (the idea that the government should intervene, yet people should remain autonomous subjects), now seems to be solved by implementing paternalistic policies for very specific groups of citizens who are 'not yet' autonomous. This way, paternalism is very much publicly supported, yet for *other* people. In this case, those others are migrant mothers.

Post-industrial motherhood ideals: Socialization for democracy

In the revolutions of the 1960s, the 'natural' authority of parents over children was questioned. What was constructed from then on as 'authoritarian'

parenting – the idea that what father or mother says goes and children obey – came to be seen as anti-democratic. The new ideal prescribed that parents should lead their children's way to autonomy, not impose their own will (Walkerdine and Lucey, 1989). One of the many voices in this perspective was that of Adorno, who insisted that to prevent a future Auschwitz, education for autonomy was imperative (Adorno, 1966). This example gives an idea of the heavy moral argument behind the perceived necessity of autonomy in those years. Because of the remains of the tradition of the nuclear family and the motherhood ideology, the person to produce these citizens still was and is the mother.

'Mothering work' is, therefore, crucial to the state (Donzelot, 1977; Walkerdine and Lucey, 1989). Mothering has been a focal point of nation building in various moments in time (Donzelot, 1977; Abramovitz, 1988; Yuval-Davis, 1997). Women are historically often the ones held responsible for the social and biological reproduction of the nation, and their bodies often are the bearers of signals that specify the boundaries of the nation (Yuval-Davis, 1997; Bonjour, 2011). As Lewis (2005) has argued for the UK, especially the figure of 'the immigrant woman' expresses the possibility of assimilation of groups into the nation and the national while at the same signalling a destabilizing force to those same entities. Similar analyses have been made of the way in which welfare policies are based on racist and sexist foundations (Abramovitz, 1988; Fox Piven and Cloward, 1993; Neubeck and Cazenave, 2001).

In the remainder of this article, we will examine how contemporary policy texts and policy practices in the Netherlands indeed put immigrant women centre stage in efforts to better 'integrate' newcomers into the nation and how the tension between on the one hand notions of emancipation and autonomy and on the other the importance of family and marriage are negotiated.

Methods: Ethnographic fieldwork and policy analysis

Marguerite van den Berg participated in parenting courses² for 18 months. She took part in courses all over Rotterdam that were organized by welfare agencies, professional organizations for parental advice and other municipal organizations. Most teachers in the courses were HBO (higher vocational training) pedagogues, educational experts or social workers. The teachers that are included in this article were white and female.

Participants in the courses were almost exclusively mothers. They participate in the courses voluntarily. Mandatory parenting courses do exist in the Netherlands but are an altogether different phenomenon from what we analyse here. Elementary schools often work together with social work agencies

to provide parent involvement programmes. Parenting courses are one element or form of such programmes. Because many courses were provided in elementary schools for parents of pupils, the mothers most often had children between the ages of 4 and 12. The mothers usually were asked to participate by a representative of the school. The courses almost always took place in a designated parent room within the school building, where mothers would also often walk in for a cup of coffee. Most of the participants were migrants or the daughters of migrants and mostly of Turkish, Moroccan and Hindu-Surinamese descent. That is not to say that the parenting courses were organized solely for migrant women. Instead, the courses were located in urban areas where most of the inhabitants are of foreign descent. Courses were organized in areas which were considered by the municipality to be 'problem areas'. Poverty, crime rates and the percentage of migrant inhabitants are important indicators in the selection of such areas (Schinkel and Van den Berg, 2011).

In this ethnographic research, negotiations about meaning and interactions that took place between professionals who executed policies (in the form of parenting courses) and women who participated in the courses were the main object. First hand observations of interactions in parenting courses were recorded in writing. Supplementary interviews with participants of the courses, professionals and managers were also conducted.

Rotterdam is an interesting case in the context of this article, because it is consistently put forward as a laboratory of social policy (Noordegraaf, 2008; Schinkel and Van den Berg, 2011; Van den Berg, 2012). Rotterdam is the poorest, most industrial and at the same time the most ethnically diverse city in the Netherlands. These three characteristics are considered fundamental problems that are used to legitimate far-reaching interventions by the local government. For the purpose of this article, we have analysed policy texts on the emancipation of women and the integration of migrants into Dutch society. We have selected texts on the national level and – as a case study of the local level – Rotterdam policy texts on similar issues. In this analysis, we have focused in the texts on conceptualizations of gender equality, emancipation of women, motherhood and integration.

Conceptual shifts in policy: Integration / emancipation / motherhood

Integration / emancipation

Because ideas of gender equality are so central to Dutch self-representations (Wekker, 2004), conceptualizations of integration of migrants into Dutch society often include gender norms. In such conceptualizations, emancipation and integration are often used as interchangeable concepts. Key topics

in Dutch discourse on minorities' integration have been headscarves, honour killings and forced marriages: all clear gender issues (Van den Berg and Schinkel, 2009; Bonjour, 2011; Schinkel, 2011). Especially Muslim women are represented as victims in need of saving by Dutch society from their husbands, put eloquently by Prins: 'Immigrant men make problems, immigrant women have them' (2000: 34). In the national policy brief 'More chances for women: Emancipation policies 2008–2011' (Ministerie van Onderwijs, 2008), this idea comes to the fore in the statement:

Because of traditional gender ideals *of men*, a lack of knowledge of the Dutch language and a lack of *contact with people outside their own communities*, social isolation is a serious threat for many young Turkish and Moroccan women. (p. 9; italic not in original, all translations into English by authors)

Note in this statement how a lack of integration, defined as contact with people outside of their 'own' (read: ethnic) communities is seen as a threat to these women's emancipation and how men's traditional views are also to blame. The emancipation of women is thus seen as an element in the 'integration' of migrants into Dutch society and vice versa: the integration of women into the larger society is an element in the definition of women's emancipation.

Parent / women / mother

At the municipal level, the 2005 policy brief 'More than just language! The Rotterdam action programme for integration of allochthon³ parents and women' is an extreme example of conceptual confusion. In the brief, the terms 'parents' and 'women' are continuously used as synonyms, for example when it says that:

[Rotterdam presents] in this program citizenship courses for allochthon parents and women. The goal [is] to enhance the participation of allochthon women in the Rotterdam society. (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2005a: 3)

In the first sentence of this quote, parents and women are presented as two separate categories, but in the second sentence, the central goal of the plan is defined in terms of the participation of women alone. In other words: to the Rotterdam municipality, parents are, in fact, mothers. The gender-blind term 'parents' thus obscures the gendered goals that are at the core of the plan: the participation of *women as mothers* in certain spheres of society (compare Reay, 1998 on 'the genderless parent' and 'un-gendered rhetoric', see also Bonjour, 2011 for an analysis of responsabilization of women as mothers for the integration of their children; see also Van den Berg, 2007).

Integration / citizenship / motherhood

The idea that women should participate as mothers comes to the fore in the idea that 'if you educate a mother, you educate a family' (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2005a: 3). The idea here is that women are the key to the development of the larger group. This theory can be found not only in Dutch social policy, but, for example, also in international development policies and NGO strategies such as many micro-credit schemes (Kabeer, 1995; Rahman, 1999). Targeting society at large by targeting women in their role of responsible mothers is thus a global phenomenon. In Rotterdam, this paradigm led to a formal priority to be given to mothers for (in some cases mandatory) citizenship courses (see for a good analysis of this particular phenomenon: Bonjour, 2011). The citizenship courses are designed to teach immigrants to be Dutch citizens. This included the Dutch language, but, as the Rotterdam brief states:

In addition to language, citizenship is about being involved in raising your children. (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2005a: 4)

Involvement in raising children was thus defined as an integral part of citizenship and 'participation in Dutch society' (see Schinkel, 2010 for an analysis of the exchangeability of the concepts 'citizenship' and 'integration' in the Netherlands). *Motherhood* is presented here as one of the elements of the *integration* of migrants into Dutch society, which is why, to give a concrete example, two thirds of Rotterdam's budget for citizenship courses was reserved in 2002 for mothers and one third for unemployed inhabitants (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2002), about which the alderman declared:

Because this way, we can prevent children growing up in an environment without knowledge about the values and norms of our country. (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2002: 17)

In this case, it appears, mothers serve as a vessel for children's integration into the larger society. Mothers are, in such a case, an entry point into the community at large. We can also see shifts in conceptualizations of parenting, emancipation, integration and citizenship when the 2005 plan for parental support says:

In Rotterdam, we have the problem of parents that grew up in a totally different 'culture of parenting' and therefore do not know what is expected of them and their children. (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2005b: 5)

[...] The problems of upbringing in Rotterdam can be associated with emancipation. Education and the bridging of cultural differences in respect to 'cultures of upbringing' [...] are necessary in respect to the equality of the sexes. (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2005b: 6)

In these quotes, the Dutch self-representation as a gender-equal country is apparent (see above), as is the idea that many migrants share cultural practices that are gender unequal. Emancipation here surfaces as a central concept that is derived from a feminist discursive repertoire in order to produce the cultural 'Other'.

Emancipation / motherhood

Policies designed to emancipate women focus on parenting. There, the importance of an autonomous form of motherhood comes to the fore. In these cases, the goal is often to connect empowerment programmes for women to women's interests '*as they are*' (De Gruijter et al., 2007; italic not in original). The idea is that women are already interested in their children and can therefore be made enthusiastic about learning more about raising them. Motherhood then becomes the starting point for processes of emancipation and empowerment, because education in any field is in such instances seen as personal development of the targeted groups of women. In the terms of the Rotterdam policy brief of 2008:

There is a need for a policy supply that connects to the interests and needs of women themselves [...] women who stand far away from the labour market [...] who need activities that are easily accessible. (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2008: 9)

This is why, in local practices, parenting courses are often part of emancipation policies (for example in PaVEM projects⁴). Moreover, motherhood is also the common characteristic of participants in certain social policies. In such cases, women are brought together on the basis of their role as mother.

Entry point for integration and emancipation: Mothers

Three forms of emancipation are apparent in our analysis of policy texts. First, policies focus on *women* who need empowerment programmes in order to emancipate from their husbands, families and traditions. Yet, the women in these policies are selected and brought together on the basis of their role as mothers. Second, policies focus on women who need to emancipate *in their role as mothers*. There, the pressure is for them to become autonomous mothers. In this form of emancipation through motherhood, the idea is that the role of the mother is the only attainable or feasible role for many women and thus this should be the role in which emancipation is to be accomplished. Third, policies focus on mothers *as a vessel* for the development of their children into citizens and for their children's integration into society as a whole. The idea is then, that women should teach their children and families how to behave, think and feel Dutch. The mother is in such instances an entry point into

communities. All three forms of emancipation come back in our analysis of classroom interactions.

Emancipation through motherhood: Parenting courses in Rotterdam

Television: A symbol for female autonomy

In an elementary school, in a working class neighbourhood in the south of Rotterdam, a group of seven mothers, two professionals and Marguerite van den Berg were gathered to talk for three mornings in the first months of 2010 about the sexual development of children and possible ways for them as parents to talk with their children about this subject. The parenting course was called 'growing up with love' and was provided by a social work agency in Rotterdam that is financed by the municipality. The way in which Dutch policy practices are teaching sex talk to parents is left out of the scope of this article, because we would like to focus on meanings of autonomy and emancipation. The mothers started the morning off with a cup of coffee in the special 'parent room' in the school. It was a cosy room with a special corner for children to play in and a small kitchen. It is the first time that the teacher Cora (as we will call her here, all names are changed; Cora is in her late fifties, white and a social worker by training) met this group of women. The following text is an excerpt of extensive ethnographic field notes.

We start with an introductory round. Cora asks us to tell each other something about ourselves. She suggests that a nice way to do this is to tell everybody what TV-show you like and why you like it so much. The mothers (all in their twenties and thirties, with multiple children and of Turkish or Moroccan descent) seem to like this question and respond with gusto. One woman confesses how she never gets to watch the shows she likes because her husband always lays claim on the remote control. Some of the other women talk about their favourite shows. When we've finished with the introductory round, Cora elaborates on why she wanted us to talk about TV: 'Women have a tendency to do everything for their husband and children. When I ask about the TV, it is instantly clear for me which ones of you have this tendency and which ones of you claim time for yourselves or for you and your husband as a couple. Because, you know that that is very important. So, when you talk about watching TV, you often say something about the relationships you have at home.'

When we analyse the excerpt above, it is apparent that Cora focuses on negotiations in the home about TV use, because this, in her view, signals the women's 'claim' to time and space. It gives her an idea about power relations

in the home. In this case, the TV can become a symbol of women's power and autonomy. The focus is thus on the *women's autonomy* within the home. A feminist repertoire is activated: a woman's claim on time and space, symbolized by the management of the TV, is highlighted. However, this focus is within a frame of a parenting course, which means the women are addressed as mothers first.

Autonomy with or without husband

Later that same morning, Cora and one of the mothers, Khadija, got into a more specific negotiation about the autonomy of women. Again, the following text is an excerpt of extensive ethnographic field notes.

Khadija married young, when she was only seventeen years old, she tells the group. She makes a point of defending marriage at an early age. She explains how much she loved to be able to marry her first love and how she is still very happy with her husband. Khadija explains how she wishes that her daughters are just as lucky as she was and are able to marry young. This way, they are free to do as they please within their marriage. Cora asks Khadija what would happen when her daughters want to study or resist the idea of marrying young. Khadija claims that studying in no way means that you cannot marry. 'You can still go to school as a married woman, you know, she doesn't have to get pregnant right away. She can wait with having children.' Khadija explains that one of the primary reasons for her plea for young marriage is the difficulty that many young women and men have with waiting for marriage to start to have sex. Because Khadija feels strongly that sex before marriage is wrong, an early marriage, to her, is a beautiful solution. Cora responds that this is of course very nice, and that it is too very nice for Khadija that her marriage worked out well, but in her work, she has seen many young marriages being forced on girls, being at odds with young girls' interests and ending in divorce.

Khadija does not fit the categorization of a mother in need of empowerment as emphasized in the above analysed policy texts. She is eloquent, educated and opinionated. Moreover, she is very open about sex. She comes to the courses voluntarily because she likes talking to other women about children, she says in an interview. Khadija makes a clear argument in the discussion related here: for her daughters to have maximum autonomy ('free to do as they please') *and* the possibility to have sex, a young marriage is ideal. The idea of a young marriage, though, is not congruent with Cora's idea of autonomy. Instead, she suggested that marrying young is likely to be forced.

In a way, Cora went as far as negating Khadija's own positive life experience with her argument that young marriages stand in the way of further personal development, such as an education. Khadija highlighted the

possibility to combine marriage and an education, through which she laid bare an assumption of Cora's: that marriage leads to pregnancy right away. Cora's insistence that women should be autonomous subjects is thus met in this negotiation by Khadija's view that women can more easily be autonomous subjects *in* marriage, leading Cora to change her argument from a deontological one into a consequentialist one: in the above discussion, she used her expert position to point to the *effects* of young marriage. In her negation of the particular (Khadija's life story), she focused on the general: Cora pointed out the negative effects of young marriage and introduced the theme of forced marriages (a high profile theme in public debate on migrant integration) into the discussion. In the interaction of Khadija and Cora, Cora addressed Khadija *as a woman* whose autonomy is important, but also *as a mother who functions as a vessel* through which forced marriages as a deviant gendered practice can be combated.

Second wave feminism as discursive repertoire

In a community centre adjacent to an elementary school, twenty mothers (varying in age from early twenties to forties, mostly of Turkish and Moroccan descent), three professionals and one of the authors of this article gathered to talk one morning in 2010 about communication between parents. According to the professional that organized this discussion morning, Marlies (a white pedagogue in her early forties, employed by the local social work agency), some of the mothers find it difficult to communicate with their spouse to their children in one voice, she explains before the meeting begins. Marlies has organized for herself to provide a morning of discussion on communication between parents. As soon as she introduced the theme, the discussion took a different turn than she anticipated. At the head of the table, on the opposite side of Marlies, Gulsen (a Turkish mother in her forties with five children) gave an opening statement in perfect Dutch:

In my home, what I say goes. My husband goes to work at five in the morning and comes home at six or seven in the evening. Between those hours, my children know perfectly well that I am the boss. They, and my husband acknowledge that I am the boss.

Gulsen was accompanied in her argument by Esmā who agreed that men today are not the same as they were before. Her husband too, she says, supports her in raising the children and doing housework. Marlies returned to the room at this point in the discussion (she had stepped out for some time) and she introduced the morning's theme for the second time, thereby crossing the discussion that had already taken off. At the same time, she invited the women to take coffee and cookies. Following this, Marlies stood up and raised

her voice to make herself heard, but the women were too busy continuing their discussion from before and pouring coffee to listen. The discussion took its own course with the women talking about their children's health problems. After a while, Marlies succeeded in getting back the attention of the women and at this point, she reintroduced the theme of the morning using an example of a mother who threatens her children with their father in order for them to listen to her. She thus used a hypothetical situation to highlight the following point:

'This has a lot to do with emancipation as well, of course. You know, that you really stand in your own position, in your own power as a mother. So that you do not say to your children that you need your husband.'

Yasmine, a young mother, intervenes and says: 'I know, but sometimes you feel so powerless, when the children have been annoying all day, you just want him [her husband, authors] to get involved too. Sometimes he's away the entire day and then when he comes home he can still be nice and patient towards the children. But you know, this is easy for him, because he hasn't seen them all day.'

Building on this statement, Marlies explains to the women why it is so important for them to stand their ground. She does so by introducing the following:

'We have dealt with this in the 1950s and 1960s as well, that we, you know, had to fight against inequality ... Maybe still ... well, you know more in the higher regions ... you know in executive boards and such. You still see a lot of men there and not enough women. But, you know, at home, you have to stand your ground. So that your children won't think: mum can't do it herself, she needs dad.'

In this excerpt, Marlies is struggling with the group of women to structure the discussion. What we see here is that Marlies introduces a feminist repertoire by introducing women's 'fight against inequality'. She thus associates this political struggle with what the participants of this morning's class deal with at home.

Some time later, Yasmine's son, eight years of age, comes into the room to pick up his mother. He is there to witness some of the discussion and hears his mother talking about feelings of powerlessness when it comes to raising him and his siblings. At this point, Marlies says to him:

'It is going to be alright, you know. Mummy tries her best!'

In this last part of this particular discussion, Marlies effectively undermined Yasmine's authority as a mother in the way that she addressed Yasmine's son.

The events of this morning are an extreme case of the tensions between 'heteronomous' professional interventions on the one hand, and the wish to reinforce autonomy on the other hand, that are characteristic of many paternalist policies. Marlies crossed the women's own discussions and introduced the theme of women's liberation as a problem that the women in the class have at home. Marlies construed a category of 'us' (which can be interpreted as 'Dutch white women', because of the differences between her and the group of mothers), that has been past gender inequality for decades (although she admitted to gender inequality in managing functions) and a category of 'others' that still need to become autonomous. She did so by highlighting that *women as mothers* should be able to operate autonomously, set apart from fathers and should not admit their reliance on their spouses to their children. In other words: in the above-related interactions, Marlies construed fathers as a category that the women should learn to do without in parenting practices. This is surprising since the morning's theme was introduced as the need for parents to *coordinate* parenting. The idea of the emancipation of women as mothers in this case led to a very specific definition of autonomy: being able to exercise power over your children without your spouse. Emancipation and autonomy in this last example from the ethnographic data, are fully defined within motherhood. Moreover, Marlies construed one category of 'we' and another one of 'you', thereby addressing the mothers not as individuals but as representatives of a category of citizens that still need to learn to be able to stand up to their husband. In this case, women are addressed *as vessels* for the integration of their communities at large.

Conclusion and discussion: The Russian dolls of Dutch feminist paternalism

The riddle with which we introduced the theme of the paper was: How is it possible that the stress in Dutch policy texts and practices on the emancipation of women from their family and spouses goes hand in hand with a focus on precisely women's role *within* the family, namely that of the mother. In this article, we have analysed policy texts and policy practices within the particular Dutch historical context of a paternalistic tradition of civilizing offensives and a radical domestic motherhood ideology. It is within this particular cultural and historical context that we can understand how the emancipation of women is related to women's role as mothers.

We have shown that aspects of the intellectual heritage of second wave feminism are discursively put to work to establish three subjectivities for women: 1) as *autonomous women* (even though they are addressed as mothers in the context of parenting courses), 2) as *emancipated mothers* and 3) as *mothers as vessels* for their families or even society at large.

The policy practices that we analysed here explicitly aim to influence mothering practices in order to influence behaviour of children and to establish shared values for all members of Dutch society. These representations of the mother, the child and society bear resemblance to the metaphor of the Russian dolls. The mother signifies the first Russian doll: she is the first recipient of civilizing efforts that are aimed at the production of autonomous, emancipated subjectivities. The second Russian doll is the child that is to *resemble* the mother in its type of subjectivity. The Russian doll metaphor here refers to the layering of these images and to the sequence of these policies. It points to the relationship of the first and the second target: from the mother to the child. The idea is that if the mother is coached to occupy an autonomous, emancipated subject position, then so will her child, because she can then teach her children. The third step, is then to establish a society full of autonomous, emancipated subjects. Thus, through the second Russian doll of the child, the third doll is reached: the doll of society at large that is to resemble the other two.

The importance that is discursively attached to what is constructed as 'Dutch progressive values', is reflected in the way in which government intervenes in the most private sphere of the home and the family: mother love, sex talk and marital communication all become objects of government intervention. However, in practice, this *vessel* of progressiveness is often in fact a *wedge* separating 'us' ('progressive Dutch') from them ('conservative migrant mothers'). Autonomy, self-development and personal integrity were indeed central ideals in the Dutch cultural revolutions of the 1960s and 70s. However, governments today are negotiating a connection between these liberal ideals on the one hand and collective responsibilities and government intervention on the other. Women-as-mothers appear as the perfect link to bridge the wedge between 'us' and 'them': they are held accountable for caring work and collective responsibilities while being addressed as potentially autonomous subjects, symbols of progressive nationalism.

Notes

1. A similar representation is often given of homosexuals in the Netherlands. See Mepschen et al. (2010).
2. The term parenting courses is a translation of the Dutch word 'oudercursussen'. In practice, this term is used interchangeably with the term 'opvoedingscursus', which translates as 'childrearing course'.
3. The term 'allochthon' is used in Dutch statistics to refer to people that migrated to the Netherlands themselves or people of whom one or both parents migrated to the Netherlands.
4. [http://www.kiemnet.nl/dossiers/socialecohesie/Arbeidsparticipatie/PaVEM-Pagina_1016.html], information retrieved 14 December 2010. PaVEM was a government initiated committee that was asked to think about the integration of migrant women into Dutch society.

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