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Ethnicizing sexuality: an analysis of research practices in the Netherlands

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ABSTRACT

Ethnicity is a frequently used measure in research into youth and sexuality in the Netherlands, a country known and admired for its favourable sexual health outcomes. This paper critically examines the production of knowledge about sexuality and ethnicity in the Netherlands. It traces the concept of ethnicity through four research practices (rationales of taking up ethnicity and compiling research populations; determining ethnicity; statistical calculations and making recommendations). It shows how the notion of ethnicity is flexible, slippery and changeable, yet at the same time becomes solidified and naturalized in relation to sexuality. The paper is based on a literature review of youth and sexuality in the Netherlands.

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Introduction

Samantha is a 17-year-old girl from Antillean origin. She lives in a large suburban area in the south of Amsterdam. [...] Samantha had her first sexual experience at the age of 14. [...] She knew from the start how to protect herself against pregnancy, as she learned in school. [...] ... She was careless with contraception. Somehow, she had the naive idea that it would not come to that. [...] But of course, Samantha was not so lucky all the time. She became pregnant and a year ago she gave birth to her daughter, Destiny. The father was a 25-year old man, Wesley, with whom Samantha had an affair. Samantha and Wesley do not see each other any longer. (Picavet, van Berlo, and Tonnon 2014, 449–450)

The vignette reproduced above is taken from an international handbook of adolescent pregnancy. In the original text, the vignette was introductory, informative and meant to represent a specific situation. At the same time, the tropes it mobilizes are immediately evident. One of the first things we

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learn about Samantha in this vignette is her Antillean origin. We also read that, despite sex education in school, Samantha got pregnant during her affair with Wesley. Samantha thus stands in for teenage pregnancy, embodying the figure of the careless teenager and the hypersexual black woman. Here, we also use the vignette as an introduction. This time, though, not as an illustration of the situation of adolescent pregnancies in the Netherlands. Instead, what the vignette represents is the broader context of research on sex and ethnicity in that country. It points us to three concerns, namely the issue of sexuality in relation to the Dutch nation; the workings of social categories and the production of knowledge in scientific research practices. It is these concerns, as well as their interconnectedness, that we engage in this paper.

The Netherlands, sexuality and nationalism

The Dutch have been internationally applauded for their pragmatic and progressive approach to teenage sexuality (Aggleton 2001; Senanayake, Nott, and Faulkner 2001). It has become a common opinion that, for the Dutch, sexuality is accepted as a normal aspect of teenage development: an aspect discussed in schools, families and health care clinics (Schalet 2011). National policy requires that secondary school students learn about contraceptives and condom use, identity formation, social skills and sexual diversity. The 'Dutch approach' (Lewis and Knijn 2002; Senanayake, Nott, and Faulkner 2001) has been characterized as pioneering and successful in preventing sexual transmittable diseases (STDs) and teenage pregnancies. As a result, the Netherlands have been praised as having achieved the status of a guiding country for the prevention of teenage pregnancies (Harbers 2006), and its sex education became a successful export product (ZonMW 2012). In this narrative of the Netherlands as a leading country, sexual progressiveness has increasingly become a defining characteristic of the nation (Mepschen, Duyvendak, and Tonkens 2010). Simultaneously, religious beliefs, irrationality and traditions came to be seen as characteristics of ethnic minority groups (Lesko 2010; Rasmussen 2012; Scott 2009; Verkaaik 2010). Such framings are easily turned into a mechanism that separates the supposedly progressive Dutch from the allegedly conservative other. This boundary making takes place within a contemporary revival of nationalism in the Netherlands that 'defines its key values, such as gender equality, sexual emancipation, and freedom of speech, in opposition to a perception of Islam as essentially unfriendly to women, homosexuals, and heretics' (Verkaaik 2010, 71; see also Verkaaik and Spronk 2011). According to Nagel (2001), sexual ascriptions in their juxtaposition of ethnic, racial or national groups against *others* have long been 'part of the ideological material out of which racial, ethnic, and national boundaries are constructed'. In the particular case of the Netherlands, the figure of the white homosexual that is threatened

by immigrants, especially by Muslims, has been central in this sexual nationalism (Dudink 2011). Immigrants and their descendants are then seen as 'forming bastions of difference, and, in instances, hostility' (Schalet 2011, 200) and get framed as posing a danger to the sexual health of the 'native' Dutch population (Proctor, Krumeich, and Meershoek 2011). It legitimizes subjecting ethnic minorities to heightened surveillance and education (Krebbekx, Spronk, and M'charek 2013; Van Den Berg and Duyvendak 2012). This process sexualizes ethnic boundaries, turning them into ethnosexual boundaries (Nagel 2002).

Category work: gender, ethnicity and intersectionality

How to deal with the ways in which sexuality and ethnicity are entangled? The framework of intersectionality (Crenshaw 1989) provides a rich and powerful way to approach this question. In an intersectional perspective, gender is not treated separately from sexuality, class or race/ethnicity. These markers of difference are seen as working together in the construction of identities. The concept has its origins in black feminist thought, and asked for a reconsideration of the categories woman (assumed to be white) and black (assumed to be men). The black woman, thus, became the quintessential 'intersectional subject' – at the crossroads, simultaneously experiencing oppressions of gender and race. One criticism of the intersectionality framework focuses on the need to understand social divisions at different analytical levels, because their ontological base and their relations to each other differ (Yuval-Davis 2006). The different categories work according to different logics, and intersectionality is not helpful to understand this process, as it 'lumps' them together, according to some critics (Skeggs, Tornhill, and Tollin 2008). Intersectionality assumes categories as given, knowable and stable, which implies they can be analysed separately. Indeed, this framework claims to *know* which categories matter, and who belongs to them, though the list seems one of endless proliferation and always ends with the notorious 'etc' (Butler 1990). It is this assumption of a received knowledge about what categories are and their ease of recognition in empirical realities that we want to challenge.

Instead of an understanding of differences as stable and pre-existing, that can just be 'encountered', we could also consider social differences as always in the making. Gender, race/ethnicity, sexuality, disability and class can work with or against one another, they can interact and interfere with each other, and in this way they can increase or decrease oppression or privilege (Moser 2006). Differences are the *effect* of interferences in specific practices. Differences do not always materialize in bodies. They are relational, they can be made durable, but can also be forgotten – they can be fragile (M'charek 2010) or made solid.

Research as practice of knowledge production

If we consider categories as made and not given, as the *effects* of certain practices – then where do they take place? One of the sites where this production becomes particularly evident and effective – because of their authority and legitimacy – is that of research. Science and technology studies (STS) consider science as ‘a set of practices that are shaped by their historical, organizational and social context’ (Law 2004). Scientific knowledge comes from somewhere: it is produced in a variety of practices, in universities, research institutes, expert centres and scientific publications. These practices do not take place outside social contexts, but are shaped by it, and also shape them in return. They do not merely describe, but they make things, and in so doing they co-produce reality. Consider for example the ways in which groups of people are clustered in scientific research: these are often reflections of dominant societal norms (Essed and Nimako 2006; Hacking 2006; Krieger 2011; Lupton 1995). But they also work the other way around: they inform social norms. Research does not discover a reality that is already ‘out there’ but instead this reality is produced by research practices ‘in here’, through collecting, clustering, and extrapolating from data. Again, this should not be taken to say that the realities of these categories come from nowhere; they are ‘embedded in social practices, identities, norms, conventions, discourses, instruments and institutions – in short, in all the building blocks that we term *social*’ (Jasanoff 2004, 2–3). We aim to find out in what way knowledge about sexuality and ethnicity is produced, or, in other words, how sexual ascription (Nagel 2001) takes place in sex research (Spronk 2014). Following Law (2004), we argue that research methods are not purely technical sets of procedures, but that practices such as surveying, naming, dividing or merging groups contribute to the creation of those very groups. This process is what philosopher of science Ian Hacking calls making up people (2006). This process renders vignettes such as the ‘Antillean teenage mother Samantha’ possible. The process of naturalizing risk groups impedes their critical interrogation as it results in obscuring the stages that are involved in their making. These stages will be examined here. Our objective is not to elucidate undisclosed assumptions about ethnic groups, but to show the methods and the effects of taking on the notion of ethnicity in sexuality research. Based on a detailed analysis of research practices as described in reports and articles, this article traces how ethnicity and sexuality are co-shaped in research into youth and sexuality in the Netherlands.

Methods

For the purpose of this study, publications on youth, sexuality and schooling in the Netherlands that appeared between 2000 and 2011 were reviewed. We

searched academic databases (such as Pubmed, PsycINFO and Google Scholar) using the terms youth, adolescents, education, school, schooling, socioeconomic status, parents and peers. Furthermore, the archives of relevant Dutch academic journals were searched, as were the archives of knowledge centres on youth, sexuality and education. Only original empirical studies studying youth and young adults were selected. Studies published before 2000 were not included. Whenever periodical studies were involved (like sexual health monitors), only the most recent edition was included. The focus was primarily on studies that studied sexuality in relation to schools or educational level.¹ The described search and selection methods resulted in thirty-two publications. As this article focuses on the use of ethnicity, only those publications that mentioned ethnicity (or a related concept such as cultural background or allochthonous/autochthonous) in their introduction, abstract or first two pages were included, resulting in a sample of fourteen studies. Thus, ethnicity was not always taken up by sexuality researchers. However, we are interested in what happens when it is: therefore we analysed the studies that are delineated in [Table 1](#).

In the Dutch case, a particular terminology is used to demarcate ethnic minorities. The most used term and aggregate category for all minorities is 'allochtonen', originally a geological term. The term allochthonous (lit.: not from the soil) is used to indicate those of non-Dutch birth or ancestry, whereas autochthonous (lit. from the soil) is used for those of Netherlands birth and ancestry. The terms became used like this in public policy and national statistics, and have become mainstream in public discourse (Geschiere 2009; Essed and Nimako 2006). The term allochthonous 'is not connected to any particular cultural background and hence individualizes, while categorizing at the same time' (Ghorashi 2014, 105). In this sense, this terminology tends to both isolate and group together, in a 'lumpy' way, different groups (Yanow and van der Haar 2013, 249).

Ethnicity as category in scientific practices

In the reports and articles on sexuality, we identified four research practices: (1) compiling an ethnically diverse sample; (2) determining ethnicity; (3) statistically calculating and comparing; and (4) making recommendations. Although our discussion of these practices might be read as suggesting a chronology, this temporal order is used only to narrate our findings. In the complex practices of science in the making, the practices might overlap, be iterative or work simultaneously. Following the research practices will reveal a particular co-constitutive relation between sexuality and ethnicity. They show how ethnicity is changeable and, at the same time, when related to sexuality, contributes to the solidification of rigid ideas about sexuality, ethnicity and the relationship between them.

Table 1. Analysis of research into youth and sexuality (terms as used in the original publications).

	Qualitative/ quantitative	Reason to attend to ethnicity	Concepts used	Operationalization of ethnicity	Categories used	Recruitment of participants	Ethnic composition of sample
Cense and van Dijk (2010)	QI	Previous research	Cultural and religious background	Country of birth parents	Surinamese/ Antillean/African, Turkish/Moroccan/ Hindustani, autochthonous, other	(1) Websites, intermediaries, earlier participants; (2) specific groups on schools; on the streets; youthevent in the district Amsterdam South- East, youthcenters Amsterdam	Autochthonous ($n = 23$), Surinamese/Antillean/ African ($n = 22$), Turkish/Moroccan/ Hindustani ($n = 17$), other ($n = 6$)
De Graaf et al. (2005)	Qn	Representativity, ability to compare groups	Non-Dutch origin, allochthonous youth	CBS definition allochthon	Dutch, Western allochthon, Moroccan, Turkish, Surinamese, Antillean, other non-Western	Via schools and municipal administration	78% Dutch; 7% Western allochthon; 16% non- Western allochthon
De Looze (2010)	Qn	None	Ethnic background	CBS definition allochthon	Dutch, Surinamese, Antillean/Aruban, Moroccan, Turkish, other Western and other non-Western	Surveys in schools (aselect sample)	80% Dutch, 2% Surinamese, 1% Antillean/Aruban, 3% Moroccan, 4% Turkish, 5% other non-Western, 5% other Western

(Continued)

Table 1. Continued.

	Qualitative/ quantitative	Reason to attend to ethnicity	Concepts used	Operationalization of ethnicity	Categories used	Recruitment of participants	Ethnic composition of sample
Hemmes and Ulichki (2010)	Qn and Qi	Previous research, tailored interventions	Youth with allochthonous background, traditional background	Unknown	Turkish, Moroccan and allochthonous youth with a non- Turkish and non- Moroccan background	Choice of school(s) unknown. Respondents via websites popular among Turkish and Moroccan youth. Interview participants unknown	Survey: 50 allochthonous secondary school pupils; Chat: unknown; Interviews: 3 respondents with a traditional Turkish background
Hollander and Frouws (2011)	Qi	Previous research, tailored interventions	Youth with Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese or Antillean background	Self-identification	Mostly used: youth with Surinamese/ Antillean or Turkish/Moroccan background	Respondents approached in places such as schools, youth and on the street	Each of the ethnic groups is represented by at least three men and three women
Inspectie van het Onderwijs (2009)	Qn	Representativity	Non-Dutch mother	Country of birth participant and his/ her mother	Pupils with a mother born in Surinam, Morocco, Turkey or the Netherlands	Case studies on twenty- seven secondary schools and eight vocational schools	Secondary school: 20% has a non-Dutch mother; vocational school: 28% has a non- Dutch mother
Kuyper et al. (2009)	Qn	Previous research	Cultural and religious background	Country of birth participant and parents	Autochthonous/ Western, Turkish/ Moroccan, Surinamese/ Antillean, other non-Western	Via youthmedia and several schools	Three questionnaires: (1) 82% Dutch, 7% Turkish/Moroccan, 4% Surinamese/Antillean, 6% other non-Western; (2) resp. 88%, 3%, 3%, 7%; (3) resp. 89%, 2%, 4%, 5%
Kuyper et al. (2011)	Qn	Previous research	Ethnicity	Country of birth participant and parents	Western and non- Western	Via youthmedia and several schools	1,257 youth, 130 from non-Western origin

Sandfort et al. (2010)	Qn	None	Ethnic background	Unknown	Dutch and non-Dutch, (subdivided into Surinamese, Moroccan, Turkish and Antillean)	Eight secondary schools in Amsterdam	56% Dutch, 24% Surinamese, 19% Moroccan, 15% Turkish, 5% Antillean, 37% non-specified other
Schouten et al. (2007)	Qn	Previous research	Ethnic background	Country of birth participant and parents	Dutch, non-Western and Turkish/Moroccan	Pupils of four secondary schools in different provinces	Dutch ($n = 406$), non-Western ($n = 33$), Turkish/Moroccan ($n = 29$)
Smerecnik et al. (2010)	QI	Previous research	Muslim or non-Muslim, immigrant or Dutch	Self-identification (Muslim/non-Muslim), Dutch/non-Dutch unknown	Muslim/non-Muslim, Dutch/non-Dutch	Visitors of an internetforum on Islam and sexuality	Forty-four Muslim, Thirty-three non-Muslim
Vanwesenbeeck et al. (2003)	Qn	Tailored intervention	Origin, background, ethnic communities	Country of birth parents	Islamic, Carribbean, Dutch	Unknown	Both parents born in the Netherlands, 73%; at least one parent born in Morocco/Turkey/other Islamic country, 11%; at least one parent from Carribbean/Surinam/other Latin-American country, 7%
Von Bergh and Sandfort (2000)	Qn	Tailored intervention	Allochthonous background, allochthonous youth	Country of birth parents	Moroccans, Turks, Surinamese, Antilleans	Recruitment of Dutch respondents unknown. Allochthonous respondents from areas where many allochthons live	38 Moroccans, 15 Antilleans, 100 Surinamese, 47 Turks

(Continued)

Compiling an ethnically diverse sample

Five times, in the literature we considered, knowledge about ethnicity is deemed necessary to match educational programmes to 'allochthonous youth' (Table 1). In three studies the reason why ethnicity is taken up in the first place remains unexplained, and seems to be one of routine. Twice, striving for a sample representative of the Dutch population led researchers to include ethnicity as a variable. The qualitative studies we found were exclusively aimed at allochthonous youth twice and Islamic youth once. Once, the sample also included autochthonous Dutch youth (Cense and van Dijk 2010). Following up on their decision to attend to ethnicity often proved to be difficult for researchers: when the usual methods for recruiting research participants were used, ethnic diversity in the sample frequently turned out to be small (Cense and van Dijk 2010; De Graaf et al. 2005; Vanwesenbeeck et al. 2003). To make sure the so-called hard-to-reach populations (Hollander and Frouws 2011; Smerecnik et al. 2010) were part of the sample, alternative recruitment strategies were used. These included, for example, inviting schools with 'more than 60% allochthonous pupils' (De Graaf et al. 2005, 4). Another strategy was identifying and inviting youth with a Surinamese, Antillean, Turkish or Moroccan background via the municipal registration of the two largest cities, Amsterdam and Rotterdam. In one study, area codes of urban areas where 'a lot of allochthons live' were dialled to contact potential study participants (Von Bergh and Sandfort 2000, see also Table 1). The compilation of an ethnically diverse group was considered a challenge that required alternative recruitment strategies, making use of existing infrastructures to document ethnicity (the municipal registration, school percentages of ethnic groups), or journals and websites popular among a specific ethnic group. The effort to establish ethnic diversity shows that researchers take into account criticisms on the earlier 'one-size-fits-all-model' of biomedical knowledge-making (Epstein 2007, 15), in which white males functioned as the 'standard human' (Epstein 2007, 16). Instead, inclusion of diversity (Epstein 2007) has increasingly become the norm. But, when considering diversity, the focus quickly turns to ethnicity – what has been called an ethnicity-first approach (Pauille and Kalir 2013). As a result, the image arises of social groups as differing from each other purely on the basis of ethnicity. This tendency to ascribe causal power to ethnicity or culture has been observed more widely in relation to (sexual) health (Epstein 2007; Gravlee and Sweet 2008; Proctor, Krumeich, and Meershoek 2011). Such framings decrease attention for similarities between groups and differences within groups, privileging a specific notion of social groups. In other words, diversity, in this step, becomes synonymous with and is practiced as ethnic diversity, established through using existing infrastructures.

Determining an individual's ethnicity

Different conceptualizations of ethnicity were used, namely: ethnic background, origin, descent; cultural, traditional or religious background; and migration or immigration history (see [Table 1](#)). The operationalization of such concepts determines the ethnic label that gets attached to a participant. Ethnicity was often operationalized using the country of birth of the participant and his or her parents. Two large research projects used the definition of the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) to divide 'non-Western allochthon', from 'Western allochthon' and 'autochthon', and between 'first' and 'second generation' (CBS 2014). As is conventional in the methodology of the CBS, eight other researchers used the country of birth of the participant and his or her parents to determine ethnicity. In two projects, self-identification was used (see [Table 1](#)). The differences in labelling seem marginal at first sight. When we turn to the Dutch royal family, and take the example of crown princess Amalia, however, the scope of the resulting differences becomes clear. Amalia's mother, queen Máxima, is, in the definition of the CBS, a first-generation non-Western allochthon (she was born in Argentina). Amalia's father, king Willem-Alexander, is, again following the CBS, a second-generation Western allochthon (his father was born in Germany). What label will our fictional participant Amalia get in the studies analysed? In two research projects, she would be labelled as second-generation non-Western allochthon (De Graaf et al. 2005; De Looze 2010). In the project of Vanwesenbeeck et al. (2003) she would be part of the Caribbean group: youth who have at least one parent who is originating from the Caribbean, Surinam or a different Latin-American country. Furthermore, Amalia would be labelled: allochthon (De Graaf et al. 2005), high-risk immigrant (Wolfers et al. 2010), non-Western (Kuyper et al. 2009, 2011), allochthon youngster with a non-Turkish and non-Moroccan background (Hemmes and Ulichki 2010) and non-Dutch (Von Bergh and Sandfort 2000). Speculating Amalia would self-identify as Dutch (her being the royal princess of the Netherlands, 'Princess of Orange'), she could be ascribed any ethnicity ranging from Dutch to non-Dutch in the studies we considered. The majority of studies established 'national origin' by asking participants to fill out their own and their parents' country of birth. In drawing on existing conventions, researchers obscure how these categorizations became conventional and how they result in an ethnic reflex (Ham and van der Meer 2012): leading to a conflation of origin with ethnic group, and to a problematization of groups (e.g. youth with an Antillean background) instead of phenomena (e.g. condom use). The often-used term allochthon is increasingly becoming controversial, due to its negative connotations and generalizing effects. This has not gone unnoticed in sexuality research. Vanwesenbeeck et al. (2003), for example, use the term, but note that there are vast differences between allochthones and that the group must be differentiated to be meaningful.

A footnote stating 'respect [...for...] all differences between individuals and subgroups' (Cense and van Dijk 2010, 102) suggests that making these classifications can be a complex exercise for researchers, leading to inclusion of an Iranian respondent in the research category 'Turkish and Moroccan youth' and a Ghanaian and Nigerian respondent in the Surinamese and Antillean category.² Despite the explanation about the constructed character and inaccuracy of categories, these same categories are used when conclusions are drawn or recommendations are made: earlier nuances tend to disappear. These groups are often ones that already have a marginalized position in Dutch society, and, as Proctor, Krumeich, and Meershoek (2011) suggest, function as 'the other'. Ethnicity figures here as a sociodemographic characteristic that is used to make groups, and is rooted in place of birth. Not just any group: groups that were already made important and meaningful in national discourses are now related to sexuality.

Statistical calculations: comparing groups and predicting behaviour

Much quantitative research starts from an analysis of differences between groups – for example to find out differences between men and women in terms of ability to talk about condom use (Von Bergh and Sandfort 2000). A precondition for the statistical validity of difference tests is that the size of the groups needs to be sufficient. It is not always possible to make differences within ethnic categories visible, as groups will become too small for statistical tests (De Graaf et al. 2005; Vanwesenbeeck et al. 2003; Von Bergh and Sandfort 2000). When this is not the case, subgroups are often combined in the analysis. Groups that are often merged are youth with a Turkish and with a Moroccan background. This happens, for example, in the report of Kuyper et al. (2009), where the sample size did not allow for splitting up in 'subgroups', for example between Moroccan and Turkish youth or between Christian and Jewish youth. Turkish and Moroccan youth in this way are depicted as subgroups of a larger group, the allochthons, which is not an unusual practice in the studies reviewed (Vanwesenbeeck et al. 2003; Von Bergh and Sandfort 2000). Another effect of this statistical requirement is that the findings cannot be specified in terms of educational level, age, or religion, even though this might be necessary to understand the findings. Social class or educational level, for example, often gets a meagre treatment, despite evidence suggesting these variables might be more relevant than ethnicity (see e.g. Matser et al. 2013). They seem not to have the same recognizability and capability to group people. In this practice, the limitations of the statistical options result in a foregrounding of ethnicity, the merging of ethnic groups based on assumed similarities in relation to 'culture', and a homogenizing of ethnic groups, obscuring other possible markers of difference due to the statistical need for large, comparable groups.

There is no unified way to deal with analyses of subgroups. For example, Vanwesenbeeck et al. (2003) found that the prevalence of pregnancies was higher among girls in the category Dutch – where it was expected that this would be higher for those classified as Caribbean. As the result was counter-expected, additional analyses were carried out (specifying the results according to age). This resulted in the inability to draw conclusions between Dutchness and teenage pregnancy, because of the small size of the samples. Yet, additional analyses (like age-based subsamples) were not carried out when the expectations of researchers are met in the first place, for example when it was found that Islamic girls ‘on all fronts are least sexually experienced’ (Vanwesenbeeck et al. 2003, 33). This exemplifies the way in which researchers’ assumptions can influence the production of data on sex. Besides determining differences between groups, many researchers want to develop a predictive model of sexual behaviour by finding out risk and protective factors. Ethnicity is situated in these models among other ‘socio-demographic’ factors such as sex/gender, educational level and (sometimes) religion. In regression analyses, these independent variables are related to a dependent variable (e.g. condom use). The advantage of this method is that it creates the possibility to calculate the statistic effects of several independent variables simultaneously. In the research of Kuyper et al. (2009) regression analyses showed, for example, that out of ten analyses, only once was ethnicity significant. At the same time, however, this method asks for binary variables, resulting in binary pairs such as man/woman, high educated/low educated and Western/non-Western (De Looze 2010; Kuyper et al. 2009, 2011; Sandfort et al. 2010; Wolfers et al. 2010). This also happens when researchers use other techniques. Binary pairs that are created are allochthon/autochthon (Cense and van Dijk 2010; De Looze 2010; Hemmes and Ulichki 2010; Vanwesenbeeck et al. 2003), Dutch/non-Dutch (Von Bergh and Sandfort 2000; Wolfers et al. 2010), Turkish/Moroccan and Dutch/Western (Schouten et al. 2007) or Western/non-Western (De Looze 2010). The consequence of this method is that one of the groups becomes the reference group, the norm. With one exception (De Graaf et al. 2005), youth with a Dutch background are considered the norm against which the others are projected. Thus, we see that a statistical technique asks ethnicity to appear as a binary variable, and that assumptions about ethnic groups’ sexuality determine the statistical calculations that are carried out and published. One half of this asymmetric binary pair becomes universal - the other particular.

It is also important here to note findings that are *not* reported in the text. If we look at the figures published by Von Bergh and Sandfort (2000) we see, following a lot of information about determinants of behaviour, that, when it concerns actual behaviour (condom use at last sexual contact, in this case), the only significant difference that was found was that youth with a

Surinamese or Antillean background used a condom more often than youth with a Dutch background. Despite this finding indicating that the group with a Dutch background is more 'at risk', the risk label does not stick to the group as it does in case of 'non-Dutch' groups. This shows that 'the Dutch' are not seen as one group as easily. We also see that some categories, like youth from China and youth from Russia, are not analysed and are not included in comparisons (Vanwesenbeeck et al. 2003). We see here that groups that are more present in societal debates gain more visibility in research reports on sex – sex research solidifies the status of these groups as 'in need of extra attention'.

In statistical practices it becomes evident that autochthones are seen as the reference group, as they get the neutral '0' value. It is also apparent in phrases such as 'the Caribbean group is not inferior to the Dutch', or, 'regarding knowledge, Islamic girls lag behind' (Vanwesenbeeck et al. 2003). Such comparisons are invalid because a group based on origin is compared to a group based on religion. Also, they make clear that Caribbean youth or Islamic girls are excluded from Dutchness, and support the image of the Dutch as progressive, and others as traditional and behind. This practice suggests that epidemiological research does not neutrally report on reality, but instead is influenced by the social context of its undertaking (Brubaker 2002). This influence is clear when an 'Islamic doctrine', 'a subpopulation among the group of Muslims with extreme views' (Smerecnik et al. 2010, 539) or 'a fairly progressive group of allochthons' (Von Bergh and Sandfort 2000, 10) is mentioned. The judgemental formulation on allochthones in general and, increasingly, on Muslims, makes understanding research results difficult: it leads to the imprecise use of terms such as ethnicity, culture and religion. It makes them appear as solid and unified; while in practice they are not so monolithic. In effect, in this step, one half of the binary pair, the autochthones, become the unmarked norm against which 'others' are measured.

Making recommendations

Many reports and articles end with making recommendations for future research, policy or practice, like promotional campaigns or school programmes. Sometimes, researchers leave the job of formulating recommendations to stakeholders in the field of youth and sexuality (Meijer et al. 2005), to experts in the field of sexual health or to youth themselves (Kuyper et al. 2009). Oftentimes, recommendations are (at least partly) formulated in terms of ethnicity. Hollander and Frouws (2011, 55) state that it is important to educate girls with an Antillean or Surinamese background about the 'not sheer positive sides of becoming a young mother'. For other researchers ethnicity proves to be important in their recommendations as well. According to Vanwesenbeeck et al. (2003, 38), in the future 'more

attention should be given to the sex specificity and cultural specificity of sex education'. Recommendations are not only formulated for youth but for their parents too: 'it is important to start targeting specific communication interventions at migrant families, which aim to increase the openness in communication between parents and their children about sexuality' (Schouten et al. 2007, 81). In the recommendations section, again, we see that many researchers do not repeat earlier nuances about the constructed nature of ethnic groups and instead talk about Dutch and non-Dutch people, about allochthons versus autochthons. The differences are presented as large enough to justify distinct research projects; it is suggested that larger groups of allochthonous youth should be studied for differences to appear more clearly (Schouten et al. 2007; Von Bergh and Sandfort 2000). This recommendation did not fall on deaf ears: next to a large research project into the general sexual health of youth, a separate project into the sexual health of allochthonous youth has been undertaken (RutgersWPF 2011). Making recommendations for further research, policy and practice in terms of ethnicity or ethnic groups adds to an understanding of the sexuality of 'ethnic others' as problematic. These recommendations often ask for 'action points', in which earlier nuances about the constructed nature and the messiness of the ethnic groupings are brushed aside: it confirms what was already known, namely that ethnic groups need special attention.

Impact and spread of research: on ethnic common sense-making

The authority that is ascribed to knowledge institutes, academic journals and universities means recommendations for future research and preventive practices often have far-reaching consequences. Research results on youth and sex are a popular topic among national newspapers. Referring to the results of a large research project, the Dutch newspaper *De Volkskrant* wrote on 16 October 2008: Talking about sex still a taboo among allochthones. The use of the word 'still' implies that allochthones lag behind the Dutch ideal of 'evidence-based pragmatism with respect to young people's sexuality' (Pillai and Toure 2010, 23) – allochthones thus embody difference and backwardness. Moreover, it implies that the autochthone group is unproblematic. But we have seen that, for example in the case of teenage pregnancies, this does not hold. An example regarding condom use illustrates the tendency to accentuate ethnic differences. The National Public Health Compass, according to its website, offers independent and scientifically based knowledge on public health. On its website, a figure on youth and sexuality is presented (Bakker 2010) (see Table 2).

The website, however, does not provide information on the number of respondents these figures are based on, its categorizations or generalizability;

Table 2. Percentage of pupils (12–15 years) who has had multiple sexpartners (simultaneously) .

Origin	Has sex with others apart from steady sexpartner		Has had four or more sexpartners	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Antillean	21	10	51	34
Surinamese	16	20	63	35
Moroccan	30	5	72	17
Dutch or other Western	7	6	34	28

Note: Translated from the website of the 'National Compass of Public Health' (Bakker 2010).

those subtleties mentioned in the research design disappear. The figure indicates that boys with a Moroccan background have sex with people next to a steady partner and that relatively few girls with a Moroccan background have had four or more sex partners. These numbers are published under the heading 'health determinants' – although the way they correlate with health remains unclear. Interpretation is left to the reader. A more obvious health outcome is condom use. Condom use is elaborately studied in *Sex under 25*, for example 'condom use while having sex with last partner' – see Table 3.

In this figure we see that a relatively small percentage of Dutch/Western boys used a condom during sex with the last partner. Furthermore, the percentage of girls who never use a condom does not significantly differ when looking at what is defined as origin. This shows that based on the same research project, different conclusions about the relationship between ethnicity and sexual health can be drawn. The choice of which figure to publish online is a choice to emphasize differences or similarities. It determines the representation of sexuality and ethnicity and influences the sexualized meanings that get attached to ethnic groups.³ Research results are not only important inside universities and knowledge centres, but find their way to media and public websites. A call for culturally sensitive interventions is becoming louder (Westmaas et al. 2012), leading to more research into ethnicity being

Table 3. Condom use at intercourse with the last partner (%).

Origin	N	Boys			Girls				
		Always	Some times	Only at the start of relationship	Never	Always	Sometimes	Only at the start of relationship	Never
Western	2,164	31▼	18	28▲	22	20	17▼	36▲	26
Moroccan	58	53▲	18	5▼	23	38	25	13	25
Turkish	77	60▲	15	8▼	17	29	33	13▼	25
Surinamese	125	50▲	15	8▼	27	24	28▲	25	24
Antillean	110	31	25	8▼	36▲	16	28▲	32	23

Notes: Translated from 'Seks onder je 25^{er}' (De Graaf et al. 2005, chapter 4).

▼ ▲ = respectively high or low given the total percentage.

conducted: a self-validating tendency is noticeable here (see also Proctor, Krumeich, and Meershoek 2011). The sexual connotations of diversity contribute to the importance that ethnicity ensues in sexuality research, in other words, to the ethnic common sense (Brubaker 2002) of categorizing along the lines of ethnicity when doing sexuality research. Political actors take the recommendations that researchers formulate seriously. They steer future research plans and government investments (Essed and Nimako 2006; see also Meijer et al. 2005). The ethnic common sense in research thus becomes an ethnic common ground in the field of sexuality in general. The practices that led to this common sense are not confined to Dutch borders: due to the position of the Netherlands in international sex research and policy, 'Dutch lessons in love' are finding their way to such diverse countries as Bangladesh, Vietnam, Uganda and Brazil (Rutgers 2015).

Sexualization of ethnicity and ethnicization of sexuality

Through four research steps, we traced the making and uses of ethnic categories and the kind of ethnic data on sexuality they produce. Ethnicity appears as a slippery concept: its definition is unclear, contested and subsequently operationalized in many, often non-coherent ways. Despite its apparent slipperiness, the notion of ethnicity is consistently used and its importance is not to be underestimated: it has become a self-evident social category in public discourse and in research. In other words, it is both a product of society and it intervenes to produce meanings in society – such as the figure of the Antillean teenage mother Samantha. Through different calculative and comparative practices, ethnicized sexualities solidify. This process has real consequences: through the intricate relationship between research, policy and sex education, ideas of ethnic minorities as forming separate groups that are sexually distinct become embedded in common sense knowledge. As many have pointed out, categories have a performative effect: they confirm, guide and change human interventions. The four steps discerned here together result in the materialization of a sexual other that is either sexually excessive and promiscuous, or sexually repressed and not able to communicate about sex. Compiling an ethnically diverse sample, determining ethnicity, statistical calculations and comparisons, and making recommendations all contribute to filling in the categories of ethnicity and of sexuality, the sexual connotations of ethnicity and the ethnic connotations of sexuality. In the analysis of Dutch research into youth and sexuality, we have seen that, in a way, sexuality itself becomes ethnicized. Ethnicity becomes partly defined in terms of sexuality – and it makes it impossible to take ethnicity and sexuality apart. The political work of this ethnicizing of sexuality goes well beyond the walls of research centres. It is part and

parcel of the contemporary political moment in the Netherlands, contributing to self and other.

Notes

1. This study was carried out at the start of the ethnographic research project 'Sexualities and Diversities in the Making', a project that focuses on social media and secondary schools.
2. The group of Surinamese and Antillean youth includes a Ghanaian and Nigerian respondent, because 'their cultural script is on the same wavelength'. A Hindustani and an Iranian male respondent belong to the category 'Turkish and Moroccan youth', because 'their cultural baggage also includes honor-sensitivity' Cense and Van Dijk (2010, p. 102). How the label 'Hindustani' was established is unclear, the methods section states that categories were made based on country of birth of participant and parents.
3. It is important to not only consider percentages but absolute numbers as well. The category youth of 'Moroccan origin', for example, is based on a sample of 58 participants. Statements on 'Moroccan boys' thus are formed on the basis of a sample of 29 (assuming the boy-girl ratio is equal).

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