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An ethnography of sexuality and diversity in Dutch schools

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MAKING SEX, MOVING DIFFERENCE

**AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF SEXUALITY AND
DIVERSITY IN DUTCH SCHOOLS**

Willemijn Krebbekx

MAKING SEX, MOVING DIFFERENCE
AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF SEXUALITY
AND DIVERSITY IN DUTCH SCHOOLS

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The pupils of the second grade take a seat at the bench that stretches along the side of the Physical Exercise hall. The teacher of this class in a secondary school in the Netherlands starts by mentioning the change of the locker rooms: as this group consists mainly of girls, the girls will be assigned to the larger locker room from now on. 'Yes!' shouts one girl, 'Then we get the mirror!' The teacher then proposes a game of chase, dividing the group into two teams, one with yellow and one with red tags. Rick, assigned to the red team, shouts: 'Ugh, gross, I have the menstruation color!' In the classroom next-door, in the 'care and welfare track', six girls are practicing some skills for a test next week. During a short break, they group together around one table. Linda takes a bottle of nail polish out of her bag and starts applying it to the nails of the girl next to her. Meanwhile, she talks about her boyfriend, who is away on holiday and whom she misses. Linda's friend Mireille advises: 'You can make a cast of his dick, so you can make a dildo out of it'. She continues to ask the others at the table: 'Do you know Serena? She did that with a dolphin, you know, one of those statues, with a fin?' Faces of disgust and laughter result. 'Yuck!' In yet another classroom, one of the pupils goes up to talk to her class teacher about a prior incident. 'They called me a slut but I am not a slut at all, teacher, I am not going out with many boys. They are sluts themselves!' She starts to cry, and says, 'If they call my mum a slut one more time I will slap them!' The teacher tries to calm her by saying that he will make sure to talk to those who insulted her. He finishes by saying, 'Now, dry your tears and go for a break, I want to go for a coffee myself too before the next class starts'.

How can we make sense of such seemingly fleeting jokes, fights and stories? This dissertation explores how sexuality comes to matter in mundane practices of relating in school. In broad strokes, the moments described, which occurred on my very first day of fieldwork in a secondary school in the Netherlands, make clear what is at stake in this study on youth and sexuality. I begin this dissertation with these stories not because they are exceptional, but because they were so common, as I would learn later. Like on this first day in school, references to and invocations of gender differences and sexuality were often made.

The argument made throughout the following chapters is that sexuality is not locked into the bodies of pupils, dormant until puberty, a challenging awakening that needs to be negotiated in schools, but, rather, that it is enacted in mundane practices: these practices bring sexuality into being. These practices draw in scientific and popular knowledge, images and discourses. As the fragment above indicates, this process can include images like that of the slut, objects such as red tags and dolphin statues, and spatial and temporal structures such as locker rooms and timetables. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork in four secondary schools in the Netherlands, I show that categorization is part of these practices, leading to, for example, an *us* that is fond of using mirrors, a *them* that masturbates, or an *other* whose mother is a slut.

Each of the five papers that make up this dissertation has an introduction that pertains to the issue addressed in the chapter. This chapter offers more general introductions: to the literatures this dissertation builds on and is in dialogue with, to the debates it intervenes in, to the approach taken to the study of youth and sexuality, and to the papers that comprise this dissertation.

Knowing adolescence and sexual development

Through studies on youth and sex, sexuality has emerged as a topic that is addressed by focusing on health and healthy sexual development, with the adolescent as the main target of investigation. Survey research into the health

of the Dutch population, and that of youth in particular, has documented a wide range of issues, such as the frequency of sexual behavior, the age of sexual debut, satisfaction with sexual acts and the use of contraceptives (Bakker et al., 2009; De Graaf, Meijer, Poelman, & Vanwesenbeeck, 2005; De Graaf, Kruijjer, van Acker, & Meijer, 2012; Mouthaan & Vlugt, 2012; RutgersWPF, 2012). These studies catalogue, chart, and compare sexual development. For example, the meticulous documenting of the age at which youth first have certain sexual experiences made it possible to construct an average sexual trajectory ranging from kissing to sexual intercourse (De Graaf, Vanwesenbeeck, Meijer, Woertman, & Meeus, 2009). The most recent survey into youth and sexuality, *Sex under the age of 25* (De Graaf et al., 2012), showed relatively good contraceptive behavior and low rates of STDs and unwanted pregnancies.¹ Such outcomes, which have been relatively stable over time, have made the Netherlands famous for its sexually healthy youth – the country is often ascribed a guiding role in these issues (Harbers, 2006). The causes of these favorable sexual health outcomes are sought in the overall societal acceptance of youth sexuality (Schalet, 2011) or sex positive culture (Jackson & Scott, 2004), sex education (Lewis & Knijn, 2002) and pragmatic policies (Alford & Hauser, 2011).²

Through the administration of individual surveys, studies like *Sex under the age of 25* locate sexuality within the individual, to be captured through individual scores on behavior, attitude and knowledge. Compiling (sub) population averages and distributions afterwards, in turn, makes it possible to speak of the sexual trajectory of adolescents, transforming adolescents into a group with shared attributes and developments. Large surveys of human sexuality are not new, and became popular in the period after World

¹ The most recent available statistics show that in the Netherlands in 2015, 3.2 per 1000 girls gave birth before they reached the age of 20 (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2016), which makes the percentage of teenage pregnancies among the lowest in the world. With regard to contraceptive use: 65% of 15-year-old girls, and 78% of 15-year-old boys reported using a condom during last intercourse; use of the contraceptive pill was 66% for girls and 60% for boys during last intercourse (Inchley et al., 2016). In the ranking of European countries that the WHO compiles based on these statistics, the Netherlands ranks 11th in terms of condom use, 3rd with regard to the pill (Inchley et al., 2016).

² This image extends to sexuality more general: it is strengthened by the country being the first to legalize prostitution (in 2000), and to achieve marriage equality (in 2001) – though one should not mistake legal equality for social equality (Hekma & Duyvendak, 2011).

War II when Kinsey published the results of his studies (Kinsey, Pomeroy, & Martin, 1948; Kinsey, Pomeroy, Martin, & Gebhardt, 1953). Interviewing hundreds of people about their sexual practices and attitudes, these thorough studies showed sexual behavior to be more diverse than assumed at the time. Around this period the method of population survey became popular, and sexual behavior became recorded in official scientific databases.³ Instead of individual cases, which formed the basis of earlier studies into sexuality, researchers now established population and subpopulation averages and distributions, creating knowledge about the sexual behaviors and attitudes of ‘the human male’ or ‘the human female’ in different countries, enabling country comparisons and rankings.

The first behavioral survey into sexuality in the Netherlands was ordered by women’s magazine *Margriet* in 1968, and aimed to map ‘actual and desired behaviors on the terrain of sexual relations’ (Noordhoff, 1969, p. 11).⁴ Participants were mostly asked about issues such as masturbation, pre-marital sex, sex drive, contraception, abortion, extramarital sex and homosexuality. The study indicated that the idea that sex belongs in a lifelong monogamous, heterosexual marriage was widely shared (Noordhoff, 1969) – although the number of people who had sex before marriage was already increasing since the 1940’s (Kooy, 1976). During the 1970s, the social legitimization of sexual activity (marriage, or intention to marry) was being replaced by an individual one: being in love or ‘strong feelings towards each other’ became a more common legitimization (Ketting, 1990, p. 73). In the following decades, surveys were repeated. Increasingly, attention was paid to the development of attitudes and practices of sexual permissiveness among youth (Bolt, 1989) in response to societal concerns about (youth) sexuality.

3 The survey method replaced earlier studies on sexuality that were based on individual case studies or theoretical treatises. For a history of sexology see Hekma (1985) and Van Ussel (1968).

4 A study into attitudes on sexuality – such as the coupling of sex and marriage – was carried out among youth at the end of the 1940s, in response to Kinsey’s study. As opposed to Kinsey’s approach, though, the study did not survey behavior, and showed that in general, at least ideologically, sex was firmly placed within marriage (Saal, 1950). In 1963, the Dutch Society for Sexual Reform (NVSH) commissioned a study into parental sex education. The study showed that girls received more information about sexuality than boys, and that this information mainly was related to first menstruation. The study was also interested in differences between social groups, along the lines of the pillars (catholic, protestant, social-democratic, liberal) that organized social life at the time (Van der Veen, 1963). See also Ravesloot (1997).

The survey method and its population focus remained popular. The response to the AIDS crisis in the late 1980s resulted in an increase in the administration of such surveys, with increasingly sophisticated statistical techniques for analyses. Thematically, there was a shift to sexual health and the detection of risk groups to be used in the development of policies to prevent transmission of the HIV virus. In the Netherlands, an association between AIDS and homosexuality was deemed ‘unjust’ (Tielman & Van Griensven, 1985, p. 421) unfair, but in practice there was an increased risk in groups of homosexual men, so the focus on homosexual men was deemed a pragmatic solution.⁵ Such an emphasis on detecting risk in subpopulations is also evident in *Sex under the age of 25*. Whereas the survey in general is aimed at Dutch youth between 12 and 25, statistical difference tests with regard to gender, age, religion, ethnicity, and educational level were conducted.

Ethnicity has especially received a lot of attention in recent years, as the sexual behaviors and attitudes of ethnic minority youth have increasingly become problematized in the Netherlands. *Sex under the age of 25*, however, showed that when differences were found, they were often very small. Nevertheless, these small differences sparked further research into those considered to be non-Dutch (ZonMW, 2011) to understand and explain the (small) differences found. Such further research into these differences implies that ethnic minority groups represent different cultures that deal with sexuality differently.⁶ This is in line with a public debate on the ‘culturalisation of citizenship’ (Duyvendak, Geschiere, & Tonkens, 2016) that requires migrants to express feelings of belonging and connectedness to their new country. In the Netherlands, sexuality plays a pivotal role in this expression of belonging (Geschiere & Guadeloupe, 2016).

Although the discipline of sexology ‘grew up’ with that of anthropology in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Weston, 1993), sexuality

5 In the reaction to HIV an interesting discrepancy appeared as in the west, HIV was connected to specific factions of the population that were seen to be at risk; in Africa the whole population was seen as at risk, thereby contributing to the image of singularity of sexuality in Africa and the African as promiscuous (Adkins, 2001; Epprecht, 2008; Patton, 1990).

6 See chapter two, which details how the need for such a study was established.

was not a defining theme for early anthropology. Sexuality was an area of study that belonged mostly to the sciences.⁷ For anthropologists, it was one of the many things commented upon in ethnographies, described through a ‘flora-and-fauna style of analysis’ (Weston, 2011, p. 18) in which sexuality was regarded as self-evident, not a category of which meanings were shaped by ‘class warfare and colonial struggle, but a force both primal and given’ (Weston, 2011, p. 11). Linked to the idea that controlling (sexual) instincts is at the basis of culture and civilization (Moore, 2004), the extent to which sexuality was tamed was taken as a measure of the extent to which a population was ‘savage’ or ‘civilized’. Thus, sexuality became an important indicator to determine the position of a people on the evolutionary ladder, classifying colonial subjects into distinct kinds (Stoler, 1995).

In 1904, psychologist Stanley Hall published his seminal study on adolescence (Hall, 1904). He chose adolescents as the object of his empirical studies, in line with the Lamarckian idea of evolution through accumulation: his finding of adolescence as an inherent period of storm and stress served as evidence to this thesis of linear progression (Seaton, 2012). In the construction of age-based development stages, Hall linked seemingly neutral stages of development to knowledges ‘produced in colonialist social relations and the social imagery of the great chain of being’ (Lesko, 1996, p. 462). This maintained the analogy that was popular at the time in which youth were seen as primitives, and it constructed ‘adolescents in the same terms that subject peoples were defined: irrational, conforming, lazy, emotional beings who were totally other from Euroamerican adult men’ (Lesko, 1996, p. 462). This colonialist legacy positioned youth as distinct from adults, as lacking reason and in need of civilization.

Challenging the universality of the evolutionary concept of adolescence, anthropologist Margaret Mead asked whether ‘the disturbances which vex our adolescents [are] due to the nature of adolescence itself or to the civilization’ (Mead, 1928, p. 17).⁸ To answer this question, she conducted

7 For a description of the making of sex and the changing understandings of sexuality and sexual difference in the sciences, see Laqueur (1990), also (Schiebinger, 1990).

8 Freeman (2000) argued that Mead based her information on sexuality on the accounts of two key informants, and suspected her of having been hoaxed. Freeman’s account has in turn been critiqued by Shankman (2013), based on interviews with one of Mead’s key informants. Apart

fieldwork on Samoa in the 1920s, as ‘the developing girl is a constant factor in America and in Samoa; the civilisation of America and the civilisation of Samoa are different’ (*Ibid.*, p. 130). This made a comparison possible, and Mead found that, instead of a period of storm and stress, orderly maturing interests and activities characterized adolescence on Samoa. Thus, she argued, ‘there must be something in the two civilizations that accounts for the difference’ (*Ibid.*, p. 131). She found those differences in the general casualness of Samoan society to be different from the United States where children were growing up in a ‘world of choices’ and facing ‘half a dozen standards of morality’ when it comes to sexuality (*Ibid.*, p. 133). The Samoan child, Mead continued, does not face the same choices and dilemmas because in Samoa ‘sex is a natural, pleasurable thing’ (*Ibid.*, p. 134), not surrounded by secrecy or age-appropriate discourses. One of the first anthropological studies into adolescence, that also paid attention to sexuality, thus showed how adolescence was interpreted and lived differently in different places. These insights, Mead suggested, should be used as a mirror to consider how one’s own society deals with issues of adolescence and sexuality.

Schools, gender and sexuality

The considerable body of research on cultural models of sexuality that followed the insights of Mead did not replace but co-existed with biological models that locate the cause of ‘storm and stress’ in the adolescent body. Likewise, the notion that ‘savages’ are driven primarily by their instincts, resurfaces regularly in public⁹ and academic debates (Spronk, 2014b),

from these questions about her research method, a second critique of Mead’s work concerns the lack of attention that was paid to the colonial context (Lyons & Lyons, 2004). Despite these commentaries, the insights with regard to adolescence that were produced by Mead’s study remain pertinent.

9 When, in the first weeks of 2016, rumors of an alleged ‘mass-sexual assault’ in Cologne spread, Dutch MP Geert Wilders proposed to close the Dutch borders to asylum seekers and all immigrants from Islamic countries. He referred to the alleged perpetrators as ‘Islamic testosterone bombs’, stating that these ‘Arab men’ are causing a ‘rape-epidemic’ (Algemeen Dagblad, 2016) among Western European women. Police investigations later showed that refugees were not or hardly involved (Soenens, 2016), but this did not change the general sentiment towards ‘Islamic refugees’, or ‘Arab men’ and their supposedly dangerous sexual drives. This was also discussed

although many studies have debunked this problematic notion (see Lesko, 2001). Similar to earlier conceptions of the instincts of ‘savages’, adolescents are often characterized as flushed by hormones and lacking the brain capacity to tame their bodily drives. In one of the schools that I studied, the parental board invited a puberty-coach to talk about the challenges of raising an adolescent. Puberty-coach Marieke¹⁰ described adolescence as follows:

Suddenly your child is an adolescent. It is like putting a Ferrari motor in a Fiat – everything is going too fast, the child cannot handle it. The impulse-brake-system is not ripe yet.¹¹

Likening the body to a machine, an increase in hormones (according to coach Marieke an 800% increase of testosterone in boys) to a Ferrari motor and the ‘unripe brain’¹² to a Fiat, drives home the message that problems are unavoidable during puberty, especially in relation to sexuality: ‘The increase in testosterone results in action: sports, women, sex. They will start to sweat and smell bad. But don’t worry, as soon as he gets a girlfriend, he will start to shower’. Clearly directing her advice to parents of (heterosexual) boys, coach Marieke placed sexuality at the center of the life stage of adolescence. This notion has become ingrained in academic and popular conceptualizations of youth, in which sexuality is presented as a drive

on the talk show *De Wereld Draait Door* (5-2-2016). The talkshow host asked a guest from the Rutgers expertise center on sexuality how ‘these’ boys will be educated on sexuality. In less dramatic and insulting words, this question created the same split between native Dutch boys and boys who(se parents) were born elsewhere, a split that is made through sexuality.

¹⁰ Throughout this dissertation, I use synonyms for schools, places and persons to ensure anonymity.

¹¹ Dutch was spoken during the observations and interviews. Quotes were translated by the author as literally as possible

¹² Although this notion of an immature brain has been linked to high-risk behaviors in adolescents, for example in the Dutch bestselling book *Het puberende brein*, [the adolescent brain] (Crone, 2008), this idea is not supported by more recent neuroimaging studies (for a review see Crone & Dahl, 2012). Despite these new insights that highlight the plasticity and flexibility of the brain, the popular notion of the immature adolescent brain circulates widely. Not just in the presentation by puberty coach Marieke, but also in a newspaper article about sexting, in which a youth worker says, ‘The adolescent brain is not yet capable of overseeing the consequences of such an action [sending a sexually explicit selfie]’ (NOS, 2016). A similar, equally rigid understanding of the brain, despite studies pointing in another direction, has been noted in relation to the ‘sex of the brain’; see Jordan-Young (2011) and Fine, Jordan-Young, Kaiser and Rippon (2013).

that is overpowering if not held in check, especially for boys (Bay-Cheng, 2003; Lesko, 2001). Understood as a biological drive that can be disrupted through negative cultural influences such as sexualized media, porn or peer pressure, adolescent sexuality requires adult intervention and guidance. The approximately 55 mothers and six fathers that were present during the presentation on the adolescent brain were urged to engage in a conversation about sexuality with their adolescent child – a recommendation that fits with the way in which adolescent sexuality is generally approached in the Netherlands (Schalet, 2011).

The incentive to talk about sex with adolescents is not just a parental matter. As the study *Sex under the age of 25* concludes:

The most important concerns resulting from this study, such as sexual coercion, homonegativity, and sexual problems, should get more attention in sexuality education (Soa AIDS Nederland & RutgersWPF, 2012, p. 7).

Schools are thus pinpointed as the site where important concerns, such as homonegativity and sexual coercion, should be addressed. These concerns become located in the individuals that attend schools, as something they bring with them to the schools. The schools, in turn, are seen as the site of intervention, the container that holds the youth with problematic attitudes, and the place where these concerns can be addressed. This has been one of the tasks that sex education is increasingly being charged with. Thus, this conclusion not only communicates what the most important concerns are, but also where they are located (in the individual) and where they should be addressed (in schools).

How does this view align with the observation that sexuality is invoked throughout mundane schooldays like in the vignettes in the beginning of this chapter? How should sex education relate to these daily references to and negotiations of sexuality? While *Sex under the age of 25* expresses and evokes concerns about sexuality, the ways in which these should be addressed remain unclear. The study does not tell us how to address these issues, nor does it inform us about the ways in which these concerns – of

homonegativity and coercion - become part and parcel of school life. Instead of developing ‘Dutch lessons in love’¹³ which treat the country as an exemplary case with regard to youth sexuality, I opt for a different route. I focus on enactments of sexuality in schools as social sites in themselves out of which no straightforward generalizations or success factors can be distilled. It is not just the site where ‘important concerns’ around sexuality can be negated through sex education, but it is also the site where such concerns are made, play out, and create effects.

The inclusion of homonegativity and sexual coercion in a study on sexual health is the result of a long history of intense debate over the what, who and how of the study of sexuality in academia. There is an extensive anthropological critique of health definitions of sexuality, pointing out the limits of individualistic behavioral research paradigms (for example, Parker, 2001; Spronk, 2012). The ‘extreme empiricism’ (Parker & Aggleton, 2007, p. 3) in the field of public health is the result of the incorporation of a tradition of sexology research. In this tradition, sexual behavior was conceptualized as the outcome of natural, biological drives that formed the basis of social experiences, a conceptualization that opposed earlier moral models of sexuality (Mottier, 2008). During their work at the Kinsey Institute, sociologists Gagnon and Simon became interested in the presumptions behind sexual classifications, and argued that all behavior, including sexual behavior, is socially scripted (Gagnon & Simon, 1973). Their work, together with that of Foucault, shaped the ‘new critical sexualities studies’ (Plummer, 2011).

Tracing the history of sexuality, Foucault described a ‘discursive explosion’, a confessional imperative around sexuality that shifted from church to science. Instead of sexuality as continuously repressed, and ‘freed’ from its regulative bounds during the sexual revolution, Foucault famously argued that there was a continuity of talking about sex – and that this should not be understood merely as repressive but in fact as productive as well. Productive, as it shapes the way we understand sexuality: the concept

¹³ *Dutch Lessons in Love* is a documentary film made by sexuality expertise center Rutgers in response to ‘questions from abroad’ on how the ‘open climate’ with regard to sexuality was established in the Netherlands (Rutgers, 2015).

sexuality itself is a result of this discourse, and the same goes for sexual identities. These identities are not merely expressed through discourse, but are constituted by it. Early sexological studies, the 'scientia sexualis' (Foucault, 1976), transformed confessions into the 'truth' about sex, cataloguing and classifying sexual behaviors and phantasies, differentiating between normal and abnormal sexual behavior. This important interference with sexuality was based on the confessional model that proclaims sexuality to be the key to individual authenticity and identity. As such, sexuality became 'the stamp of individuality' (Foucault, 1976, p. 146), but, at the same time, it was an indication of a society's strength. Foucault's intervention formed an important impetus to the study of sexuality, and moved this study in the direction of social constructionism. Importantly, biological, cultural and social constructionist understandings of sexuality did not neatly follow one another, but co-exist, and sometimes form strange hybrids.

Social constructionist approaches to the study of sexuality have sparked interest in the school as one of the sites of constructing sexuality and gender. In the 1980s, Connell typified schools as 'masculinity making devices' (Connell, 1989, p. 291), and considered them to be agents in making particular types of gender. Most of this work on schools and sexuality has conceptualized schools as spaces where gendered and sexual identities are performed and policed.¹⁴ A large and important body of literature has emphasized the *doing* and the *effort* that it takes for hegemonic forms of gender to appear natural. For example, Nayak and Kehily have argued that heterosexual masculinity is not something that can be asserted once, but continually has to be 'asserted, regulated and performed' (Nayak

¹⁴ My focus here is on secondary schools. However, although children are often seen as nonsexual, sexuality is by no means irrelevant to primary schools, as ethnographic work has shown (Kuik, 2013; Renold, 2005; Thorne, 1993). Emma Renold introduced the concept 'sexual generationing' – the positioning of boys and girls in age-appropriate discourses, in which childhood is seen as asexual, and adolescence as defined by sexuality (Renold, 2005, p. 17). In one of the first studies on gender (and to a lesser extent sexuality) in primary schools, based on fieldwork in the late 1970s, Barrie Thorne drew on the metaphor of play to indicate the active production of gender categories in everyday life, and employed the term borderwork to characterize the ways in which children continuously established and differentiated boys from girls (Thorne, 1993). In ethnographic research in Dutch primary schools, similar processes were observed. A study by Kuik (2013) showed that primary school pupils were actively drawing in puberty by referring to sexuality, and posited it is thus not just a biological or developmental phenomenon, but a social phenomenon as well (Kuik, 2013).

& Kehily, 2006, p. 464). Similarly, CJ Pascoe, in her study of masculinity in high schools, presents the school as a major socializing institution in which gender and sexuality are performed (Pascoe, 2007). Studies into femininity repeatedly showed the importance for girls to display a sexy, desirable hetero-femininity, a position that easily shifts into one of undesirability if one dresses or behaves 'too' sexy or sexual, resulting in exclusion and ridicule (Epstein, 1997; Pomerantz, 2008; Ringrose, 2013; Tolman, 2002).

Instead of conceptualizing sexuality as a natural, individual drive, these studies understand sex and gender as coming about in doing. In employing such an understanding, many scholars have been inspired by the work of Butler, especially her theorization of gender as performative, as an effect of repeated speech acts. The notion of gender performativity holds that gender is not something we have or are, but something that we do: 'that the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality' (Butler, 1990, p. 185). These acts need to be repeated, a repetition that is 'at once a reenactment and reexperience of a set of actions already socially established; and it is the mundane and ritualized form of their legitimation' (Butler, 1990, p. 191). Inspired by the work of Butler, studies of gender and sexuality in schools have focused on, for example, the subversion of or escape from gender norms (Haywood & Mac an Ghaill, 2012; Holford, Renold, & Huuki, 2013; Renold, 2006a; Ringrose & Renold, 2014); sexual subjectivity (Allen, 2005a, 2009; Epstein, Flynn, & Telford, 2013; Kehily, 2004; Miller, 2013); and the policing of heterosexuality in schools (Chambers, Tincknell, & Loon, 2004; Epstein et al., 2013; Kehily, 2001; Renold, 2006b; Sanjakdar et al., 2015).

The various points raised in this literature show that sexuality is not confined to specific times and places of sex education, and that it is related to but not contained by bodies. The tendency in these studies, however, is to rely on narrative accounts and, in such analyses, to focus on the formation of subjectivity in a web of power relations (Spronk, 2014a); hence the investigation often focuses on either conforming to or subverting gendered norms. Many studies have provided substantial knowledge of processes through which youth, mainly girls, constitute sexual subjectivities. As gender

and sexuality are seen to be socially formed, the focus is on the individual – and how the agency of this individual is constrained by normative discourses. In contrast, this study shifts the interest from individual negotiations of a gendered norm, or subversion of that norm, to the collective processes in which sexuality has a role and takes shape, setting out to understand not cultural representation or subjectivity, but the enactment of sexuality.

Sexualities and diversities

Did you know that adolescence is over 500,000 years old? Many allochthonous parents do not know very well what puberty is. In western society, someone is an adolescent at the moment of ejaculation or menstruation. In Africa, this means that you can join the tribe to go hunting. In western society there are more demands for the adolescent: becoming an adult takes longer.

Continuing the lecture on the adolescent brain, coach Marieke invoked a universal model of biological development, in which menstruation and ejaculation are important markers. However, they are taken to mean different things: in ‘western society’ they indicate the onset of puberty; in ‘Africa’ they attest to the ability to go hunting. This explanation combines biological and cultural elements, and at the same time is firmly based in Dutch society with its particular division of the population into allochthones and autochthones.¹⁵ These issues have prompted several questions: Why is the distinction allochthone-autochthone relevant here? How should we understand the opposition between ‘western society’ and ‘Africa’? How do these categorizations matter to the children of those being lectured and who inhabit the school?

15 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 acquired this usage in public policy and national statistics, and have become mainstream in public discourse (Essed & Nimako, 2006; Geschiere, 2009). In the remark by the puberty coach, allochthonous parents are located firmly outside of ‘western society’. Allochthonous parents are imagined to be absent from the group of parents that attends this evening. For notions of self and other in this particular school, see chapter 6. On the notion of autochthony in the Netherlands, see Mepschen (2016).

A study into sexuality in the 1960s (Van der Veen, 1963) divided its sample of participants along the lines of the dominant social groups that formed the famous Dutch ‘pillars’ (Lijphart, 1989). Social life was largely organized through these four groups (Catholics, Protestants, socialists and liberals) from the end of the nineteenth century through the 1960s. In the absence of a majority, the political elites of these minority groups together developed a style of politics through compromise rather than conflict (see Davidson, 2015).¹⁶ Although the division into the four pillars is no longer deemed to be the most important in sexuality research, a preoccupation with differences between groups remains. Ethnicity has taken over the position of the most used marker of difference. This shift occurred when the Netherlands saw remarkably fast societal changes in the 1960s that were facilitated by a rapid secularization and depillarization. This gave new social movements, such as gay and lesbian movements, much influence (Davidson, 2015) and they were incorporated into the political system easily, contributing to the idea of Dutch ‘traditions of tolerance’ (Mepschen, Duyvendak, & Tonkens, 2010, p. 967).

A similar approach of tolerance has been noted in relation to sex education in schools. Gradually, during the 1960s and 1970s, the role of schools was recognized (Röling, 1994, 2003). The Dutch government acknowledged adolescent sexual activity as a fact: displaying pragmatism instead of moralization. Pragmatism, then, is portrayed as neutral whereas morality is connected to religion (Bang Svendsen, 2017; Rasmussen, 2015; Schalet, 2011).¹⁷ Through this acceptance of teenage sexuality as a fact, there were no fierce political debates about how to manage this – as opposed to

¹⁶ The system of pillarization was also reflected in the organization of schools. In 1917 it was instituted in the constitution that denominations could found schools based on their own system of beliefs with State financing, the so-called ‘freedom of education’ (Wingerden & Sturm, 2003). This system is still in place, and public, special (religious denomination) and general special (f.e. Montessori, Dalton) schools are funded in the same way by the state and are subjected to the same set of regulations to ensure quality education. The special schools are allowed by law to exclude pupils or staff members when they do not subscribe to the values of the school. This law is not used often, but has led for example to the suspension of a gay teacher from a Christian school in 2009, a case in which the school stated that this ‘sexual orientation did not fit the foundations of the school’ (‘School met de Bijbel Emst stelt homoseksuele leraar op non-actief’, 2009).

¹⁷ Between 1911 and 1971, article 248bis of the Dutch law criminalized sexual relations between those above and those below 21. The law only pertained to homosexual relations. Since 1971, the age of consent is 16 for both homosexual and heterosexual contact (Hekma & Van der Meer, 2011).

other countries, notably the US (Irvine, 2000). Instead, and characteristic of the politics of compromise, the management of teenage sexuality was passed over by the government to professionals in the field, who are expected to work based on 'scientific evidence alone' (Lewis & Knijn, 2002, p. 675). Whereas the government sets a general 'attainment target', stating what pupils should know about sexuality by the end of secondary school, the way in which this goal is reached is up to individual schools.¹⁸ As such, sexuality could be included in primary and secondary school curricula without much political turmoil.¹⁹ This approach, referred to as a Dutch tradition of the normalization of adolescent sexuality (Schalet, 2004) is, according to many, under threat from immigrants (for example, see Schalet, 2011). As opposed to the Dutch, presented as secular in this narrative, immigrants (especially Muslims) are said to bring along religious beliefs that interfere with a rational approach to sexuality. Thus, sex education and youth sexuality are somehow implied in a narrative of (secular) Dutchness. Scholarship has thus far neglected to address the question of how youth sexuality figures exactly in this narrative, and how the narrative plays into youth sexuality in schools.

The type of sex education that the Netherlands became famous for is characterized as 'comprehensive', 'planned' and 'evidence-based' (Ferguson, Vanwesenbeeck, & Knijn, 2008; Schaalma et al., 1996; Schaalma,

18 In 1998, sexuality was introduced in the attainment targets for primary schools; stating that pupils should learn about human reproduction (Ministerie van Onderwijs Cultuur en Wetenschappen, 1998). In 2012, sexuality was included in attainment target 43 for secondary schools. This target stated that: "the pupil learns about similarities, differences and changes in culture and ideologies in the Netherlands to relate these to one's own and other's way of life, learns the significance of the respect of each other's attitudes and ways of life for the society, and learns to respectfully deal with sexuality and diversity within society, including sexual diversity" (Kamerbrief Kerndoelen [Parliamentary decree attainment targets], 2012, p. 2). This attainment goal institutes homotolerance as an important objective – turning tolerance of homosexuality into a learning goal for pupils (Rothing, 2008).

19 This does not mean that some resistance to sex education has not been voiced. As stated, in general schools can decide on the content and manner of teaching sexuality and reproduction. When a national educational TV program for primary schools, however, included an item on sexuality called 'Doctor Corrie', angry parents united. These mostly Christian parents wrote to an MP of the Christian Party (CU), who asked parliamentary questions to the state secretary of education. The state secretary answered by saying that schools are free to choose whether or not they will watch the educational TV show (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2013). In this case, in which the content of the sex education is fixed and included in an educational TV-program, resistance does happen and quite easily translates to parliamentary questions which require an official answer from the government.

Abraham, Gillmore, & Kok, 2004). This type of sex education provides information about sex on the basis of which pupils can make rational choices, choices that should not to be diverted by ‘cultural and religious norms and values’ (Smerecnik, Schaalma, Kok, Meijer, & Poelman, 2010, p. 7). The approach is often praised for its effectiveness, measured through pre- and post-intervention surveys on knowledge, attitudes and intentions for behavior (Schutte et al., 2014; Vanwesenbeeck et al., 2016). The same type of sex education, however, is also critiqued for its naturalization and individualization sexuality, and its lack of taking into account the interplay of sexuality with gender, race, religion and class (Bay-Cheng, 2003; Bredstrom, 2005; Lamb, 2013; Lesko, 2010; Rasmussen, 2012). In a country that regards sexual progressiveness as a defining characteristic of its culture (Mepschen et al., 2010), religion is often deflected onto those deemed non-Dutch. In other words, sexual progressiveness is regarded as incompatible with religious values (Bracke, 2011; Moors, 2011). This conflation between Dutchness and secularism works to mark those deemed non-Dutch as religious, resulting in a conflation of religion and ethnicity.²⁰ Combined with a tradition of epidemiological research to distinguish ethnic groups, these divisions are easily turned into a mechanism that separates the so-called progressive Dutch from the conservative, religious other. It legitimizes subjecting ethnic minorities to heightened surveillance and education (Van den Berg & Duyvendak, 2012), to civic integration exams in which sexual freedom becomes an instrument of coercion (Butler, 2009), and even frames migrants and their children as a threat to the sexual health of the ‘native’ Dutch population (Proctor, Krumeich, & Meershoek, 2011).

This centrality of sexuality to nationalism is not new. In nineteenth-century ideologies of bourgeois respectability, sexuality functioned to designate both Jews and homosexuals as the nation’s outsiders, and, thus, sexuality was crucial in defining the nation as well as those that belong to it (Mosse, 1982; Nagel, 2002). Racial elements of the structures and methodologies of comparative anatomy were used by nineteenth-century sexologists in their quest to establish differences between normal and

²⁰ Essed and Trienekens (2008) call this the muslimification of racism.

homosexual people and bodies (Dudink, 2011; Somerville, 1994).²¹ It resulted in the emerging of ‘a host of naturalized and racialized categories and characters’ (Dudink, 2011, p. 260), such as the nation, and the Jew and the homosexual as its racialized others. Similarly to more recent forms of sexual nationalism, then, we see a strong connection between race and homosexuality, albeit the other way around. In recent debates on homosexuality and the nation, homosexuality functions as a racial category: it represents whiteness (Dudink, 2011).

Although the Netherlands is often seen as an example of a country that successfully addresses issues of youth and sexuality, there has been little room for critical inquiry into the realities that are enacted through sex education and the discourse on progressiveness in general. Sexual nationalism has mainly been studied in political discourse in relation to homosexuality (Dudink, 2017; Jivraj & de Jong, 2011; Mepschen et al., 2010),²² not in relation to youth sexuality.²³ Questions about the ways in which it interferes with the enactment of sexuality by youth remain unexplored, which implicitly constructs them as unaffected by political discourse. This dissertation takes issue with the idea that youth are somehow exempt from this nationalist politics of sexuality. Although the contemporary focus on ethnic minority youth in sexual health research speaks to a long history of studying the sexuality of others, the effects of this research focus have not

21 Magnus Hirschfeld, for example, was inspired by the work of criminologist Lombroso in his quest for detecting ‘real homosexuality’ in physically recognizable features (similar to the efforts of Lombroso to find ‘real criminals’). Havelock Ellis studied what has been more recently called transgender identity, and was one of the first scholars to classify this as a distinct construction from sexual inversion and homosexuality (Mottier, 2008). It is important here to understand that the term heterosexual also is the result of these scientific practices. Heterosexuality did not always have a status of normalcy – it was first catalogued by Richard von Krafft-Ebing as a perversion in 1893 (being a non-procreative desire). See Katz (2007).

22 This political discourse is not only the terrain of nationalist right-wing parties such as the PVV. In a letter to ‘all Dutch citizens’ published in all major national newspapers at the beginning of the 2017 electoral campaign, Prime Minister Mark Rutte (VVD, liberal party) wrote: ‘We feel a growing unease when people misuse our freedom to mess things up here, while they came to our country because of that freedom. People who do not want to adjust, criticize our habits and reject our values. That pester gays, hoot at women in short skirts, or call normal Dutchmen racists. I understand very well that people think: if you reject our country that fundamentally, I would rather want you to leave. Because that is the feeling that I have as well. Act normal or leave’ (Rutte, 2017).

23 An exception to this is a study by Duits (2006) on the clothing choices of girls of primary school age, positioned within debates on sexualization and increasing societal concern about Islam in the Netherlands.

been questioned in the Netherlands. In what (new) ways does research enact ethnic minority youth's sexuality as different or problematic? How do these conceptualizations play out in public discourse and how do they influence schooling? How are youth differently shaped by sexualized nationalism? And how do they relate to this?

The puberty coach finished her talk by urging parents to guide their adolescent kids as they 'experiment, take risks', and start to get interested in sex at a life stage in which 'self-reflection is gone'. After the lecture, drinks were served, and one of the mothers present told me that her daughter was increasingly paying attention to her clothes: 'She is on WhatsApp with her friends before going to school, taking pictures of her pants to ask whether they are not too short'. Communicating worries about the increased attention her daughter paid to her own looks and how much of her time this consumed, the mother demonstrated perfectly well her daughter's abilities to engage in reflection. Although it may not be the reflection meant by coach Marieke, there was a process of reflection and deliberation through a WhatsApp group with friends. The principal told me briefly about an incident earlier that day, when a pupil photographed the behind of one of her teachers: 'She thought it was nice to show her parents, she really had no clue'. This was an underestimation not only of the pupil but also of the power of sexualized images and the currency they can carry for youth (Ringrose & Harvey, 2015). That this pupil took the picture became known to a teacher through another girl in the same class, with whom the first girl was having a fight – thus the picture had a role in a specific relation between pupils.

This short example shows that the kind of issues that the puberty coach was addressing might not have been the most prominent for the parents (and teachers) in the audience. How is the school positioned in the proposed model of adolescent development? What is the role of technologies such as smartphones with cameras and the capability for instant messaging? And what role do friendships and opposition between friendship groups play? In this study, I re-address the focus of research and propose a shift from individual bodies to social processes in which sexuality appears and disappears in different forms and with different effects. These processes, forms and their effects will be central in this dissertation.

Main question and analytical approach

The papers that make up this dissertation collectively explore what sexuality *is made to be*, and what it *does* in schools. To guide this exploration, it asks:

How is sexuality enacted in mundane practices in schools and how is this process of enactment implied in the making of differences and similarities among youth?

Often introduced as a self-evident concept, sexuality is hardly defined or explained in scholarly work (Spronk, 2012): some find it in bodies, others in feelings, practices, social norms, desires, moralities, or a combination of those. Though this can be problematic, since it assumes sexuality to be self-evident, essentializing the phenomenon, I also not define or pin down sexuality before starting this study, in line with the tradition of material-semiotics. I do this not because I consider sexuality to be self-evident, located in a singular place and influenced by stable factors, but to be able to study what it is made to be and what it does in practice. This approach does not look for a singular version or explanation of sexuality but allows for multiplicity and relationality. It is open to sexuality being located in and articulated through bodies, norms, desires, discourses, practices, or a combination of those – recognizing that the way in which sexuality is popularly known influences how it is enacted in practice, while allowing for new versions to emerge.

Many studies in gender and sexuality studies that focus on youth and sexuality in school separate sex (biological) from gender (sociocultural), and focus on the latter. Instead of conceptualizing sexuality as a biological phenomenon that is socially mediated (Vance, 1991) and focusing on the (changeable) mechanisms of this social mediation, scholars in science and technology studies (STS), by contrast, reject this nature-culture divide, as well as the associated division of academic labor. Thus, they argue, science does not speak objectively, and biology does not lie ‘out there’ for researchers to discover. Rather, what we think of as biological facts are ‘rooted in specific histories, practices, languages and peoples’ (Haraway, 1997, p. 217). Science

scholars thus closely interrogate the scientific practices through which such facts come about (Adams & Pigg, 2005; Fausto-Sterling, 2000). Studies into, for instance, sex hormones (Roberts, 2007), sex differences in the brain (Jordan-Young, 2011), sex chromosomes (Richardson, 2013), the genes (M'charek, 2005), reproductive organs in scientific textbooks (Martin, 1991), and the development of the male pill (Oudshoorn, 2003), showed how social and practical factors are entwined with scientific research and the outcomes this research produces.

These studies contribute to an understanding of science not as revealing the truth about a particular phenomenon, but as contributing to, and co-producing those truths. This active notion of science can be captured by different metaphors such as that of construction, performativity or enactment. The notion of construction, however, implies a social or individual builder that builds something stable (Law, 2009). There is a risk of understanding the metaphor of performativity, which has sparked many studies into gender, as like a theater with a front stage and a backstage – a front stage where performance takes place and a backstage where the 'real' is hiding, as suggested by Goffman (1956). In gender studies, the notion of performativity is used differently, warranting that there is no 'doer behind the deed' (Butler, 1990, p. 25). However, to completely shed the suggestion of a 'real' and a 'performer', as well as that of the stable object built through construction, I use the term enactment (Mol, 2002), indicating that activities take place, but the actor stays vague – there is no single builder or performer, building site or theater. The question, then, is not one of finding true knowledge, but of finding out what different knowledges do in practice.

Although my study is indebted to science and technology studies it is also different: it did not set out from the start to compare and contrast how sexuality is 'done' in different scientific practices and settings. Instead, it traces how certain more or less stabilized notions of sexuality: as natural, gendered, different among differently categorized groups of people, play out and get remade in schools. It analyzes how the making of differences and similarities among youth is implied in this process. Drawing on insights of material semiotics helps me to study sexuality empirically, to not locate it a priori in bodies, subjectivities, norms, discourses, or sciences, but to

understand it as emerging from their relations. I do so by analyzing mundane practices in schools, including walking through hallways, hanging out in the canteen, and following classes. Although the practices are mundane, the issues are not necessarily: controversial issues such sexting and sex education also figure in these schools.

How is the enactment of sexuality implicated in the making of differences and similarities among youth? As we have seen at several moments throughout this chapter, sexuality is often linked to ethnicity: by the puberty coach that invoked distinctions between allochthone and autochthone understandings of puberty, by the systematic breaking down of statistics in *Sex under the age of 25*, or by linking sex education to Dutchness. The approach in this study is not to look for 'social differences in sexual health', separating the sexual and the social, but to analyze how differences are the effect of practices, and the role that sexuality plays in processes of differentiating. Understanding differences and similarities as the effects of practices implies that they will not be located in the bodies of some, but are found in relations and the investments in the relations that produce them (M'charek, 2010). Doing so does not exempt youth from the politics of sexuality, but shows how they get implied in, have to relate to, and change these politics. It is an approach that is open to differences and similarities other than those of ethnicity, broadening the scope of stories about sexuality to include, for example, friendship, education, and social media. These stories can be used to understand and question the politics around youth and sexuality in the Netherlands.

Study sites and ethnographic method

This dissertation is based on ethnographic fieldwork, conducted between March 2013 and December 2014, in four secondary schools in the Netherlands. Here, I introduce the schools and outline the ethnographic approach.

The schools that I studied varied in terms of educational level and geographic location. The system for secondary education in the Netherlands is divided

into three levels, namely pre-vocational secondary education (vmbo), general secondary education (havo), and pre-university education (vwo).²⁴ The duration of the programs differs: pre-vocational is four years, general five, and pre-university education six years. Around half of the pupils that have finished elementary school continue their education on the pre-vocational level. The other half is almost equally divided between general and pre-university education (Ministerie van Onderwijs Cultuur en Wetenschap, 2013). This division in school levels is followed approximately in the current study, in which three pre-vocational classes, one general and one pre-university education class were studied. This allows for contrasting the ways in which these levels invite certain identifications and practices and refuse others (see chapter 5).

The study comprises schools that are situated within and outside the Randstad, which is the region spanning the four largest cities in the Netherlands (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, and Utrecht), where an estimated 7 out of the 16 million people in the Netherlands live. The Randstad is also the part of the country where most studies are being conducted, based on the assumption that it is in these urban areas where most social problems, including those that relate to sexuality, reside (see chapter 2). To be able to contrast schools, two were situated within, and two outside of the Randstad. The latter ones were more welcoming of me, as they were less burdened with requests to participate in research, and for organizational reasons.²⁵ My presence there could therefore also be slightly more continuous than in the two other schools in which a stricter start and end date of the research were negotiated.

In the first school, Florius College, one of the teachers invited me to take part in the sex education lessons that she offered on Friday afternoons during a period of four months. I observed the elaborate sessions on sex

²⁴ The vocational track has been divided into three levels (basic, general, theoretical). The pre-university track consists of two levels (atheneum and gymnasium). Next to the three general levels of education (vmbo, havo, vwo) that have been described, about 5% of secondary school pupils attend special or practical education, a type of education that is outside of the scope of this study.

²⁵ At Nexus High my participation started halfway through the school year, and since this was the year before the final exams I did not extend the research beyond the summer break. Florius College was about to go through a large reorganization which limited the research period.

education that were based on a curriculum and supplemented with fieldtrips and guest lectures. The school was situated in a large city in the Netherlands, in a neighborhood on the outskirts of the city, and provided prevocational education (vmbo) and general secondary education (havo). The class that was studied was in the havo track. In the other three schools my presence was more substantial and intensive. The second school, Rijnsbergcollege, was a small school for vocational education, situated in a more rural area. Here, I studied two different classes, one in the 'basic-track' and one in the 'general/theoretical track'. I studied both classes for one day a week, over a period of 15 months, mostly in their second year and several months in the third year. The third school, Bernarduslyceum, was a school for higher education and pre-university education in a provincial town. In this relatively strict and traditional school, I followed a pre-university class of pupils at the athenaeum and gymnasium levels in the second year of the six-year track, for a period of eight months. Finally, Nexus High was a large school for prevocational education in a city in the Randstad. Here I followed a class in the third year of the four-year vmbo track (general) for a period of six months.

All school administrators suggested that it would be most practical for me to be assigned to one particular class. Three classes were in the second year, one was in the third year (Nexus High). Most pupils were between the ages of 13-15, while some were a bit older, 16 or 17 – at Nexus High and Florius College. The choices of which classes to study were mostly made by school administrators based on their knowledge of the group and the class teacher. Being assigned to a particular class meant that I followed the pupils around through classes, breaks, and events. Like they did, I also got acquainted with others during those out-of-class moments in which more mingling happened.

The contradiction between the rigidity of planned activities and strict time schedules, and my own research method of tagging along, waiting, observing and participating, was aptly pointed out by one pupil when he remarked, 'You basically get paid for sitting here and doing nothing all day?' Most of the empirical material that this dissertation relies on comes from participant observation, or, as this one pupil characterized it: 'doing nothing

all day'. What I was doing, indeed, seemed to resemble 'nothing', as this was exactly how many pupils described their schooldays to me when I missed one: 'We did nothing, we learned nothing, nothing happened'. Still, they were doing many things, things I increasingly participated in: walking from one class to the next while sharing the hallways with other pupils, trying to be in a seat before the bell rang and the hallways became silent; standing still in a corner of the playground, eating, drinking, checking their phones, chatting, and waiting for the bell to ring again to announce the next class; listening to each other's stories, talking about weekends, about homework, questioning each other about a particular interaction with a boy or girl. I was walking, waiting, chatting, listening to them and, often when they were working on a specific task during class, writing notes about the previous hours.

Adolescent culture has been conceptualized as different and mysterious, a conceptualization which ignores the connections between young people's cultures and those of adults, especially in schools, which are organized and mostly controlled by adults who can employ institutional resources (Raby, 2007). The difference between me and the pupils was most tangible in the fact that they were obliged to be in school every day, while I could sometimes skip a class or a day without repercussions. My presence was at times questioned, but the longer I was there, the more accustomed the pupils became to me. This became clear when one pupil said to a friend that I had not met, 'Why are you looking like that, that's Willemijn, she is just walking along with us'. No further questions asked or elaboration needed. Pupils tried to make sense of me as much as I was trying to make sense of them, asking questions about my youth, private life, clothing, and hairstyle. As adolescence is often seen as a state between childhood and adulthood, I occupied a position of in-betweenness for the pupils: I had finished secondary school but was still in some form of schooling and had not yet entered 'adulthood', which they associated with having a permanent job, being married, owning a house and, ultimately, being a parent – none of which applied to me.

Creating rapport with pupils also involved showing on many occasions that I could be trusted. For example, during one of the first months at

Rijnsbergcollege, a few pupils went to someone's house when a class was cancelled. I joined, but within half an hour pupils started to drink beer and liquor. Upon returning to school, the principal found out two boys were intoxicated. She came into class and demanded that everyone who was at the house where the drinking happened raise their hands. I raised my hand too, but did not tell the teachers or school officials what exactly happened or who drank alcohol and who did not. Luckily, the school officials did not push me to. This showed the pupils I could be trusted. On many other occasions I never opposed gossiping or joking about teachers when I heard it, sometimes being complicit in it by laughing, winking or raising an eyebrow. Similarly, there were many cases in which I saw the copying of homework or cheating during exams. At Nexus High, I even helped Michelle during a social science test by whispering an answer to her (when she asked me, 'What is the name of that state secretary of justice of ours again, the fat one?'). She came out of the test chuckling and telling her friends I had helped her to pass the exam. That same afternoon, she and two of her friends offered up part of their lunchbreak to do a group interview with me.

These group interviews were conducted with friendship groups, as this often helps to create a comfortable atmosphere (Renold, 2005). Indeed, the group interviews that I conducted often resembled casual conversations; the pupils would interrupt each other, laugh, have conversations in between, whisper, tell jokes, get into fights, and gossip about others who were not present. The difference was that these conversations often took place in an empty classroom, individual room or teacher's office, and during class time (and therefore in the interest of the pupils to make them last longer); they were recorded and started off from a question posed by me or from what they thought would be interesting to me. Despite my explanation that these conversations were recorded, and that I would use them for my study, the format did not seem to align with their idea of an interview. This more formal type of interview that the pupils imagined, based on their experiences with teachers and social workers, became clear when Timmy asked halfway during an interview, 'Oh, did the interview already start?'

In individual interviews, this casual atmosphere was harder to establish; discussions were more based on my questions and resulted in relatively short

and abstract answers (see also Nespor 1997). Pupils were not used to this style of conversation with adults; maybe it reminded them of the 5- or 8-minute conversations they had with the class teacher a few times a year to discuss their grades. The interview as a particular style of communication requires skills (to listen to a question, answer, convince the interviewer, give examples, etc.) that only some pupils mastered. In these interviews, it seemed hard to overcome the 'great gulf' that developmentalism has established between knowing adult and unknowing child (Raby, 2007). Attempts to deformalize these conversations, by using informal language, mild teasing, jokes, or by eating food and getting drinks, were not always successful ('ha-ha, there she is again with her bag of candies'). Individual interviews, however, did prove to be helpful when they revolved around a specific incident that I wanted to know their opinion about, in which case the answers were not at all short or abstract, but long, complicated and emotional. The research approach, in other words, did not follow a pre-set strategy but evolved along the way, and was the result of interactions between researcher and researched, school timetables, and available locations.

Overview of the chapters

This dissertation is composed of five empirical chapters that analyze sexuality and diversity.

Chapter two critically examines the production of knowledge about sexuality and ethnicity, through a review of Dutch studies on youth and sexuality between 2000-2011. In these studies, ethnicity is a frequently used measure, and this chapter traces the concept through four research practices, namely the rationales for taking up ethnicity and compiling research populations, the determining of ethnicity, statistical calculations, and the making of recommendations. It will show that ethnicity is a slippery concept: definitions are unclear and contested, and it is operationalized in many, often non-coherent ways. But while the notion of ethnicity is flexible, slippery and changeable throughout these practices, at the same time it becomes solidified and naturalized in relation to sexuality.

Chapter three follows the case of a girl's nude picture being

disseminated in one of the schools that was studied. It argues that sexting has become a widely recognizable phenomenon that is scripted in a specific way, as summarized in the oft repeated phrase ‘when-girl-sends-nude-picture-to-boy’. This scripting through media and academic reports influences the way sexting comes into being. This, in turn determines how such cases are dealt with in practice, as following the case of Zoe over time will show. The analysis complicates debates about sexting by troubling how the script actually produces the phenomenon as well as its gendered and racialized subjects.

Chapter four presents three sex education classes that each took a different pedagogical approach. It uses these three classes to address the question: what else can sex education do? This question opens up the study of sex education beyond the two common modes of seeking to establish effectiveness or to engage in a mode of critique. The analysis of classroom practices shows that sex education is a collective practice that might affect the future health of individuals, but, more importantly, plays into and reinforces patterns of race, gender and popularity. Furthermore, the chapter highlights the ways in which comprehensive sex education either emphasizes or ignores the issue of homosexuality, and how this is related to ethnicity and sexual nationalism. The analysis complicates the ways in which sex education is conceptualized and measured as a health intervention.

Chapter five explores the ways in which heteronormativity is enacted through friendship and teaching practices in and around the schools. Among pupils, heterosexuality was presupposed yet also made in practices of forming, consolidating or ending friendships. In two schools heterosexuality was drawn in to ease teaching relations, while at a third school it was seen as a hindrance to academic achievements and was therefore relegated to the private sphere. This chapter shows that heteronormativity might not only regulate gendered and sexual identity constitution but works in realms of social life that are often thought of as desexualized. It also breaks with the tendency to produce singular accounts of heteronormativity and its effect in schools.

Chapter six engages with questions of diversity in secondary schools. The analysis traces different locations, articulations and problems of diversity for pupils and their teachers. The chapter shows that the categories of social

life are not coherent, homogeneous and consistent, to be found in a person or in the body – in other words, real – but instead that they can *become* or *fail to become* real in social interactions. Whenever diversity was articulated in one of the schools, it was rapidly dealt with in one of three ways: through emphasizing similarities, deflection onto others, or ignorance. Making diversity irrelevant depended on a deflection of racism onto others and in effect maintained the negative connotations of diversity and the locking of its problems into some schools and bodies and not others.

Finally, **chapter seven** revisits the issues raised in the introduction. It will outline the main findings and arguments and its implications for theory, methodology and intervention.

Chapter 2

Ethnicizing Sexuality: An analysis of Research Practices in the Netherlands

Abstract

Ethnicity is a frequently used category in research into youth and sexuality in the Netherlands, a country known and admired for its favorable sexual health outcomes. This chapter 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; 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, Berlo, & 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 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 it 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, and their interconnectedness, that we engage in this chapter.

The Netherlands, sexuality and nationalism

The Dutch have been internationally applauded for their pragmatic and progressive approach to teenage sexuality (Aggleton, 2001; Senanayake, Nott, & 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 pupils learn about contraceptives and condom use, identity formation, social skills and sexual diversity. The 'Dutch approach' (Lewis & Knijn, 2002; Senanayake et al., 2001) has been characterized as pioneering and successful in preventing sexual transmittable diseases (STI's) 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 et al., 2010). Simultaneously, religious beliefs, irrationality, and traditions came to be seen as characteristic 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 & 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' (p.126). 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, p. 200) and get framed as posing a danger to the sexual health of the 'native' Dutch population (Proctor et al., 2011). It legitimizes subjecting ethnic minorities to heightened surveillance and education (Krebbekx, Spronk, & M'charek, 2013; Van den Berg & Duyvendak, 2012). This process sexualizes ethnic boundaries, turning them into ethnosexual boundaries (Nagel, 2002).

Category work: Gender, ethnicity, 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, 2008).

Intersectionality assumes categories as given, knowable and stable, which implies they can be analyzed 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 its 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 centers, and scientific publications. These practices do not take place outside social contexts, but are shaped by them, 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 & 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, p. 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 like 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). It is the process that 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, peers. Furthermore, the archives of relevant Dutch academic journals were searched, as were the archives of knowledge centers on youth, sexuality and education. Only original empirical studies into youth and young adults were selected. Where 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.

The described search and selection methods resulted in 32 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 in the 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 analyzed 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 (Essed & Nimako, 2006; Geschiere, 2009). The term allochthonous 'is not connected to any particular cultural background and hence individualizes, while categorizing at the same time' (Ghorashi, 2014, p. 105). In this sense, this terminology tends to both isolate and group together, in a 'lumpy' way, different groups (Yanow & Van der Haar, 2013, p. 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, practices might overlap, be iterative or work simultaneously. Following 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 their relationship.

1: Compiling an ethnically diverse sample

Five times, in the literature we considered, knowledge about ethnicity is deemed necessary to match educational programs to ‘allochthonous youth’ (table 1). In three studies the reason for taking up ethnicity 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 at Islamic youth once. Once, the sample also included autochthonous Dutch youth (Cense & 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 & Van Dijk, 2010; De Graaf et al., 2005; Vanwesenbeeck et al., 2003). To make sure the so called hard to reach populations (Hollander & 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’ to take part in a study (De Graaf et al., 2005, p. 4). Another strategy was identifying and inviting youth with a Surinamese, Antillean, Turkish or Moroccan background via the municipal registration of the two Dutch largest cities, Amsterdam and Rotterdam. In one study, area codes of urban areas where ‘a lot of allochthons live’ were dialed to contact potential study participants (Von Bergh & 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, p. 15), in which white males functioned as the ‘standard human’ (Epstein, 2007, p. 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 (Paulle & Kalir, 2013, p. 1357). 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 & Sweet, 2008; Proctor et al., 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.*

2: 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' (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 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 labeling 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 analyzed? In two research projects, she would be labeled as second generation non-western allochthon (De Graaf et

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 & Van Dijk, 2010	QI	Previous research	Cultural and religious background	Country of birth parents	Surinamese/Antillean/African, Turkish/Moroccan/Hindusani, autochthonous, other	1) websites; intermediaries; earlier participants; 2) specific groups on schools; on the streets; youth event in the district Amsterdam South-East; youth centers Amsterdam	Autochthonous (n=23), Surinamese/Antillean/African (n=22), Turkish/Moroccan/Hindusani (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 non-Western	Surveys in schools (a select sample)	80% Dutch, 2% Surinamese, 1% Antillean/Aruban, 3% Moroccan, 4% Turkish, 5% other non-western, 5% other western
Hemmes & Ulichki, 2010	Qn and QI	Previous research tailored interventions	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 & Frouws, 2011	QI	Previous research, tailored interventions	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 3 men and 3 women
Inspectie van het Onderwijs, 2007	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 27 secondary schools and 8 vocational schools	Secondary school: 20% has a non-Dutch mother; vocational school: 28% has a non-Dutch mother

Qualitative/ Quantitative	Reason to attend to ethnicity	Concepts used	Operationaliza- tion of ethnicity	Categories used	Recruitment of participants	Ethnic composition of sample
Kuyper et al., 2009	Qn Previous research	Cultural and religious background	Country of birth participants and parents	Autochthonous/Western, Turkish/Moroccan, Surinamese/Antillean, other non-western	Via youth media 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 participants and parents	Western and non-western	Via youth media and several schools	1257 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)	8 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	Ql 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 internet forum on Islam and sexuality	44 Muslims, 33 non-Muslims
Vanwesenbeeck et al., 2003	Qn Tailored intervention	Origin, background, ethnic communities	Country of birth parents	Islamic, Caribbean, 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 Caribbean/Surinam/ other Latin American country, 7%
Von Bergh & 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
Wolfers et al., 2010	Qn Tailored intervention	Ethnicity, immigrants	CBS definition allochthon	Dutch, Surinamese, Antillean, Turkish, Cape Verdian, Moroccan, other Western and other non-Western	First and second year classes of 5 vocational schools near Rotterdam	Dutch (38%), Surinamese (16%), Antillean (12%), Turkish (10%), Capeverdian (6%), Moroccan (5%), other western (6%), other non-western (8%)

al., 2005; De Looze, 2010). In the project of Vanwesenbeeck and colleagues (2003) she would be part of the Caribbean group: youth who have at least one parent that is originating from the Caribbean, Surinam or a different Latin-American country. Furthermore, Amalia would be labeled: allochthon (De Graaf et al., 2005), high-risk immigrant (Wolfers, Kok, Mackenbach, & de Zwart, 2010), non-western (Kuyper, De Wit, Adam, Woertman, & Van Berlo, 2009, 2011), allochthon youngster with a non-Turkish and non-Moroccan background (Hemmes & Ulichki, 2010), and non-Dutch (Von Bergh & Sandfort, 2000). Speculating that Amalia would self-identify as Dutch (her being the royal princess of the Netherlands, 'Princess of Orange'), she would be Dutch in the study of Hollander and Frouws (2011). In the studies considered, Amalia could thus be ascribed any ethnicity ranging from Dutch to non-Dutch.

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 & Meer, 2012): leading to a conflation of origin with ethnic group, and to a problematization of groups (for example youth with an Antillean background) instead of phenomena (for example condom-use). The often-used term allochthone 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 & Van Dijk, 2010, p. 102) suggests that making these classifications can be a complex exercise, 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.²⁶ Despite the explanation about the

²⁶ The group of Surinamese and Antillean youth includes a Ghanaian and Nigerian respondent, because 'their cultural script is on the same wavelength' (Cense & Van Dijk, 2010, p.102). A Hindustani and an Iranian respondent belong to the category 'Turkish and Moroccan youth', because 'their cultural baggage also includes honor-sensitivity' (idem). How the label 'Hindustani' was established is unclear, the methods section states that categories were based on country of

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.*

3: Statistical calculations: comparing groups and predicting behavior

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 & 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 & 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 and colleagues (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 & 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 and educational level, for example, often get a meager treatment, despite evidence suggesting these variables might be more relevant than ethnicity

birth of participant and parents.

(see for example 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 and colleagues (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, p. 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 behavior 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 (for example 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 and colleagues (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, western/non-western (De Looze, 2010; Kuyper et al., 2009, 2011; Sandfort, Bos, Collier, & Metselaar, 2010; Wolfers et al., 2010).

This also happens when researchers use other techniques. Binary pairs that are created are allochthon/autochthon (Cense & Van Dijk, 2010; De Looze, 2010; Hemmes & Ulichki, 2010; Vanwesenbeeck et al., 2003) Dutch/non-Dutch (Von Bergh & Sandfort, 2000; Wolfers et al., 2010), Turkish/Moroccan and Dutch/Western (Schouten, van den Putte, Pasmans, & Meeuwesen, 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 behavior, that, when it concerns actual behavior (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 analyzed and are not included in comparisons (Vanwesenbeeck et al., 2003). *Thus, 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 'o' -value. It is also apparent in phrases like 'the Caribbean group is not inferior to the Dutch', or, 'regarding knowledge, Islamic girls lag behind' (Vanwesenbeeck et al., 2003, p. 32). 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, p. 539), or 'a fairly progressive group of allochthons' (Von Bergh & Sandfort, 2000, p. 10) are mentioned. The judgmental formulation on allochthones in general and, increasingly, on Muslims, makes understanding research results difficult: it leads to the imprecise use of terms like 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.*

4: Making recommendations

Many reports and articles end with making recommendations for future research, policy or practice, like promotional campaigns or school programs. Sometimes, researchers leave the job of formulating recommendations to stakeholders in the field of youth and sexuality (Meijer, Graaf, Vanwesenbeeck, Poelman, & De Graaf, 2005), to experts in the field of sexual health or to youths themselves (Kuyper et al., 2009). Often, recommendations are (at least partly) formulated in terms of ethnicity. Hollander and Frouws (2011, p. 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 and colleagues (2003, p. 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 about sexuality between parents and their children' (Schouten et al., 2007, p. 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 & 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 some ethnic groups require 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 that 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* headlined: Talking about sex still a taboo among allochthones (Budde, 2008). 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 & Toure, 2010, p. 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 (Nationaal Kompas Volksgezondheid, 2014). On its website, a figure on youth and sexuality is presented (Bakker, 2010), see table 2.

Origin	Has sex with others apart from steady sex partner		Has had 4 or more sex partners	
	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

Table 2. Percentage of pupils (12-15 years) that has had multiple sex partners (simultaneously).
Translated from National Compass of Public Health (Bakker, 2010)

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

Origin	N	Boys			Girls				
		Always	Some times	Start affair only	Never	Always	Some-times	Start affair only	Never
Dutch/Western	2164	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

▼ ▲ = respectively high or low given the total percentage

Table 3. Condom use at intercourse with last partner (%)
Translated from ‘Seks onder je 25e’ (De Graaf et al., 2005, chapter 4).

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 that never uses 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.²⁷

Research results are not only important inside universities and knowledge centers, 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 conducted: a self-validating tendency is noticeable here (see also Proctor et al., 2011). The sexual connotations of diversity contribute to the importance that ethnicity assumes 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 & 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 constantly used and its

²⁷ 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).

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 this makes it impossible to take ethnicity and sexuality apart. The political work of this ethnicizing of sexuality goes well beyond the walls of research centers. It is part and parcel of the contemporary political moment in the Netherlands, contributing to self and other.

Postscript to chapter 2

Several developments have influenced Dutch discourses on ethnic minorities in general, and in sexuality research in particular since the analysis that resulted in chapter two was conducted in 2011.

In December 2011, two artists that were protesting against the racist caricature of *Zwarte Piet*, servant to Saint Nicholas, were arrested. The violent arrests would mark the start of a renewed wave of anti-racist protests, centring around the figure of *Zwarte Piet*. These anti-racist interventions, that had in the past often been marginalized, now gained support from several politicians and commentators. On the other hand though, reactions from those in support of *Zwarte Piet* have been fierce and widespread, with the prime minister stating that ‘those who do not support *Zwarte Piet* should leave the country’.

Intensifying the ongoing debate on ‘Dutch identity’, the statement that race does not matter in the Netherlands (Hondius, 2014; Wekker, 2016) has become an increasingly difficult position to defend. This has also affected the use of ethnic categories in research. The use of the terms *allochthone* and *autochthone* have been problematized in this debate on Dutch identity as well. The Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy announced its discontinuation of its use of the terms in late 2016, stating that they do not fit ‘current day issues surrounding migration’ – they are said to be ‘out of time’ (Bovens, Bokhorst, Jennissen, & Engbersen, 2016, p. 7). An alternative has not been introduced by these institutes, which signals a wish to end the separation between Dutch people with and without a migration background. These are not just symbolic actions, but, as chapter two showed, these effect scientific reports and are taken up in media and politics.

The analysis presented in chapter two was published in a theme issue of the Dutch journal for sociology in 2013. As such, the analysis itself became part of the process of science in the making. It directed attention to the question of ethnic classification in the field of sexual health studies, and led to an expert meeting on diversity in this field of studies. This does not mean, however, that a classification based on origin disappears overnight. The third edition of the largest study into youth and sexuality, *youth under*

the age of 25 was repeated for the third time in 2017. In the survey, one of the first questions asked about the country of birth of the participant as well as the parents' of the participant. The researchers disagreed with the Scientific Council and thought it important to register 'origin' in this way, in order to study differences across groups. While the study has not been published yet, it looks like the terminology will change from 'allochthones' to 'people with a migration background', but that the practices of division and comparison and risk determination will remain in place.

Chapter 3

When-girl-sends-nude-picture-to-boy. Unscripting Sexting in a Dutch school

Abstract

Based on an ethnographic case study of a girl's nude picture being disseminated in a secondary school in the Netherlands, this chapter argues that sexting is scripted through media and scientific reports, influencing the way it comes into being and is dealt with in practice. This sexting script shapes the way teachers and pupils react when a nude picture 'is going around'. The script changes the story that we will follow. It emphasises the girls' agency in sending the picture, taking it to signal a lack of self-confidence, and implying her guilt in its dissemination. On the other hand, it erases several elements, notably the different networks of friends that the actors tap into, and the 'economy of pictures' that the picture is part of. This analysis complicates debates about sexting by troubling how the script actually produces the phenomenon, as well as its gendered and racialized subjects. The sexting script *does* things. The case that has been presented here, shows that certain things are made invisible, as they do not fit the script. As such, they cannot become part of what we understand the phenomenon of sexting to be.

Introduction

Awful, it must be awful. In their innocence or stupidity they, ... eehhh... Let this happen and these are exactly the dangers that we want to talk about with our pupils' (RTL news, 25-09-2014). Referring to two girls who had sent someone sexually explicit material of themselves, a head teacher of a Dutch school expresses his worries during a TV-interview. The voice over adds that 'sometimes it is pure stupidity, other times, a cry for attention'.

Since 2008, many articles on the phenomenon called sexting have appeared. Sexting is often described as the exchange of sexual messages or images via mobile phones (Hasinoff 2012; Ringrose et al 2012; Hasinoff 2015) and most often refers to girls sending a sexually provocative picture or video clip of themselves to a boy. The practice has often made the news, the quote above, taken from a Dutch news program, is just one example. The news story reported on the circulation of clips of young girls who 'perform sexual acts', with the headline 'Urgent call - talk about the dangers of sexting'.²⁸ The emotional appeal of the head teacher makes clear that something very serious is 'happening', something that is potentially destructive. Such news stories led some commentators to say that sexting, among teenagers, is the newest in a series of moral panics about youth sexuality (Hasinoff, 2015; Lumby & Funnell, 2011; Tolman, 2013).

Sexting, a portmanteau of sex and texting, has been studied from a number of angles. First, there are epidemiological studies that look for the prevalence of the phenomenon and its effects on youth (in terms of risk, sexual problems etcetera). Some of these assert that the practice of sexting is taking on epidemic proportions (Gaylord Forbes, 2010; Podlas, 2011). These epidemiological studies indicate that sexting has become a fairly common practice among teenagers owning a smartphone.²⁹ Second, a large body

²⁸ This imperative is aimed at parents: they are the ones that are advised to talk to their children about the dangers of sexting

²⁹ A review of (mostly US-based) research into sexting found that approximately 10% of adolescents had sent a sexy picture once (Klettke et al., 2014). Research in the Netherlands has found that a minority of adolescents has produced online sexual images (3.0%, Kerstens & Stol,

of research has emerged that investigates the effects of media on sexual development and activity from a (mental) health perspective. This research has often found a correlation between exposure to sexy pictures and ‘sexual risk-taking’ (Klettke et al., 2014), ‘high-risk behaviors’ (Temple et al., 2014), or ‘sexual attitudes and experience’ (Van Oosten et al., 2015) in young people, and looks for ways to minimize negative effects. Third, sexting is also the object of a diverse set of questions from the social sciences. Here, attention is paid to situating sexting in the sexual cultures of teenagers, (Albury, 2013; Albury et al., 2013) and the overall sexist culture of which the practice is part (Ringrose et al., 2012; Ringrose, 2013). Fourth, media scholars study sexting in relation to social media: as media production (Hasinoff, 2012), as constrained or made possible through technologies (Hasinoff & Shepherd 2014), through its capacity to produce value, or as a gendered process (Ringrose et al., 2013; Berriman & Thomson, 2015).

While these studies provide a useful entry point into discussions about sexting, they, however, assume sexting to be a clearly defined phenomenon that can be described through numbers, stories, and interview accounts. Rather than accepting the assumption that sexting is this clear phenomenon, I question it by using the notion of the script. During my extensive ethnographic fieldwork at a Dutch school, a nude picture of a girl from a class that I studied was spread throughout the school. In following the case closely over several months, it became clear that the sexting script did not cover the whole story. Recognizing sexting as script makes space for different questions to be asked, such as: how is a nude picture made to ‘go around’ in a school? How do pupils and teachers react? What is drawn into the story and what is left out? What does this make of sexting and its subjects? Based on this case I show that the sexting script does things: it opens and closes positions that the actors can take up, and highlights some aspects while erasing others.

2014; 4-8%, Graaf, Kruijer, Acker, & Meijer, 2012; 19%, Scholieren.com, 2014).

Sexting as script

The metaphor of the script has a long history in the social sciences, two relevant strands of which, I will discuss. First is the coining of 'sexual scripts' by Simon and Gagnon, who used the term to contribute to a social understanding of sexuality (Simon and Gagnon, 2007[1984]). In a strong reaction against sexology research that situated the sexual in the biological realm, they argued for an understanding of sexuality as socially scripted 'on three distinct levels: cultural scenarios, interpersonal scripts and intrapsychic scripts' (Simon and Gagnon, 2007 [1984], p. 31). Though a successful antidote to the biological sexual model, critics have pointed out that there is a lack of clarity as to where cultural scenarios originate and how they come into being (Frith & Kitzinger, 2001). Despite this critique, the notion of the sexual script is helpful to understand the appropriate objects, aims, and desirable qualities of sexual interaction. In the Netherlands, sexual contact between teenagers is considered to be a normal part of growing up, albeit only under very specific circumstances (Schalet, 2011), that exclude social media as a vehicle for sexual communication.

The second relevant strand relates to technological objects. Akrich (1992) uses scripting to describe the ways norms and values are built into objects. Technological objects, she argues, 'contain and produce a specific geography of responsibilities' for those who use them: they form the behavior and identities of their users. Like a film script, Akrich explains, 'technical objects define a framework of actions together with the actors and the space in which they are supposed to act' (Akrich 1992., p. 208). In other words, scripts are not only to be recognized on a discursive level, but are inscribed in objects as well: they become ingrained in the material objects we use. In this case, this inscription is seen in mobile phones with cameras: they afford the possibility of making pictures that, when connected to the Internet, can easily be shared with others. This opens up the notion of sexting beyond the discursive level, as the practice is partly scripted through camera equipped mobile phones and other technological objects.

Media coverage and scientific publications not only name the practice of sending sexually explicit self-images 'sexting', they actively intervene in

the ways the practice should be understood: they script it. Studies looking at the frequency of sexting (epidemiology), its effects (health, psychology), its contexts (social scientists) or its cultural productions (media scholars), constitute sexting as a clear phenomenon. This phenomenon can be summarized in the script 'when-girl-sends-nude-picture-to-boy'. In this script, sexting comes to stand in for a girl sending a (semi) nude picture to a boy, who will undoubtedly share it with others. However, these academic studies not only describe the objects that they study, they simultaneously make these objects (Law, 2004). The sexting script is gendered: girls who do this tend to be framed as victims of a sexualized culture, as naïve about the risks of sending sexually explicit pictures, and as lacking self-confidence. Boys who do this are rarely the focus of analysis and consequently, their role gets naturalised.

The case presented here follows the ways in which the sexting script in a Dutch secondary school opens and closes positions that different actors can take up. Focusing extensively on the days immediately following the spread of a picture and reflections on the event several months later, will show how the sexting script -produced through media and scientific reports- not only describes the phenomenon of sexting, but also prescribes how it is dealt with in practice, and, to a degree, produces sexting.

Research focus and method

The research project on which this chapter is based studied sexuality and diversity in secondary schools in the Netherlands. The Netherlands is often regarded as a country that has successfully incorporated sexual education into its educational system and that actively promotes gender equality. Dutch sex education programs and approaches are regarded as exemplary. In short, the Dutch are seen as forerunners when it comes to dealing pragmatically with teenage sexualities in schools (Weaver, Smith, & Kippax, 2005). As such, it is interesting to study how sexting is dealt with in this context of pragmatism and normalization of youth sexuality, as well as to analyze the mechanisms that resonate beyond this particular case.

When it comes to sexuality, research often focuses on sexual problems (Spronk, 2014a). This is especially the case when studies focus on ethnic others, whether found abroad or, in this case, within; in ‘Dutch society’s Other’ (Balkenhol & Jaffe, 2013). The idea of ethnic others’ sexuality as problematic not only influences public opinion, but also resonates with research practices. Most research is being done in urban areas in the so called Randstad³⁰ and focuses on ethnic minority populations (Krebbekx, Spronk, & M’charek, 2017).

I carried out a large part of my fieldwork outside of the Randstad, focusing instead on two schools in one of the relatively more rural provinces of the Netherlands. The case that this chapter will analyze took place in a school, called Rijnsbergcollege, that offers vocational education (Dutch: VMBO). The school is relatively small, with about 300 pupils. Most of them live in one of the five villages surrounding the school. Almost all pupils can be described as children of working class parents and the school regularly emphasized its whiteness in relation to neighboring schools and especially as opposed to schools in the Randstad. The 27 pupils that formed the class that I studied were 13-14 years old at the time of the study. I conducted 15 months of fieldwork, which, for several days a week, entailed attending school lessons and breaks, and participating in school events like parties and trips as much as possible. During this time, I observed pupils, listened to their conversations, asked questions, chatted with them in classrooms, hallways and the bike shed. Next to holding and hearing many informal conversations at school, I carried out more formal individual and group interviews, which were recorded and transcribed.

A picture is going around – Guilt and/of circulation

I was confronted with sexting when Miss Oosten informed me that a nude picture of Zoe was ‘going around’ the school. The next day, she told me that

³⁰ The Randstad is the region spanning the four largest cities in the Netherlands (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, and Utrecht).

she had heard about the picture from some of her colleagues, who, in turn, were shown the picture by senior pupils during class. When the information reached the class teacher, she decided to talk to Zoe, but Zoe did not want to talk about it. According to Miss Oosten, Zoe kept repeating 'it is my own stupid fault', and 'there is not much more to say'. Miss Oosten called the girls' parents and summarized their reactions: 'father cried, mother thought it must be a loverboy'.³¹ As he did not attend the same school, she had not been in touch with the boy who forwarded the picture without Zoe's consent.

Miss Oosten posted a message about the issue on the internal school communications website, a system for all teachers of a class to be kept up-to-date about any special circumstances, issues or rules regarding a certain pupil. The note in the database stated:

Zoe does not talk, ignores her parents, does exactly as she pleases, she does not even bother to say good morning. Tomorrow I will again be in touch with her father. He is going to talk to Zoe tonight.

The written memo about the issue in the electronic system added seriousness to the 'problem' – it was now a registered event, public to Zoe's teachers, it would remain in her file for the rest of the school year. Miss Oosten's intervention worked to connect the issue to Zoe's behavior at home. Zoe's parents were notified and the class teacher tried to talk to Zoe about the problem and, by implication, the underlying causes that were sought in the person of Zoe. This was hampered, however, by Zoe's lack of communication. The teacher contacted her family to find a solution together and the way Zoe behaved within the family home was made part of the problem. This move established that the problem was located inside Zoe.

The next day, shortly after the biology lesson started, Miss Oosten came in, and asked Zoe to come with her. Murmuring increased as Zoe walked to the front of the classroom, with all eyes upon her. When she

³¹ The word loverboy is used to designate boys who lure girls into prostitution by first starting a 'romantic' relationship with them. Since a biographic novel appeared on the issue in 2008 (Mosterd, 2008), many disconcerted media reports about the phenomenon have appeared in the Netherlands. In every school I have been for this study I found at least one novel on the issue in the school library.

returned, about 15 minutes later, again, everyone looked at her. Her best friends Jordan, Alyssa and Kira looked at each other with a chuckle. Some guys in the class were making jokes. Loud enough for Zoe to hear, Justin said to Damian: 'hey look at Zoe's cleavage', to which Damian replied 'why bother, we've seen everything already', while some others laughed in response. Zoe ignored them, and the teacher did not seem to notice, or ignored them too. Here we see that the image goes around not only online but also offline, in school spaces, through showing the image on cell phones to one another. In addition to the images 'going around', the *discussion* of the picture and the girl pictured also circulated. In the school spaces described, this circulation was accelerated by teacher interventions and consultation.

Jordan and Kira, among Zoe's best friends, appeared to be mad at Zoe. When I asked them whether they were also angry at the boy who forwarded the picture that was meant only for him, they told me no – 'because she [Zoe] did it herself. Pupils and teachers alike repeated this sentiment over and over. My questions about the boy – whether he had done something wrong, needed to be questioned, or if he also had to have conversations with his class teacher - were met with surprise. At one point Miss Oosten exclaimed: 'why do they keep doing it?!' The plural form suggests that it is not only about Zoe here, but about all girls who take and send revealing pictures to boys. For the teachers, Zoe, by taking and sending that picture, came to embody a certain type of girl: that is the 'innocent' or 'stupid' girl from the news stories. The remark indicates that, within the sexting script, it is not possible to imagine that youth, like adults, can engage in sexting for interpersonal intimacy, communication, and expression (Albury et al., 2013).³²

Here, Zoe was simultaneously positioned as perpetrator, in utterances like 'she did it herself' and as victim, for example in the reference to a loverboy's possible involvement. The sexting script made Zoe appear as the problem. On the one hand, the problem was individualized, while on the other hand, in the teacher's use of 'they', it appears to be more complicated: Zoe was not only taken apart, she was also regrouped in the collective of 'those girls' – those girls that occupy the position of 'naïve' or 'stupid' girls in the sexting script.

32 For adults, on the contrary, sexting is encouraged to improve one's sex life

It is not only the nude picture – Exposing and bridging social networks

At the end of class on the second day after the spread of Zoe's picture, a teacher asked her if she was okay, noting that she looked tired. She began to cry. This was seen by the whole class who again began whispering, with many pupils turning in their seats to look at her. When the class drew to an end, Zoe was still talking to the teacher, sobbing. In the ladies room, I ran into Zoe's friends Kira and Jordan, and asked 'what's going on, are you mad at Zoe?'

Kira: yes. She sent around nude pictures and everyone has seen them, at this school and at Delta [which is a nearby school]

Jayden walks past and says: Zoe is crying!

Kira shouts to Jordan: your big friend [sarcastically] is crying again

Jordan asks: where?

Kira: yes she's probably being pathetic in front of a teacher

Willemijn: did you see those pictures?

Kira: no, but I do have them on my phone [taking out her phone upon which I indicate that I do not want to see them]

Willemijn: but I think it is sad for her

Kira: there is nothing sad about it. She did it herself

Willemijn: but who has forwarded them?

Kira: I don't know

Willemijn: someone from this school or another school?

Kira: another

Jordan: Willemijn, it is not only the nude pictures. She was going with all these bruinen [brown ones] and she also has a picture of one of these bruinen [brown ones] touching her bra. [Jordan mimics Zoe's provocative pose and look]

Willemijn: so how long has this been going on?

Jordan: he is so black that when you put him on a paper you don't even see him!!

Willemijn: but I mean the boys

Jordan: yes suddenly she goes with all these guys from Delta...
[a nearby school]

While Zoe was crying and comforted by a teacher, Jordan suggested that I should not take things at face value. She explained that the fight was not because of the pictures but because of the fact that lately, Zoe had been hanging out a lot with boys from another school. For Jordan, the picture symbolized Zoe's shift to spending more time and intimacy with boys, as opposed to her female friends. Earlier studies suggest that a great deal of conflict among girls in this age group relates to this 'shift from primary relationships with girls to a heterosexual orientation toward and higher valuing of relationships with boys' (Ringrose 2013, p. 86). It is important here to pay attention to the content of the nude image, as not each image evokes similar responses. There is, for example, a difference between an evocative pose while undressed, and a depersonalized (head cut off) shot of breasts: a difference that relates to the complicated task of adolescent girls to be sexy, but not sexual (Holland, Ramazanoglu, & Sharpe, 2004). To make things worse in the eyes of Jordan, Zoe was hanging out with boys who have a different 'skin color' than their own (which is white). For her friends, Zoe became an out-of-control girl, beyond their reach. Jordan said they had warned her many times, asking her 'are you going to stop with these brown ones or what?' The racial component added intensity to the transgression and to the blame; echoing the notion that she should have known better with these 'sexual predators', as racial others are often cast to be (Bredstrom, 2005; Hasinoff, 2014; Nagel, 2001). When I interviewed Jordan individually, she tried again to assure that her anger towards Zoe was justified:

You know first she did not wear make-up and she was hanging out with these boys who are now in the first year. You know Mark and John, they live in Noordveld, they are white, normal people.

Again, the importance of the different, racialized friendship networks was emphasized. According to Jordan, the nude picture did not stand alone; instead, she situated it in a longer period of Zoe going out with boys from a

different school, Delta College. This school is close by, but is mostly looked down upon by pupils at Rijnsbergcollege. It is cast by teachers as well as pupils as ‘very different’. This difference is coined in terms of ethnicity and safety – Delta College is situated in a small city that is seen as more ethnically diverse and having more urbanized social problems.

At the moment that she tried to convince me her anger towards Zoe was justified, Jordan talked about Zoe’s hanging around with ‘brown’ boys. In a way, she used the argument of race as common ground to justify her own behavior and to further disqualify Zoe’s behavior. In doing so, she tried to constitute me as ‘one of them’, one of the inhabitants of the provincial school that rejected the ‘multicultural’ neighboring school. Here, two common discourses of racism in the Netherlands, namely that of criminalization and sexualization (Wekker, 2016), are evident: the pupils in the other school need more correction and are said to receive more ‘red notes’ (an official warning to parents of which three lead to complete suspension of the school), and their sexual behavior is implicitly assumed deviant by Jordan.

Zoe was the only girl of her group of friends who tapped into friend networks that attended Delta. Jordan lived quite far from the village and was not allowed to go anywhere by herself. Alyssa had problems keeping up in school and spent most of her afternoons studying (a few days a week with a private teacher). Kira’s mother was always at home with her after school, available to hang out. Zoe, on the other hand, could go wherever she wanted; her parents were rarely at home after school hours. She did not need to study a lot to get acceptable grades (she was advised to go to a higher level track but her parents wanted her to go to the school in their village, which only offered a vocational track).³³ From her village, in which she lived centrally, Zoe could use the bus to get to nearby towns. As such, she tapped into other social networks that were unavailable to her friends from school. Part of the harsh reaction of her friends can be read accordingly: that Zoe’s interests differ from theirs, that she hangs out with people they do not know, and who are

33 The Dutch school system is roughly divided into three levels: VMBO is the preparatory middle-level vocational education, a four year track; Havo is the higher general continued education, a five year track; VWO is pre-university education, a six year track. The decision which track to enter is made by the pupil and his or her parents at the end of the primary school (at age 11 or 12), based on a test and teacher advice.

cast as ethnically different. These networks, until the spread of the picture, were geographically separate. The technology of the mobile phone, as well as the affordances of social media, dissolved geographical boundaries: suddenly Zoe's friendships and relations with the group from Delta became visible to her Rijnsbergcollege friends, demonstrating how new media 'leak' (Chun & Friedland, 2015). The way in which social networks were bridged, and the ways in which their racialization can increase policing of sexual behavior, were important for the actors in this case, but go unnoticed in the sexting script.

Zoe tells her side of the story –Boys' nudes and refusal of victim role

In the afternoon of that same day, still the second day after the picture was spread, there was a Physical Exercise (PE) class.

When class is over, and we are in the girls changing room,
Zoe changes quickly and leaves.

Kira announces that, during class, Zoe told her side of the story.

Kira summarises quickly: She said she needed Joey [the boy whom she sent the picture to]. And that he would only be there for her if she sent that picture. And that she needed him and that's why she did it. Then, Joey sent the picture to his best friend [Sara]. Sara forwarded it to her whole list of WhatsApp contacts. And that is when Zoe wanted to hit her [Sara] but then Akhil [a friend of Sara] slapped her [Zoe] in the face.

Someone says she thinks Zoe is going down the wrong path. Others nod in agreement.

When someone notices Zoe left her earrings in the changing room, Jordan says: yuck I am not touching those.

It is important to note here that it turned out to be a girl (Sara) who widely distributed the picture after receiving it from her friend Joey. This contradicts and complicates the general script of sexting. In this case as

well, it is very easy to overlook this detail. Only Zoe points it out, but the issue does not stick with anyone - the blame was already placed on Zoe for engaging with the 'wrong' (kind of) guy(s). No attention was paid to who made the picture travel: instead the sentence 'a picture is going around' is used: thus evacuating agency and making it easier, once again, to blame girls for not containing their sexuality (Chun & Friedland, 2015). The other part that is often neglected is that Zoe was trying to confront Sara (who spread her picture widely) by hitting her. This moment of anger does not suit the victim position that Zoe has to take up in the sexting script. Here, it is clear that there was barely any space for Zoe to 'tell her side of the story'. The conclusions were already drawn, and stayed the same: Zoe was going down the wrong path and is to be avoided. Her earrings were not to be touched.

The last part of the conversation presented above took place in the girls changing room. Here, there are no boys or teachers around; it is coded as a female space. The room is used for (un)dressing, looking at each other and in the mirror, adjusting hair and make-up, gossiping. Most girls tried to stay as long as possible in the confined and slightly more private space of the changing room. Zoe, however, tried to get out as quickly as possible.

In this version of the story, as recounted by Kira, Zoe kept a secret. It excluded her friends, making them even angrier – how can she share things with this boy that they don't know about? Now, she is being intimate with a boy without her best friends knowing about it, going against their established norm of sharing everything they experience with boys. This was evident in the girls changing room when someone asked: what would she need Joey for?

Half a year later, relations seemed to be normalised again, and I no longer heard references to Zoe's pictures. During an interview, Zoe distanced herself from the girl in the picture by emphasizing that the incident happened 'last year' (before the summer holiday), that she changed a lot, and that her relationship with her parents improved due to changes she made (like taking part in family meals). In recounting last year's highs and lows, Zoe reproduced characterizations that are evident in much of the literature on teenagers and sexuality in which peers are seen as threat and the family as the site of positive identity development (Wyn, 2012). Ending relationships

with particular boys and overcoming alienation through reconciliation with family members is an important transition in stories like these (Hasinoff, 2014). Regarding girls who send nude pictures Zoe told me:

Sometimes I have that, even though I think it is stupid of myself, but, ehm, if some person has a picture, you... Ehhh... You don't want anything [to do with them] anymore. [You keep your] distance. But then I think, well, I have had them [nude pictures] myself. If someone does not like that girl I go along with that too and think, well, 'I don't like you either'. Whereas if people would think that way about me I would be hurt... but it is [happening] almost automatically.

Here we see the sexting script at work once more: Zoe indicated that the distance she wanted to take from girls who 'have' a picture arises almost automatically. In the same conversation, however, Zoe again complicated the sexting script when she told me that she took and sent more nude pictures than the one that caused the situation I have been describing here. She also owned pictures of boys that she used to threaten them against spreading her pictures. These pictures, she told me, were mostly from naked body parts, so-called 'dick pics' (Salter, 2015), a term that is used in Dutch as well. She never spread these, as she said, out of pity. Spreading would most likely not be a smart thing to do, given that it would signal her sexual activity, something that might negatively reflect on her as it suggests an overt sexuality that marks women as slutty, and not 'classy' (Attwood, 2007). Her asking for and saving boys' nude pictures disrupts the script of the naive girl who has been victimised by boys.

***But I scratched out her head!* – Situating sexting in an economy of pictures**

Zoe was part of the girl's clique that was more popular than the other one in the class which called itself the 'nerdalerts'. Several times, I noticed that girls from the 'nerdalert' group showed that they had the picture of Zoe on their phones.

Two weeks after the nude-picture had been 'going around' I went out for dinner with the class and some of their teachers. Zoe and her friends leave early. Linda and Evi want to show Zoe's picture to one of their teachers. The teacher refuses to look at it, and says he did not want to see it. Linda replied surprised: 'but I scratched out her head!' Shortly after, Evi gives the teacher a wristband that she made for him.

The youth that I studied used their smartphones every day to take and send pictures. During class or breaks, a photo or (group) selfie could be taken at any time, as pupils regularly took out their phone and ordered: 'selfie!', which was often followed by an immediate striking of poses. Smartphones make the making and sending of high quality pictures easy, quick and cheap. Almost every pupil owned a smartphone with a camera and photo-sharing apps.³⁴ Furthermore, the school provided free Wi-Fi, which contributed to the large number of pictures circulating. I barely heard youth make or talk about phone calls, while in contrast they were using WhatsApp, Facebook, Snapchat and Instagram on a daily (sometimes hourly) basis, and sometimes Skype as well. All of these technologies appeal to the visual - increasing visual and sexualized communication (Allen, 2013; Ringrose et al., 2012; Berriman & Thomson, 2015). These daily practices of taking and sharing pictures were visible to teachers as well. To a certain extent, they participated in it by taking pictures themselves and sharing them on Facebook or the school website.

Pictures taken with smartphones were often posted online, and were consequently met with a number of 'likes' or comments. In school, they were often shown to each other, and evaluated and gossiped about. When posting pictures, young people expose themselves to the chances of deriving pleasure from likes and positive reactions, as well as the possibility of criticism (Berriman & Thomson 2015). This taking, posting, sharing and valuing of pictures has been described in terms of an economy (Ringrose et al., 2013; Shields Dobson & Ringrose 2016), in the sense that it involves production, consumption and valuation. This 'economy of pictures' is not gender

34 Such as WhatsApp, Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook Messenger

neutral. Previous research argues that for boys, owning semi-nude pictures, functions as a form of capital (Schwarz, 2010). Ringrose and colleagues describe this economy in detail. They found that images of girls' bodies, for boys, hold value as they are proof of something that a girl has 'done for him' (Ringrose et al., 2013, p. 314). Girls as well can gain value, namely by being asked for a nude picture, which is read as a sign of desirability. However, when a girl agrees to send a nude picture, her sexual reputation and value decrease (Ringrose et al., 2013).

In addition, the case analyzed here shows that for girls as well, owning pictures can be a form of value. Notably, it was a girl (Sara) who distributed Zoe's picture widely after having received it from Joey, who Zoe had sent it to. Receiving and owning nude pictures of other girls, especially of girls who are more popular, can be a way of showing that they are part of a certain network of peers. In addition, it can give girls the tools for power reversal by inscribing the pictures (like Linda did, scratching out Zoe's head). Possessing pictures of boys can be a form of power for girls too: Zoe told me that she has pictures on her phone from naked body parts of boys that she threatens to publish if they spread her picture. Zoe until now decided not to do it, out of pity, as she said to me. Exposing these pictures would most likely not have the same consequences for boys as it has for girls. The economy works differently for boys than for girls; they can make it 'profitable' in different ways and to different extents, and at different costs. When discussing the nude-picture of Zoe, this picture was never related to this busy 'traffic' in pictures. What could have been considered as a continuum was isolated. In the sexting script, the phenomenon of sexting is particularized, it is not seen as functioning in an economy of pictures.

When-girl-sends-nude-picture-to-boy

Sexting has come to be understood as a growing practice among youth, a practice that is potentially dangerous and damaging, especially for girls. Based on media and scientific reports, it has become a widely recognizable phenomenon, scripted in a specific way: the line

'when-girl-sends-nude-picture-to-boy' barely needs explanation. It implies an unhappy ending in which the picture is inevitably spread, and will result in an emotional drama for the girl, who should take the blame, and consequently change her behavior.

In this chapter I argued that sexting is produced as a very specific script by media and scientific reports. This script determines how a girl whose nude picture is 'going around' in school is reacted to: it requires people to act in a specific way. Based on the case of Zoe that I have described here, it becomes clear that this sexting script not only describes, but also produces, the phenomenon, by making invisible certain issues, while highlighting others. Three things were highlighted through their reiteration. First was the fact that Zoe was the one who had sent the picture to Joey. Second was that she was guilty of its spread, a result of sending a nude picture that is regarded as inevitable. Third was the idea that she was 'going down the wrong path' and was in need of intervention.

Several aspects were made invisible. First was the different network of peers that she tapped into, and the ways in which the racialization of this network increased the negative reactions of her friends. Second was the practice of boys sending nude pictures of themselves. Third were the ways in which technological affordances, such as making pictures and the availability of Wi-Fi, increased the circulation of the picture. Finally, the ways in which the picture that was going around was part of daily practices of taking, sending, and relating through pictures was invisible in the script. The gendering of these practices was also made invisible, as no attention was paid to the fact that the boy who received the nude-picture of Zoe forwarded it to one girl, who consequently shared it with her complete list of contacts.

Next to describing and producing the phenomenon, the script also worked prescriptively: it invited specific actions such as adult interventions, informing teachers, picking a fight, and leaving earrings untouched. Following sexting in school makes visible how the sexting script is stabilized, as certain aspects of the case did not get incorporated into the story while others were emphasized. Only because of this, it is possible to understand the case presented here as one of those stories that is captured by the sentence 'when girl sends nude picture to boy', and to incorporate it into the

Chapter 4

What else can sex education do?

Abstract

Comprehensive sex education (CSE) has been heralded as the right way to do sex education. It is informed by theory, and supported by evidence. To think sex education outside these intervention logics, this chapter asks: What else can sex education do? Three ethnographic cases from secondary schools in the Netherlands trouble the separations that CSE relies on, namely those between the present and the future, between learning and doing, and between the individual adolescent and the collective peer group. The analysis shows that sex education is a collective practice that does not (only) affect the future health of individuals, but brings about other effects, such as that of race, gender and popularity.

Introduction

In 2015, the 19th edition of the Dutch conference Sexuality*HIV*STD took place. It was a festive one: the school-based sex education program *Long Live Love* had existed for 25 years. In the closing plenary, researchers gave four-minute speeches to an audience of sex educators, public health professionals, researchers, and some pupils of a school that just won the 'Long Live Love Award'.³⁵ The academics shared one recommendation of their study for sex education practice. The first speaker focused on the importance of policymakers to structurally embed sex education on the municipal level, and the second speaker recommended schools support teachers in the implementation of sex education.

The speakers in the plenary session did not focus on the content of sex education, reflecting a general consensus in the Netherlands about what constitutes good sex education. After having established throughout more than 25 years of research what good sex education is, characterized by the terms 'comprehensive' and 'evidence-based', the next challenge seems to be guaranteeing that it reaches everyone and is delivered properly. Comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) has been described as 'one of the most important tools to ensure that young people have the information they need to make healthy and informed choices' (Parker, Wellings, & Lazarus, 2009, p. 227) and through CSE, young people 'can be enabled to make decisions by themselves' (Braeken & Cardinal, 2008, p. 57). CSE is understood to be a progressive, liberal version of sex education that realistically prepares youth for becoming sexually active in the future – in a healthy way.

In the plenary on sex education, I reluctantly accepted the invitation to become the third speaker, slightly uncomfortable taking on the role as academic expert. Nevertheless, I recommended careful attending to the social effects of sex education. Practitioners and pupils evaluated the three recommendations in a discussion on stage.³⁶ Although my call was

³⁵ Awarded to the school that, according to the jury of experts, provided the best sex education the previous year

³⁶ Assessing which of these academics was able to convince the audience of the importance of their findings

recognized as important, some regarded it as vague and hard to translate to practice. It was difficult to make clear what exactly a careful attending to the social effects of sexuality could entail – because of the time limitation but also because the logics of sex education and the appropriate terms for evaluation seem fixed. Words such as health outcome and behavioural determinant, theory, evidence and practice, figure in a widely accepted logic of sex education which did not fit my ethnographic observations.

These sex education intervention logics hold that adolescence is the main stage of sexual development. Herein, adolescents are negatively influenced by silence about sexuality (on the side of parents), by peers, the Internet and media more generally, and hormones (that cause changes in body and brain). To curb these influences, and to keep adolescents healthy and safe, sex education focuses on making rational individuals that can talk openly about sex, know its scientific facts and have the social skills to act upon this knowledge (Schaalma et al., 2004). Sexual activities – that they will engage in during a later stage of their lives and that will take place in the privacy of a bedroom – will, as a result of the intervention that is sex education, be safe and therefore pleasurable.

To reach this goal of healthy sexuality, youth are provided with sex education. A scientific, evidence-based approach is advocated, steering away from the explicitly moral messages of abstinence-only education (Lamb, 2013; Rasmussen, 2012). During its 25 years of existence, several studies have indicated the Dutch sex education program *Long Live Love* ‘works’; that is, it increases the intention among youth to have safe sex (Schaalma et al., 1996; Van Empelen, 2013). Therefore, it is listed as an intervention with a ‘strong indication of effectiveness’ in the database for effective youth interventions (Meijer, 2014).³⁷ Since establishing the effectiveness, the content of the program is no longer studied extensively, but the research focuses on implementation (Schutte et al., 2014), a shift that also occurred during the conference.

A second strand of sex education research, which is less prominent in the Netherlands but important internationally, critiques these logics,

³⁷ The label ‘evidence-based’ is awarded after ‘two studies of good quality’ (preferably experimental design) deliver proof, and is rarely given out (Zwicker et al., 2015).

highlighting the individualistic approach to sexuality it relies on, which comes at the cost of a lack of attention to power differences, sexual agency and sexual pleasure (among others: Bay-Cheng, 2003; Holland et al., 2004). Pointing at the ways in which sexuality intersects with issues of gender, class/education, ethnicity and race, studies have uncovered values and norms that might implicitly be communicated in sexuality education. They deconstruct hegemonic gender structures (Sanjakdar et al., 2015) and racialised knowledges (Bredstrom, 2005) that shape sex education curricula, uncover 'hidden lessons' of the curriculum (Fields, 2008), or 'make visible' how heterosexual structures influence classroom interaction (Ryan, 2016). Studies doing so often rely on an analysis of sex education material or classroom interactions, and look into representations of sexuality and performances of gender. Sometimes the perspective of pupils is elucidated to find out how they evaluate sex education or how to improve it (Allen, 2005b).

There has not been much crossover between these two strands of sex education research: they operate in different realms of knowledge production. A notable exception is the issue of pleasure. Since Michelle Fine's seminal article on the missing discourse of desire (Fine, 1988), a large number of studies has focused on and argued for the inclusion of pleasure in sex education (see for example the edited volume *The Politics of Pleasure*, Allen et al., 2014). These calls resulted in a move away from a narrow 'risk' approach in some CSE programs, to include sex as pleasurable, though often as an individualized imperative (Lamb, Lustig, & Graling, 2013). The Long Live Love program, for example, answers the question of how to make sex pleasurable by stating: 'Sex is pleasurable when it is safe and with someone you love'. The notion of pleasure has become incorporated under the denominator 'comprehensive', and pleasure has been redefined as an objective of the program.

While it is undoubtedly important to attend to sexual health, and to critically engage with the ways in which sexuality is represented in and through sex education curricula, a lot of weight is given to the intervention that is called sex education. Each strand of studying sex education displays a different version of good sex education, understood in different terms and

operating in different scientific repertoires. Both know what to look for (e.g., determinants, bias) and how to judge it (e.g., in terms of health effects or heteronormativity). In this chapter, I would like to pause this evaluative mode of studying sex education, and explore other ways to think about/with sex education.

This move to think 'more' has also been proposed by recent studies in which sexuality is not considered to be an individual construction triggered by adolescence (Renold, 2005), nor as entirely discursively constructed (Ringrose, 2011), but as having 'everything to do with how bodies, things, ideas and social institutions assemble' (Fox & Alldred, 2015, p. 909). They draw attention to the physical spaces where youth interact and to the ways in which femininity and masculinity are always 'becoming' (Renold & Ringrose, 2011). These becomings are conceptualized not as residing inside the individual body, but as 'effects of bodily relations or linkages, comprised from a range of material or non-material domains' (Holford et al., 2013, p. 714). In analysing sex education, I take my inspiration from this recent body of literature and the questions it puts forth on the relationality of sexuality.

Here, I would like to look at sex education, not as a means to an end (health effects, the formation of sexual identities, gaining knowledge), but as a practice of relating. This means attending to the 'empirical mess' that ethnographic accounts produce. It also means resisting the application of explanatory frameworks that are put forth by sex education logics and those by critical constructivist studies. This is not to disregard these explanations and theories, but to understand how they might 'become effects rather than explanatory foundations' (Law, 2009). Attending to practices offers a way out of the evaluative modes described, as demonstrated by previous studies into care practices, another domain in which strong opinions prevail on what is 'good' (Mol, 2008). As will become clear, a focus on practices leads to foregrounding issues and processes that may otherwise be overlooked (see e.g., M'charek, 2013 on race).

The practices that I will present here come from ethnographic fieldwork in two secondary schools in the Netherlands. The first school, Florius College is situated in a large city in the Netherlands, in a neighbourhood on the outskirts of the city. I was in touch with a teacher

from this school who invited me to sit in on the sex education lessons that she offered in her higher general education class over a period of four months. The class that I followed consisted of 18 pupils between the ages of 14-17. At the second school, Rijnsbergcollege, a small school for vocational education that is situated in a more rural area, my presence was more substantial and intensive, as I took part in school days for fifteen months, during which I observed several sex education lessons. The class that I followed consisted of 24 pupils between the ages of 13-15 at the time of study.

Three cases will be presented to grasp what sex education in practice can entail. Each case, to a different extent, allows us to reflect on the guiding question throughout this chapter: what (else) can sex education do? The first case alerts us to the ways in which spaces and times of learning about, and spaces and times of doing sexuality are intertwined. The second case, which describes a class in which pupils are invited to ask questions about sexuality, shows that these questions serve purposes other than health, and that learning about sexuality is not restricted to the sex education classroom. Third, the analysis of a game intended to teach pupils on the transmission of HIV, brings to the fore the ways in which sexuality is collectively enacted.

I. Cuddling in class

During a sex education class at Florius College, primed by the program *Long Live Love*, relationships were discussed. Teacher Anneloes took twelve (instead of the standard six) lessons to carry out the program, as she doubted whether ‘these pupils’ – referring to the ethnic minority background of almost all of them – got any sex education at home. She was also worried about false information received through peers or the Internet. In line with sex education logics, she constructed the sex education class as a ‘space of truth’ (Preston, 2016), a truth provided by the teacher that counters the assumed neglect of the topic by parents and the wrong kind of information found online and obtained through peers. The program materials were used as inspiration, but Anneloes highlighted topics she deemed important for her group, such as virginity and homosexuality. In addition, she filled a

drawer in her classroom with condoms that pupils could take for free and without having to ask her.

Sitting in a circle had become the common set up for the sex education class, and after everyone had found their seat, Anneloes asked the pupils to share their experiences of being in a relationship. Some pupils started to point at Imane and shout her name – indicating her as the one experienced with romantic and sexual relationships. Anneloes declared this pointing to be against the ‘rules of the class’ that were agreed upon, before she turned to Imane to ask if she wanted to react. Imane agreed to talk about having had a boyfriend, how they met (at school), flirted (via Whatsapp), dated (a walk in the park), and fell in love. But, she quickly added that that is over now.

Anneloes: ... how did you break up?

Imane (giggling): We broke up because of that disco-party that you organized.

Anneloes: Oh, really? What happened?

Imane: I did not want to go there and he [boyfriend] did.

And then at the party he went [kissed] with others.

Classmate: yes, a real Mocro! [resulting in laughter in the class]

Anneloes: Was it a Moroccan boy?

Imane: Yes

Classmate: Real Mocro, told you! [Laughter]

Anneloes (sarcastically): Yes because all Moroccans cheat, don't they? Really mature to say such things, that does not make any sense! Imane is telling us from her own experiences so we listen to her with respect. So he cheated on you?

How did you find out, how did it make you feel and what did you do?

Imane: Yes I heard it from others and it made me feel sad.

So I asked him about it and he was acting vague. I knew enough and so we broke up.

Anneloes: And now, are you in love now?

Fabius, who has been sitting next to Imane pulls her towards him in a hug. Imane buries her head in her arms, on Fabius' chest.

They have been sitting close to each other the entire class and

Imane has had one leg over his leg. Others point at them and make signs of hearts with their hands.

Still half-embraced by Fabius, Imane answers giggling:

No, I am not in love at the moment.

The set-up of the class – the circle – is unusual. This teacher’s other classes took place in a different configuration, namely rows of desks and two by two, a spatial division that clearly institutes the teacher as the centre of attention and as the only one in the classroom with private space (Nespor, 1997). The start of the sex education class involved changing this. It symbolized the teaching philosophy of Anneloes: this was going to be a conversation, a sharing of knowledge, and a process of learning from each other. At the same time, however, Anneloes ultimately decided what kind of knowledge was important for the pupils in class, though these decisions were sometimes disputed, for example when her elaborate discussion on the hymen was met with the dismissive remark, ‘All that time to answer just one question. Tssss...’. Or when she kept probing Imane to share more details, although the educational message of the relationship history was not entirely clear. What it did make clear, however, was that the separation in sex education logics between spaces of learning (school), and spaces of sexuality (bedroom, sleepovers, as pictured in the booklet), does not hold.

Characterizations of youth sexual experiences in terms of their sexual debut (De Graaf et al., 2010; Van de Bongardt, de Graaf, Reitz, & Deković, 2014; Wolfers et al., 2010), a sexual trajectory (Janssen, 2008; Nikken & De Graaf, 2012) and sexual career (Bakker et al., 2009; De Graaf et al., 2005), support a developmental, linear temporality.³⁸ These logics separate the here and now of gaining sexual knowledge in class from the then and there of sexual behaviour in private spaces. In practice, however, school itself was a space/time for sexuality: for cuddling in class, for ‘going with others’ during a school party. This resonates with ethnographies that describe the school as a space where sexuality is performed, played out, and made

³⁸ Another temporal linearity is at work here in which sex education functions as a marker of modernity. This is beyond the scope of this chapter, but see Rasmussen (2012).

(Pascoe, 2007; Ringrose, 2013).³⁹ In class, while attention was going to verbal articulations of relationships, the bodily relations that Imane and Fabius engaged in were not brought into speech. They signalled a form of intimacy taking place in school, and it was the sex education class that allowed for these bodily connections and communications. While sex education logics imply a linear developmental logic, a focus on practice shows that sex education changes class spaces and pedagogic styles, confirms and contests sexualized ethnicities, and engages future and current sexual and romantic relationships, feelings and actions.

II. Asking questions

When discussing the issue of sex education, Hans, the biology teacher at Rijnsbergcollege, relied on the regular biology textbook. In addition to textbook education he tried to let the questions that the pupils asked him guide the class. Worried about the large amount of incorrect information that pupils find online, he takes all questions of pupils seriously. Again, the classroom is constructed as a space of truth, this time comprising the biology textbook and the knowledge of Hans himself. In this case, sex education involves pupils asking questions and a teacher answering them. As opposed to the strategy of Anneloes, who explicitly said that pupils should learn from each other's experiences, Hans positioned himself as the one who was knowledgeable. He relied on his knowledge as a biology teacher and adult to answer their questions, explaining what they will come across later in their lives. Again, the teacher is seen as the one who embodies objective knowledge, as a neutral guide in the sexual development of youth. Hans considered it to be his role to provide 'the correct information'. Here he reiterates sex education intervention logics in which knowledge is one of the important determinants of behaviour change, leading to health(y choices). The objective biological knowledge that he communicates, however, are the

39 This is not exclusive to the secondary school as sexuality does not suddenly appear during adolescence, but is articulated and shaped earlier (see for example Kuik, 2013; Renold, 2005; Ryan, 2016; Thorne, 1993).

result of scientific practices, practices of fact-making that have been erased (Roberts, 2016). As a result of that, gendered stereotypes that produce biological ‘fairy tales’ such as that of the passive egg and the active sperm (Martin, 1991) go unchallenged and were reiterated in the class film about reproduction.

We are sitting in the science classroom, but today the white lab coats stay on the coat rack. Pupils sit two by two, boys and girls paired up, separated by sinks and facing the teacher. The class discusses ways of preventing pregnancy, including coitus interruptus, when the principal walks in to ask Hans something. When she walks in, Ryvano comments: ‘Wow she looks tarted up’.

When she has left, Hans wants to continue the class and asks: ‘Where were we?’ Alyssa answers quickly: ‘We were busy with cumming!’

Pupils, teacher and ethnographer laugh in reaction to this well-timed joke. A bit later, Alyssa changes her tone to a more serious one: ‘Can you get pregnant by giving someone a blow job?’ When Hans answers elaborately, concluding in the negative, Alyssa turns to Zoe and says loud enough for the whole class to hear: ‘Ooh, so you can just continue giving blow jobs!’

Alyssa’s question about oral sex shows there is no such thing as innocent information transfer from teacher to pupil for future use. Instead, the answer was immediately related to the situation in which Zoe supposedly found herself, and marked her as sexual. Through her question, Alyssa made clear that one of her friends performed oral sex. Sex education was thus used to publicly ‘out’ someone as sexually active. But at the same time, it positions Alyssa as close to Zoe, as they know about each other’s sexual whereabouts. The sexual acts that they engage in are collectively prepared and evaluated, and this takes place in school spaces. In a similar vein, Ryvano’s comment about the head teacher’s appearance (‘She looks tarted up’), can be seen as a reaction to the ‘feminine’ topics of reproduction that were being discussed during this class especially, which featured a lengthy clip on the female

reproductive cycle. Through humour, the sex education class was used to enact desirable, popular masculinities and femininities (Allen, 2014).

Later the same day, during engineering class, Zoe, Alyssa, Jordan and Kyra called me to their table. They asked me to explain what an orgasm is. Alyssa looked up the word on her smartphone, keeping her actions out of the teacher's sight, who had reminded them before, when they were cuddling while they were supposed to sweep the floor, that the engineering class is not a place for intimacy (another word they asked me to explain). When Alyssa found an explanation about orgasm on *Wikipedia* she read it out, but could not pronounce the word clitoris – she seemed not to have heard it before. Jordan thought only boys could have an orgasm and was amazed to find out that girls can as well. She asked me twice to confirm that this information was correct, making sure I was not joking. This question on orgasms signals that the conversations in class sparked more questions on sexuality outside of the classroom, while the girls were relying on different sources of knowledge (*Wikipedia*, the ethnographer they already knew for a few months). Internet was not a risky source of knowledge, like it is presented in sex education logics, but one of the information resources they drew on and checked, as the biology book could not answer this question for them.

The mode of relying on pupils' questions took particular forms: of the principal's appearance, of preventing pregnancy, of making someone's sexual activities public. Later, in a different class, in a different group, and with different sources of information, answers to different questions would be sought. This case shows there is no one-way transfer of knowledge; instead, what we see is that knowledge making and challenging is started in the classroom, and continues outside the space/time of the official sex education class.

III. The AIDS-cup-game

Following sex education logics, the development of individuality is one of the important tasks of the life stage of adolescence (Lesko, 2001). Therefore, adolescents should learn to 'make their own choices', and to 'resist peer

pressure' (Froyum, 2010; Lesko, Brotman, Agarwal, & Quackenbush, 2010). Sex education is supposed to assist the individual adolescent in resisting pressure from peers to engage in risky behaviours. 'Giving in' to peer pressure is often regarded as an attempt to increase one's popularity. Attending to sex education in practice troubles these logics and shows that sex education does not (always) guard against, but participates in articulating and re-establishing popularity hierarchies. Instead of building individual strength against negative peer influence, the case directs our attention to the collective effects of sex education in practice.

One morning at Rijnsbergcollege, teacher Inge told me that class that day was to be devoted to sexuality, as 'the class is going through adolescence'. To address this, she decided to play the AIDS-cup-game, a game that was developed in the 1990s to educate pupils about the transmission of the HIV-virus.

Inge is filling cups with water and putting them on a tray when the pupils enter the room and find a seat. The classroom is organized into groups, about four or five pupils sit together in groups of their own choosing. Tessa, Alyssa, Kira and Jordan add a chair to their group of tables and order me to sit with them. They compare old pictures of themselves on their smartphones. Tessa scrolls through hers and says, to no one in particular: When I do not wear a bra and I am standing in front of the mirror they [her breasts] look less big. There is no verbal response, but eyes go around the table, chest height.

When Inge finishes her preparations she invites each pupil to take one cup, and to walk around the classroom. Pouring water into each other's cup symbolizes the exchange of bodily fluids when having sex. The water in one of the cups is 'infected' with sugar, symbolizing the HIV virus. The lesson of the game is that anyone can be infected, as, in theory, the water of all participants tastes sweet at the end of the game. But the pupils do not know this yet. After a few minutes of mingling, they sit down and take a sip of the water in their cup. Inge asks them to raise their hand in case

it tastes sweet, and reveals this means HIV-infection. All hands go up, except those of the girls at the front left group of tables. Jenna, Brianna, Mieke and Linda were the only ones in class who remained 'uninfected', and laughter resulted when their hands did not go up.

Sex education builds on pre-existing social networks in the classroom. As happened before during other classes, one group was collectively marked here as undesirable/nonsexual. Jayden verbalized this: 'Hahaha no one wanted to have sex with them!' The fact was, in a way, made evident by the chemical result of the game. Knowledge, here, was delegated to the taste buds, to the taste of sugar. Tasting sugar – or not – confirmed the division that existed in the class between those who were sexually active, and verbal about that, and those who were not, or hid this. After she concluded that the 'uninfected girls' did not play the game right, Inge moved to the next part of the class: teaching how to put a condom on correctly.⁴⁰

The sex education game worked to reproduce existing popularity hierarchies in class, as no one wanted to play the game with the unpopular group of girls. While some pupils were 'having sex' with others, they dared to ask for that, others were told 'I am not having sex with you!', did not want to, or did not dare to ask someone to exchange fluids. Instead of levelling, the game had a discriminating effect. The girls marked as undesirable only exchanged fluids ('had sex') with each other. This was out of the question for boys, who, when they would find themselves too close to another boy, shouted 'GAY!' and hurried to find the nearest girl to 'mix' with. As such, the game became a moment of producing heterosexual masculinity – using the gay epithet to distance themselves from unwanted forms of masculinity they perceived to be effeminate (Pascoe, 2007).

The AIDS-cup-game taught as much about the connection between heterosexual desirability and popularity as it did about HIV prevention.

40 At the vocational Rijnsbergcollege, Hans relied on questions, and Inge on games and condom practice, as they thought their pupils should do something practical instead of reading. Anneoes' class was a higher general education class (havo), and relied heavier on written text. In the pre-university level (vwo) school that I observed, sex education was not regarded as important. In this way, the issue of educational level matters in relation to sexuality.

Throughout the three cases, peers appear not as one large, risky influence, but as reflective, as asking questions for one another, as cuddling and comforting, as laughing at, ignoring, emphasizing or denying sexuality. As such, sexuality appears as collectively enacted, instead of individually embodied.

'Including diversity in sex education'

In recent years, the denominator 'comprehensive' has increasingly been accompanied by the imperative to 'include diversity' in Dutch sex education and research. There has been a strong lobby to make teaching about diversity legally mandatory in secondary schools. This lobby turned out to be successful in 2012, when a national requirement for secondary schools was passed stating, 'Pupils learn about similarities, differences and changes in culture and religion in the Netherlands, [...] and learn to respect sexuality and diversity within society, including sexual diversity' (Kamerbrief Kerndoelen, 2012, p.3).

To understand how this obligation to attend to diversity resonates with sex education practice, let us return to the first case in which Imane shared her relationship experiences in the class circle. When the ethnic signifier of 'Mocro' (Moroccan) was mobilized in relation to cheating, a widely circulating notion of threatening Moroccan/Arab masculinity was brought into the classroom (Bredstrom, 2005; Briggs, 2014; Hasinoff, 2014). Teacher Anneloes countered this generalization, and denounced making a connection between sexuality and ethnic groups as immature. At the same time, she regarded her pupils as being especially in need of sex education because of their ethnicity, which signalled to her a lack of open communication about sexuality in their families.

When she was teaching elaborately about the hymen, her motivations were contested by pupils (recall: 'All this time to answer just one question...tsss'). This was even more evident when discussing the issue of homosexuality, another 'coercive concern' for ethnic minority youth (Jaffe-Walter, 2016). When Anneloes asked in which countries

homosexuality is illegal, most pupils shared what they knew about their countries of origin, such as Ghana and Egypt. Anneloes continued to tell the class that homosexuality exists even in countries where it is illegal, something the pupils found hard to believe. Emphasizing that the *Long Live Love* booklet presents the scientific facts, she pointed out it indicates that 5-6% of all people are homosexual. Someone corrected her and said: 'But it says 5-6% of people *in the Netherlands!*' The forceful negative reactions to homosexuality seemed to confirm the notion that sexual diversity and cultural diversity make a 'difficult' couple. However, this might as well be an effect of the class environment: rejecting homosexuality became a joyful process given the laughter that arose in challenging the teacher. It shows that essentialized versions of ethnicity and sexuality and contestations against these essentialisms co-exist. However, who does the essentializing and who does the contesting (teacher, pupil, booklet) differs.

The assumption that homosexuality is denounced by the 'ethnic other' is widespread, and implies, incorrectly, that those who are 'autochthonous Dutch',⁴¹ accept homosexuality without problems.⁴² To be Dutch is to subscribe automatically to sexually liberal values (Mepschen et al., 2010; Van den Berg, 2013), whereas ethnic others are constructed as sexually risky (Krebbekx et al., 2017). Homosexuality is especially regarded to be 'a difficult topic for discussion in multicultural classrooms' (Bijster, 2016).⁴³ While playing the AIDS-cup-game, at the Rijnsbergcollege, which was described to me as a 'white school', the gay-epithet was used by boys who found themselves close to each other. However, this did not become part of the teaching process, which might indicate that for 'autochthonous Dutch' boys, homonegativity is not taken seriously or worthy of correction, whereas it is emphasized for those who are regarded as ethnic others. This

41 The most used term for all minorities in the Netherlands is 'allochtonen', whereas autochthonous is used for those of Netherlands birth and ancestry. In relation to sexuality, see Krebbekx et al. (2016).

42 Studies show that favorable statistics towards, for example, gay marriage are reported in surveys in the Netherlands, but this positive attitude does not hold for displays of homosexuality in the public sphere such as two men or two women holding hands (Kuyper, 2015). For an analysis of anti-gay violence in the Netherlands, see Van der Meer (2003), and Buijs et al. (2011).

43 Shortly after news about mass sexual assault in Cologne broke this was translated into a call to improve sex education for Islamic boys [often conflated with Moroccan boys].

connection between ethnicity, religion and sexuality that has been termed secularism (Scott, 2009), was an effect of the class practices in different ways, as we have seen. It was established by pupils, for example when using the word 'Mocro'; by teachers, through attending to the hymen; and through educational materials, such as the *Long Live Love* booklet that portrayed a Muslim girl who referred to her religion when stating that she will remain a virgin until marriage. It could also result in an absence of sex education: a principal of a third school I studied told me sex education was not a key focus as their school was not attended by many allochthonous pupils.

Asking the question 'What else does sex education do?' alerts us to the risk that sex education produces some of the tensions between sexuality and ethnicity that it seeks to reduce. Talking about sex is practiced as a feature of Dutchness, and in the cases explored here this worked through emphasizing homonegativity for some, while ignoring it for others. Conflating Dutchness with acceptance of homosexuality, and more liberal sexual morals in general, influenced what topics were taught to which pupils, how much time was devoted to it, and in which schools sex education was deemed important to begin with.

Conclusion: Intervening in theory through practice

The three cases presented in this chapter troubled the separations that sex education puts forth: between individual and peer group, between the present and the future, and between learning and doing. It also asked for a reconsideration of the relation between sexuality and ethnicity. One last issue that following sex education in practice brings up, returns us to the panel in which academics were asked to present a recommendation to practitioners – how do we translate the results of the current analysis into one recommendation to improve sex education? Despite my call for 'attention to the social effects of sexuality', it is evident that such a clear distinction between the individual and the social cannot be made. Pupils collectively learn how to do sexuality, ranging from where and how to talk and laugh about it, to the visualization of growing up based on pictures

on their smartphone, to remarks on breast-size or (the absence of) sexual behaviour. In the logics of sex education, sexuality is individually embodied, set in motion by hormones that steer bodily changes. Studying sex education in practice foregrounds that sexuality is enacted through collective practices, and that this brings along social effects – of popularity, ethnicity, gender.

Comprehensive sex education is not a fixed theory that is applied in the same way in different schools but appeared as fragmented, recurring at different moments and places, with different sources of knowledge, on the initiative of different actors. In the cases explored, sex education led to pupils knowing which teachers to approach in case they needed confidential advice on issues related to sexuality, or when in need of condoms. It also led to conversations about female sexuality in the engineering classroom. How does this complicated 'intervention' relate to effect studies? Measuring effectiveness asks for making effects measurable. However, the inability to separate what does and does not belong to an intervention should function as a warning against a too strong belief in evidence from effect studies (see Kok et al., 2012) and subsequent calls for further standardization of sex education practice. Results can be wrongly ascribed to an intervention (element) if we do not recognize these other things sex education sets in motion, the things that 'come along' (Mol 2010, p. 256).

In this chapter, I attended to sex education and the effects it can have, the other things it can do – things other than a transfer of objective knowledge. I shared three cases that troubled the logics of sex education, in which adolescents are conceptualized as in need of knowledge to individually develop a healthy sexuality, which is threatened by the negative influence of peers. Rather than following these logics, or countering them through a mode of critique, I have studied sex education in practice. This chapter showed the school to be a space/time for sexuality, how sexual knowledge is produced and used in class, and how sex education plays into and depends on processes of (gendered) popularity. In addition, the analysis pointed to the ways in which comprehensive sex education either emphasizes or ignores issues such as homosexuality, virginity, and dialogue and thereby, as a sexual practice (Verkaaik & Spronk, 2011) (re)produces ethnic characterizations of sexuality. Finally, the analysis of sex education in practice complicated the

ways in which sex education is conceptualized and measured as a health intervention. Throughout this chapter, sex education appeared as a range of different practices that were held together by the label 'comprehensive sex education'. As schools, classrooms, pupils and sex education materials change from one place to another, so will sex education and its effects, but in each new constellation sex education will do 'more' and 'other things' than influence future individual health.

Chapter 5

Locked in the matrix? Heteronormativity in secondary school friendship and teaching practices

Abstract

This chapter explores the ways in which heteronormativity is enacted through friendship and teaching practices in and around secondary schools. Based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in three schools in the Netherlands, it describes heteronormativity as relational and situational. Among pupils, heteronormativity was presupposed yet also made in practices of forming, consolidating or ending friendships. Relations between teachers and pupils showed heteronormativity to be differentiated across contexts: in two schools heterosexuality was drawn in to ease teaching relations, while at a third school it was seen as a hindrance to academic achievements and was therefore relegated to the private sphere. This chapter shows that heteronormativity might not only regulate gendered and sexual identity constitution but works in realms of social life that are often desexualized. It also breaks with the tendency to produce singular accounts of heteronormativity and its effect in schools.

Introduction: Locked in the matrix?

Since its introduction, the notion of heteronormativity has become one of the most important concepts in gender and sexuality studies. It describes a pervasive, often invisible norm of heterosexuality (Warner, 1991) that assumes a binary conception of sex (male/female), with corresponding gender expression (masculine/feminine), and a natural attraction to the opposite sex (heterosexuality). This heterosexual matrix (Butler, 1990) renders alternative sexualities 'other' and marginal. It describes 'not only a normative sexual practice but also a normal way of life' (Jackson, 2006, p. 17), which regulates those within as well as outside of its bounds. Bringing together gender and sexuality in a rigid mould, heteronormativity has proven to be a foe that unified queer and feminist studies (Wiegman, 2006).

One area that has been recognized as important in the construction of gender, and in which heteronormativity is pervasive, is that of education. In recent publications, schools have been described as 'hegemonically heterosexual' (Batsleer, 2012), characterized as oppressive and tense spaces, where 'heterosexuality is the ever-present, regulating influence in classrooms' (Ryan, 2016, p. 79), and as invisibly structured by heteronormativity (DePalma & Atkinson, 2010). This heteronormative structure silences or disparages queer sexualities (Ryan, 2016) and is seen as in need of being 'tackled' (Sauntson & Simpson, 2011). Furthermore, heteronormativity has been described as an implicit moral framework (Vinjamuri, 2015), or an ideology (Yep, 2002), that 'hurts everyone' (Knight, Shoveller, Oliffe, Gilbert, & Goldenberg, 2012). Ironically, despite its constructionist roots, the concept is thus increasingly presented in a realist framework in which schools are heteronormative spaces. Instead of an assumption of schools as heteronormative independent of the people and practices within them, this chapter will engage with the makings of heteronormativity in schools.

Revising their use of the heterosexual matrix in an analysis of school-based fieldwork, Atkinson and DePalma (2009, p. 17) wonder whether 'through naming and believing the heterosexual matrix and identifying evidence of its operation, we reify, reinforce and reinscribe it, even as we attempt to subvert, unsettle or deconstruct it'. The metaphor

of the matrix, they explain, implies an image of a structure 'out there' that constructs its subjects. To allow for an investigation of heteronormativity as a collective process, they suggest 'un-believing the matrix' as a starting point for ethnographic explorations of sexuality in schools. Several others have commented on the possibility that the critique of heteronormativity reifies the phenomenon. Jackson, for example, suggested that 'to say that a phenomenon such as heterosexuality or gender is normative [...] may prove to be overly deterministic (2006, p. 109). Similarly, warning against simplifying or reifying heteronormativity, Butler (2006) observed that studies often describe merely two options: either subjects submit to the heteronorm, or they escape it. Though the uptake of the concept of the heterosexual matrix has been extensive, Butler has discontinued using the term precisely as it 'became a kind of totalizing symbolic' (Butler, Osborne, & Segal 1994, p. 36).

This study wants to avoid an interpretation of heteronormativity as an anterior and universal reality. Drawing from fieldwork in secondary schools, this analysis shifts the focus of study from identity performance to social relations, namely friendships and teaching relations. Foregrounding how heteronormativity might operate in realms that are not considered 'sexual' but 'social', my objective is twofold: to understand how heteronormativity functions in relation to friendships and teaching relations and, in turn, how heteronormativity is generated through friendship and teaching practices.

'How to survive school? Make friends!'

While the majority of academic studies is concerned with gendered identity formation and the (in)ability to develop or express sexual orientation, secondary school is described by youths themselves as 'a place for meeting friends' (Lahelma, 2002). In the Netherlands, a bestselling book marketed to pupils anxious about transitioning to secondary school addresses 'how to survive' the first year with advice on how to find and keep friends (Oomen, 2015).

Whereas the issue of friendship is attended to frequently in studies of primary schools (see for example Duits, 2008; Bruegel, 2006), ethnographies of secondary school more often focus on sexuality (Martino, 1999; Pascoe, 2007; Ringrose, 2013). While there are ethnographies that explicitly engage with the issue of sexuality in primary school (Kuik, 2013; Renold, 2005), there remains little engagement with how friendships are lived in secondary school (but see Hey, 1997 for an exception). The minority of studies that attend to friendships in schools often cast them as vehicles through which a gendered/sexualized identity is performed (for example Pascoe 2007; Ringrose, 2013). As several studies have pointed out, when attention to friendship is paid, heteronormativity is seen to 'get in the way' of boy-girl friendships, as these quickly become heterosexualized (Pascoe, 2007; Renold, 2005). Furthermore, studies show that heteronormativity can hierarchize friendship groups: attractiveness and popularity with the other sex becomes a marker of popularity among the same sex (Duncan, 2004; Duncan & Owens, 2011). These indications of the importance of heteronormativity in the splitting of friendship groups into boys and girls, as well as in setting up a hierarchy of popularity, raise further questions about whether and how heteronormativity structures friendship practices. Though I do not want to deny the importance of friendship groups for the performative constitution of individual identities, the focus here is different: it is to understand the different means and effects of heteronormativity, including its importance in the consolidation of friendships (Atkinson & DePalma, 2009).

While school might be an important place for pupils to meet friends, it is also a place that is shared with teachers.⁴⁴ Though many studies have identified schools and classrooms as arenas for the construction of gender and sexuality, attention to the role of teachers in this process has been relatively limited (Francis & Skelton, 2001). Recently, some studies interested in countering homophobia in classrooms have focused on teachers (DePalma & Atkinson, 2010) and the ways in which they can effectively challenge homophobic remarks and behaviours. As teachers are not only

⁴⁴ And support and administrative staff, although these are often physically separated from pupils.

responsible for conveying a certain curriculum, but also for limiting the range of movements and behaviours of their pupils (Nespor, 1997), the ways in which they can police gender and sexuality have been well documented (Garcia, 2009; Kehily, 2002; Martino & Frank, 2006). The ways in which their mundane teaching relations rely on and produce heteronormativity, however, have been comparatively underexplored.

The question then, is not one of how friendships and teachers influence gender identity formation. Instead, it is one of understanding how friendship and teaching practices in school spaces are influenced by heteronormativity, and how this normativity is generated through these practices in turn. Based on ethnographic fieldwork in three secondary schools in the Netherlands, this chapter argues that heteronormativity is central to the making, practicing and breaking of friendships among pupils, and that teachers employ and enact heteronormativity in different ways in their pedagogic practices in attempts to connect to pupils and to improve their academic achievements.

The study

The system for secondary education in the Netherlands is divided into three levels: pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO, subdivided into three levels), general secondary education (havo), and pre-university education (VWO, divided into athenaeum and gymnasium). A test during the last year of primary school, when pupils are around the age of twelve, is 'a crucial moment which sorts students into subsequent educational tracks which largely determine their later educational trajectories' (Schnell, Keskiner, & Crul, 2013, p. 134). Most pupils (60%), having finished elementary school, continue their education in pre-vocational schools (VMBO).

Despite a commitment to 'equal opportunities', the Dutch system has some unintended consequences: the influence of family background is higher in differentiated systems, thus countering the democratising function of schooling (Netjes, Werfhorst, Dijkstra, & Geboers, 2011; Rineke Van Daalen, 2010). For example, it has been shown that due to the early differentiation, ethnic minority students in the Netherlands have a lower

chance of reaching higher education in comparison to those in countries where later differentiation takes place (Crul, 2013). While it is possible for pupils with a pre-vocational diploma to continue in general secondary education, and for pupils with a general secondary education diploma to continue in the pre-university track, in practice there is a divide between pre-vocational secondary education and general secondary education (Stevens, Clycq, Timmerman, & Van Houtte, 2011), and obtaining degrees has become increasingly difficult (Stam, 2017). This divide has become more pronounced as school levels have relatively recently been separated, with schools offering just one level. Notably, there are many schools that offer only the pre-vocational level and many that offer both the higher secondary and the pre-university level. This separation leads to 'racially and socioeconomically segregated schools' (Paulle, 2013, p. 9), in which the pre-vocational schools are attended by children with a working-class background or ethnic minority background, whereas pre-university schools are more likely to be attended mostly by white pupils with an upper middleclass background.

Data used in this chapter derive from three schools: two of them were pre-vocational schools, while the third one offered general secondary and pre-university education. In this third school I followed a class in the pre-university track. The classes that were studied were in year 2 or 3, with pupils ranging in age from 13-17. Over the course of 15 months, I observed and participated in classes, lunchbreaks, and many informal conversations, as well as the occasional school trip or party. Next to these observations, I conducted more formal interviews.

While the study was not set up as a comparison of schools or school levels, the data point to some contrasts in how heteronormativity worked across the schools. There was an atmosphere of light-heartedness and playfulness at the first school, Rijnsbergcollege. This pre-vocational school was divided into two locations; the one in which I studied was attended by about 300 pupils. It was characterized by a high level of connectedness: most teachers knew the first names of the majority of pupils. Many of the pupils that were in class together had known each other before, either through primary school, sports memberships, or through family or neighbourhood connections. The section on friendship practices will draw mostly from this school.

Nexus High, the second school, was a relatively new school for pre-vocational education, and distinguished itself from other schools in the region by emphasising sports and personal development to enhance the talents of their pupils. The 1400 pupils were housed in a large and modern building that encompassed a recording studio, many athletic facilities, and was decorated with prizes won by previous pupils and pictures of alumni who had become local or national celebrities.

The third school, Bernarduslyceum, once again became a school for general secondary and pre-university education eight years ago, after the pre-vocational track was discontinued. The oldest of the four secondary schools in the medium sized city, it had a reputation of being old-fashioned and somewhat elitist. The school's popularity has decreased slightly in recent years, though at the time of this study it was attended by approximately 1300 pupils, which was still close to the maximum capacity of the building.

Practicing friendship: watching six-packs, drinking beer

While many of the participants mentioned having at least one friend outside of the school, classmates were the most important source of friendships and were the friends most time was spent with, inside as well as outside of the school. Friendships, anthropological research has found, foster a sense of belonging (Dyson, 2010; Hey, 1997), or as one pupil explained to me, are crucial as 'in school it is just important that you are not by yourself.' This concern with not moving through the school alone was voiced often. Here, I will take a closer look at what exactly is done and said in moments of being together among friends.

In one of the physical education classes that I observed at Rijnsbergcollege, Priscilla and three of her friends had distanced themselves from the sports activities and gathered on a bench nearby. Sitting closely together, wearing identical school PE uniforms, they were bent over to watch the screen of Priscilla's phone. When pulling out her phone, which she had secretly smuggled into the PE hall in her bra, Priscilla proposed that they 'watch six-packs on hot-or-not.' Laughter ensued while doing so, and

the girls took turns glancing at teacher Inge, making sure their defection from the PE class was not noticed. Later, they explained the smartphone application *hot or not*.

Jenna: hot or not. Well then you get...

Mieke: let Kelly tell it!

Kira: I don't play that game

Jenna: I will tell

Brianna: and I will add

Jenna: you make an account and someone else too

Daisy: with Facebook

Jenna: yes with Facebook

[laughter]

Jenna: you can put pictures online and you can choose women or men and until what age and then you get to see a lot of pictures and then you can press cross or heart. Cross is that you turn down that person, and heart is that you think that person is nice and handsome.

[all in the background while Jenna talks: wooooo]

[author]: and can the other person see what you have pressed?

Brianna: yes only if he liked you

The six-pack, a colloquial term used to refer to well-defined abdominal muscles, has become an important element of boys' social media presence (Allen, Harvey, & Mendick, 2015; Harvey, Ringrose, & Gill, 2013; Leurs, 2012). In advertising, the figure of the 'good-looking male "six-pack"' (Gill, 2009) emerged as a highly specific way of representing the male body. Balancing representations of men as sex objects, over the past three decades advertisers have found modes of representation that 'appeal simultaneously to (at least) three different constituencies: gay men, heterosexual women and heterosexual men' (Gill, 2009, p. 146). In the game played by the girls, the signifier 'six-pack' is recognized as legitimating the 'heterosexual female gaze' (*Ibid.*). While one could say that the four girls are engaging principally in a session of 'gazing', the looking at boys' bodies is actually

instrumental in the consolidation of their friendship, an effect that seems amplified through the secrecy and the physical closeness of their bodies. I want to suggest that it is not the attraction to boys' bodies, and thus a performance of heterosexuality, that is central here, but that the availability of the game on Priscilla's phone, during PE class, facilitates the intimate bonding among girls, contributing to their friendship. Although set up as a dating application, there was no intention of dating among these girls – watching pictures and counting how many times someone had a 'match' was not the aim. Only once did one of them respond to a message, but she quickly stopped the conversation and deleted this contact as her 'match' was 'talking dirty'. *Hot or not* was referred to as a game, which has more social and less romantic or sexual connotations. Heterosexual attraction, implied in the 'boy-watching' by girls, and in the boy-girl mode of the game that was selected, was functional in this practice of friendship, and the joy that arose from playing this 'game' functioned to link laughter and intimacy. In the conversation in which I asked about this game, the girls giggled together and finished each other's sentences, thereby demonstrating their being 'in-tune' which further consolidated their friendship (Coates, 2007).

When one day a teacher called in sick in the morning, the first two hours were cancelled for the class that I studied at Rijnsbergcollege, and about 12 pupils went to Zoe's house 'to chill'.

Arriving at Zoe's place, we enter the cabin in the backyard that houses a bar with liquor on top, a dartboard, and is decorated with pictures of fishing trips taken by Zoe's father and his friends. Hanging out in the cabin in the backyard, it was not long before Damian asked Zoe for a beer, which she subsequently gave to him. The cabin is filled with pupils, there aren't enough chairs for everyone, some sit on each other's lap or on the armrests and the group seems to be a bit hesitant about what to do next. It is cold on this November morning, and Jordan asks Zoe whether the girls can go inside. I stick with the boys, but after one of the girls came back to the cabin for the third time to ask me/order me to come inside with her as "all the girls are inside", I give in.

In the living room, the girls are watching MTV, commenting on popstar Rihanna's new video clip, eating crisps. When I go and see what is happening in the cabin a bit later, I find all the boys are now drinking beer or are trying some of the liquor from the bar. Meanwhile, they are singing vulgar and homophobic songs, playing darts ('the cunts' against 'the gays', I read on the scoreboard) and engaging in physical horseplay. The atmosphere signals excitement about the illicit drinking, and increasing worry about returning to school for class: some boys breathe repeatedly in each other's (and my) faces to check whether the alcohol can be detected. Back at school, a teacher realized Damian and Justin had consumed alcohol, as they did not walk straight and were exceptionally loud. They were called to the principal's office and got suspended for the rest of the day.

In the description of this event, we see how an unexpected morning in school led to a group of pupils hanging out at Zoe's place. In the cabin, though, it was unclear what exactly the group should do: pupils appeared restless and unsure on how to do this 'chilling'. When Damian started drinking, Jordan and the other girls decided to go inside, splitting the group into boys and girls. The boys then drank alcohol and started playing darts, whereas the girls, inside, drank soda and ate crisps while watching and commenting on music videos. Drinking alcohol has been described as a pleasurable friendship practice – 'a social pleasure rather than an individual experience' (Niland, Lyons, Goodwin, & Hutton, 2013), and this is what happened in the cabin in the garden: there was a constant conversation about feeling and smelling the effects of alcohol, and, among those inside, a conversation about the drinking boys. It constituted these boys as 'out of line' teenagers that did crazy things with friends. The performative practices of heteronormative masculinity, through physical horseplay and using sexist terms for the darts-teams, reiterated gendered stereotypes.

Drinking stories were not only told by boys, but by girls as well, in which they functioned similarly to display connectedness. Zoe and Alyssa, for example, told me about being drunk and peeing in the middle of the

street one night, a story that was interrupted by laughter, giggling and excitement (see also: Cullen, 2011). In this particular morning, in the larger, mixed group, and in the shed with its decoration that invoked a particularly classed adult masculinity (darts, fishing, alcohol), however, it was the boys who drank. The incident became a story that was told over and over again. Some pupils, two years later at the graduation ceremony, jokingly asked me, “Do you remember that one time we were drunk during school[hours]?”, thereby highlighting this particular instance as a formative moment in their schoolyears. Such storytelling should be understood as a powerful way of ‘doing friendship’ through which boys ‘display connectedness with each other, while at the same time telling stories of heroism or laddishness which construct and maintain hegemonic masculinity’ (Coates, 2008, p. 105).

Both of these vignettes show how the joy, laughter and consolidation of bonds among friends were presupposing as well as enacting heterosexuality. Observing the pleasure with which primary school pupils ‘insert themselves into the heterosexual matrix’, Paechter suggests understanding this as partly arising ‘from belonging, from inserting oneself into a heterosexually constructed gender, shared with older children and with adults’ (Paechter, 2015, p. 12). The next section will shift attention to the moments in which such joy and laughter is absent.

Discontinuing friendships: gossip and distancing

One of the girls of the group that engaged in the ‘six-pack’ watching, Jenna, transferred to Rijnsbergcollege at the beginning of the school year. She started dating a boy who lived in a nearby city and was fully consumed by her new love, chatting with him on her smartphone almost non-stop. This was going on for about three weeks when the following happened.

One morning, Jenna starts crying. Jayden shouts: ‘Jenna is not happy today because she has had an abortion!’. Jenna snaps: ‘Act normal!’, and leaves the classroom. I share a desk with Leslie and Manon. Manon asks Leslie, ‘Is it true, did she have an

abortion?’ Leslie is not sure and makes clear she doesn’t care either by shrugging her shoulders. When Manon has found out later, she comes up to me and tells me she knows what happened: ‘Priscilla said Jenna was pregnant. But that’s what you get when you are new’. Later that day, I ask Priscilla, who is one of Jenna’s best friends, what was going on between them. She tries to avoid answering and tells me with a nervous giggle that it was ‘nothing’ and, ‘just a joke’.

The joke resulted in Jenna’s sexual behaviour becoming the central topic of conversation in class. Jenna got upset, left the classroom crying and called in the help of the class-teacher. Priscilla was well aware of the effects of her ‘joke’, as she seemed very nervous when I asked her what was going on: she was blushing, giggling, and avoiding the question. Spreading the abortion rumour functioned as a warning to Jenna to not ignore her friends at the expense of her boyfriend and to stay in line with the rest of the girls in the group, who were sexually inexperienced. Calling on empathy, the teacher, who, like Priscilla, referred to the incident as a joke, urged the pupils to stop making such jokes as ‘they can hurt’. This call for empathy left the content of the fight untouched.

Manon’s remark – ‘that’s what you get when you are new’ – indicates that such jokes that police sexuality and femininity are not a rarity and might be part of forging new friendships. A few months later, Jenna befriended another group of girls, from a different class. When the timetable allowed for it, she spent her breaks with the new group of friends who became her primary friends. The fight that revolved around Jenna’s recent sexual and romantic relation confirms the centrality of sexual regulation of femininity to the friendship of girls (Ringrose, 2013; Chambers, Tincknell, & Loon 2004; Renold, 2005; Hey, 1997; Kehily, 2002).

This centrality of sexuality is not exclusive to girls, as became clear in a group discussion on friendship and friendship-groups. Five pupils of Rijnsbergcollege explained why Damian is not part of their group – a group that had formed at the beginning of secondary school (about 15 months prior), with some members having known each other since kindergarten.

Anthony: But... how shall I say it he acts much older than we are
Timmy: yes
Paul: how shall I put it he is much further
Roberto: he turned 14
Paul: well you don't really see that. But to us..
He says to us. yes. I don't know if I can say this but..
Anthony: yes. Yes
Paul: yes but anyway. He is. His sexworld is waaaaay waaay
further than we are.
Timmy: yesss
Paul: and, smoking
Interviewer: yes..
Paul: and well, I do it as well sometimes
Timmy: smoking?
Paul: [no] but he drives a scooter almost every day, on the road.
With him it is like... people just think let him go [...] it is his own life
Timmy: he will end up badly

When Paul confided that Damian was 'further in his sexworld', the others added that he was out of line, and 'acted older' in relation to smoking and driving a scooter as well. At school, Damian regularly boasted about the sex he had had the night before with his girlfriend. This sparked questions from the other boys, who asked him about it often. He became a resource on sexuality, pregnancy prevention and the female body, someone whose information they used to become sexually knowledgeable. They listened to him carefully – while at the same time placing significance on the difference in sexual experience between Damian and themselves. Although the boys in this group interview seemed hesitant to share the information on Damian with me, their strategy of saying 'how shall I say it ... I don't know if I can say it' effectively made sure others' whispering stopped and everyone listened carefully to what Paul had to say. In their description of Damian, the boys draw upon the idea of sexuality as conceptualized in stages ('being further') that are related to age ('he behaves much older'). Also, linking sexuality,

smoking and driving a scooter, they conclude: 'he will end up badly', making clear that while they are interested in his actions, they are different 'kinds' of boys.

Teaching relationships: drawing in or excluding gender and heterosexuality

Although most analyses of sexuality and gender have focused on pupils, teachers are by no means exempt from the workings of these categories. Francis and Skelton (2001) argue that teachers construct gendered identities in the classroom, showing how masculinity is constructed through disciplining pupils and through their relations with pupils, sometimes disciplining boys by questioning their masculinity. Male teachers, they continue, use their relations with pupils to confirm their own masculinity, by 'positioning themselves as "one of the lads" with the boys in the class' or by 'positioning themselves as "other" to girls, non-masculine boys, and all things feminine' (Francis & Skelton, 2001, p. 14). As opposed to studies indicating that sexuality is explicitly kept 'outside' of the classroom (for example Allen, 2007), teachers as well as pupils in the two pre-vocational schools that I studied often actively drew sexuality into teaching practices and relations to establish an amicable bond, or to draw attention to the educational materials, as the following examples of each school will show.

To celebrate the end of the school year at Rijnsbergcollege, the entire class went out for dinner at the local Chinese restaurant (except for Roberto who, to increase his muscle mass, followed a strict diet which the restaurant buffet did not accommodate).

When most of the pupils have left, I change seats to the middle of the table, joining some teachers and pupils in a conversation on 'players'.⁴⁵ One of the teachers, Simon, while looking at Damian,

⁴⁵ The word player is used to refer to 'tough' boys who have a lot of girlfriends and who are interested in sexual relations rather than love. For girls, the term used to refer to this is 'slut', a word with more negative connotations, see also Naezer (2006).

says: 'I think there is just one player here'. Damian recounts proudly that he 'first' had [a relationship] with Esmee. Then with Tamara. Then with Evy. And then again with Esmee'. He smiles. One of the teachers, Bas, asks: 'Who is the one who breaks up?' Damian answers proudly: 'It's always me!' Damian's friend Justin adds: 'Esmee, you know the one with the snake movements from that nude clip'. The others at the table nod to indicate their recognition of the girl and the clip.

After dinner, the conversation among the men and boys present turned to the sexual relationships of Damian. This collective enactment of masculinity provided a way for the teachers to build rapport with their male students and to cross generational boundaries (Pascoe, 2007). This way of relating through asking about girlfriends and 'being a player' strengthened the relationship between Simon and Damian, highlighting and confirming a particular hegemonic form of masculinity that united these boys and men in opposition to women and girls. Girls were seen here only in relation to having romantic/sexual relations with Damian, most pronounced when Esmee was mentioned: she was referred to as the one who had danced in her bedroom naked, captured on a webcam, the clip of which had spread throughout the school. The female teachers and pupils who were still sitting at the table were listening, not actively joining the conversation. In a context of recurring debates in the Netherlands (as well as internationally) on the 'feminization of education' – a process said to result in a lack of male role models (Acker, 1995; Martino, 2008) and considered to be the cause of a multitude of boys' problems (Acker, 1995; Driessen & van Langen, 2013; Foster, Kimmel, & Skelton, 2001; Ringrose, 2013; Timmerman, 2011; Van Essen, 1999) – it is interesting to note the active masculinization of the relation between teachers and pupils that leaves the women and girls at the table in a position of audience.

The practice of drawing on sexuality to establish a cordial relationship with a pupil also took place inside of classrooms. Consider the following field note.

Daya notified class teacher Mascha as soon as she walked into the classroom at Nexus High: 'Miss, your tights are damaged!'. Mascha replies: 'I know, thanks hun'. The class, consisting of 14 pupils, will be working individually on a number of tasks during today's class. Intern Nathalie walks around the classroom to assist pupils where needed. When Nathalie arrives with the girls who sit in front of me she teasingly says to one of them: 'I have a boy in my other class that is into you'. A back and forth in which Daya tries to find out who it is follows. Nathalie does not want to tell, and Daya gives up, saying, 'Well, I just hope it is not a tata'.⁴⁶ Ignoring the remark, Nathalie smilingly asks about the assignment Daya is working on.

Through attention to clothes and confiding information about the (possible) sexual interest of boys, a shared identity as (heterosexual) women is established. It works to decrease the power and age imbalance that exists between teachers (or interns) and pupils and is strategically used by Nathalie to gain attention before asking about their assignment. In both instances, in the restaurant as well as the classroom, the opposition between teacher (adult, powerful) and pupil (child, submissive) is being reduced through establishing amicable relationships by drawing on heterosexuality.

At Bernarduslyceum, in the pre-university track, a different use of sexuality was at work. Here, when sexuality was invoked by teachers, it was often positioned as being at odds with academic achievements. This becomes clear when we look at the ways in which teachers dealt with the brushing of hair, a common practice by many girls in the schools studied, as the most popular hairstyle for girls during the time of this study was long and straight.

A group of girls at Bernarduslyceum seemed very invested in their appearance: at the start of almost every class, when the pupils

⁴⁶ Tata is a derogatory term derived from 'potato', postulated as the defining food for Dutchmen, and is used in slang to indicate Dutch descent.

were finding their place, settling in, and the teacher was setting up to start the class, girls checked their hair and make-up. Often a quick glance in the mirror (or in the selfiemode camera of their phone) and a few rearrangements of hair and re-application of lip balm were made. In the morning though, after arriving to school by bike, hair brushing was more common. The teacher of music and arts was annoyed, as his class was the first each Tuesday morning, and each time an argument between him and Diana and her friends ensued over the hair brushing. One time, the teacher took away Diana's hairbrush, under large protest of her and her friends. She was to pick it up later at the school's reception desk, a place where pupils mostly came when they were in trouble, and where they would rather not be seen. Diana waited nervously with her best friend and was handed her hairbrush after she promised to go and see the music and arts teacher to be informed about her sanction.

As opposed to the interventions by this Bernarduslyceum teacher, most of the short instances of hair brushing were hardly noticed or penalized by teachers at Nexus High and Rijnsbergcollege. There, being occupied with one's appearance was not seen as an interruption of the teaching process, or regarded as being at odds with academic achievement. When Diana was discussed in the teacher meeting at Bernarduslyceum, one of her teachers remarked, 'She is more a havo [general higher education track] pupil: she invests more in her looks than in her homework'. Others nodded in agreement, opposing looks with academic achievement, and situating Diana as out of place in the pre-university track. During the same meeting, when Lisa's disappointing grades were discussed, one teacher remarked: 'She is already occupied with boys'. In the same meeting, when discussing Bas, one of the teachers urged her colleagues to help in 'protecting Bas against the girls who fancy him', as she feared he could not deal with the attention and it would keep him from paying attention in class. The advice was followed when, not much later at the beginning of a history class, teacher Emmen asked Bas to turn around in his seat: 'Bas, I know you are a real chick magnet

and all the girls want your attention, but I want to start class now'. In an interesting reversal of gendered stereotypes, female sexuality is presented here as predatory, as something that boys should be protected against.

These field notes show three different ways in which heterosexuality functioned in pupil-teacher relations and teaching practices: it was drawn upon to find common ground or similarities; to grab the attention of a pupil before going into a class assignment; or to assist in the estimation of someone's academic potential.

Discussion: heteronormative by default?

The current analysis started with taking up the suggestion that heteronormativity might not only regulate gendered and sexual identity constitution but works on other domains of social life as well (Jackson, 2006), domains that are often seen as asexual, such as those of friendship and pedagogy. A second point of departure was the 'un-believing' of the heterosexual matrix (Atkinson & DePalma, 2009) as 'just the way things are' in secondary schools. Instead of starting from the assumption that schools are heteronormative a priori, it traced the workings of heteronormativity in the making. To engage with these issues, the paper highlighted the ways in which heteronormativity is enacted through friendship and teaching practices in and around secondary schools.

The vignettes on friendship did not illustrate attempts of youth to come across convincingly as heterosexual (see for example Renold & Allan 2006), but instead showed ways in which killing time, overcoming boredom, being together, strengthening or discontinuing friendships were produced through heterosexuality, and at the same time, through these iterations, constituted heterosexuality as normative. It is possible to read the current analysis as an argument in support of the all-encompassing pervasiveness of 'the' heteronorm. However, I want to suggest it should be read as a warning against the tendency to unitize heteronormativity: as we have seen, norms of heterosexuality do not appear the same in each friendship group all the time, or in each school, and could create different effects in different

situations. The vignettes support an understanding of heteronormativity as relational and situational: friendship practices such as watching six-packs were a means of ‘consolidating friendships rather than performing coherent identities’ (Atkinson & DePalma, 2009, p. 80). In other words, the heterosexual practice of boy-watching enabled the friendship among girls to consolidate, and in turn instituted heterosexuality as the norm. In addition, friendships could be hampered by expressions of sexuality that did not fit that of the friendship group. In describing these different effects, the analysis supports arguments that question the singularity of heteronormativity and the heterosexual matrix (Mak, 2015).

Overall, studies of gender and sexuality in schools tend to focus on the (re)production of dominant discourses and the (un)availability of subject positions that are the consequence thereof (Dalley & Campbell, 2006; Renold, 2006b; Ryan, 2016). In this line of theorizing there is a clear directionality from power to subject identity, a directionality in which there might not always be room for instability and in which relationality is seen as in service of individual identity (see also Spronk, 2014). Importantly, the argument in this chapter is not one of denial of the realness of the phenomenon heteronormativity, but is instead that the phenomenon is partly brought into being through social analysis (see Law & Urry, 2004). Doing so would locate it firmly in schools as an all-encompassing force that results in individual identity performances that either confirm or disrupt this norm (Butler, 2006). Highlighting relationality instead, made it possible to understand heteronormativity as produced through and productive of relations such as friendship. The findings suggest that ‘skepticism about heteronormativity’s unity and stability is more useful than criticizing it as a grid of “intelligibility” that makes certain lives “unlivable”’ (Mak, 2015, p. 403). Instead of understanding heteronormativity as an invisible structuring force, this chapter argues that it should be understood as produced in and productive of friendship and teaching practices.

Though most studies interested in sexuality and schooling focus on youth, this chapter showed that teachers in the pre-vocational schools also relied on heterosexuality to establish common ground between themselves and their pupils, to retain attention, and sometimes to make abstract

knowledge relevant to pupils' lives. In both pre-vocational schools studied, sexuality was invoked by teachers, such as in the dinner conversation with Damian, or by the intern Nathalie. In the pre-university school though, sexuality was seen as a threat to academic achievements. In practice this difference meant that much more talk about sexuality was allowed and invited in the pre-vocational schools, whereas it was seen as inappropriate, and therefore silenced, in the pre-university track. Understanding this mechanism is important, especially in the Dutch case with its early differentiation of educational levels. The way in which sexuality was used in contrasting ways in the schools studied here, exemplifies a particular way of reinforcing the mind-body distinction that is implicit in the division of educational levels (Van Daalen, 2010) that are often regarded as important markers of social hierarchy and class position in the Netherlands (Eijk, 2011). This distinction was also evident in the amount of time that was allowed for social interactions. At Bernarduslyceum, the school was more often a pedagogic space than at Rijnsbergcollege or Nexus High, where the school was more often practiced as a space for the formation of social relationships and social learning, and where mundane actions like hair brushing or applying lip balm were rarely seen as disruptive.

Studying various schools alerts us to the risks of reifying not just heteronormativity but 'school' as well: each school dealt with sexuality differently, despite being situated in the same national context. The differences found might be related to the size of schools, their educational levels and subsequent differences in the understanding of the task that the school is to fulfil, or to variations in school environment and regulations (Sandfort et al., 2010). There has been very little effort to reflect upon precisely how such differences take shape and these issues warrant further study. The observations point us to question the differences found without directly relating them to the educational level or class background of pupils, a move which tends to naturalize classed differences in sexuality (Bettie, 2003). Contrasting approaches are relatively rare in ethnographic studies of schools, although they can be considered important in breaking with the tendency to produce singular accounts of heteronormativity (or the 'school').

Conclusion

This chapter attended to the ways in which heteronormativity is made relevant in secondary schools. Moving away from a focus on gendered and sexual identity constructions or performances, it argued that heteronormativity is drawn on in mundane practices of relating in schools.

Understanding heteronormativity's effects in and emergence through practices of forming, consolidating or breaking friendships, and the pleasures that can be derived from it, indicates the pervasiveness of the norm in realms of social life that are often desexualized. With regard to the relations between teachers and pupils, the findings show that the ways in which heteronormativity was constituted is not universal: in two schools heterosexuality was 'drawn in' to ease teaching relations or establish a common ground between teachers and pupils, whereas at a third school (hetero)sexuality was seen as being at odds with academic achievements and therefore relegated to the private sphere. From this analysis it follows that challenging heteronormativity requires looking at the ways in which it is productive of social relations such as friendships.

The current analysis complicates interventions around non-normative sexual identities. These interventions often focus on accepting or respecting differences. However, coming out of the closet becomes a lot harder when friendships are built around heterosexuality: it means that a fear of exclusion or bullying based on sexual identity might not be the main issue, but that instead it is an impossibility of participating in friendship practices that might be harder to overcome.

Through its centrality to mundane practices of relating among friends and between pupils and teachers in schools, heterosexuality is iterated and reinstated as normative. By analysing friendship and teaching relations through the lens of heteronormativity, this article has pointed our attention in three directions for further inquiry. The first is the importance of understanding heteronormativity as productive of relations in schools. The second is the destabilizing of heteronormativity: when is it drawn upon, and in what ways? Lastly, the approach of studying multiple contexts can show the different effects of heteronormativity in different environments. Together, these observations urge us to not reify the school or the phenomenon of heteronormativity.

Chapter 6

‘Not an issue in our school’ – Diversities in the making in secondary schools in the Netherlands

Abstract

This chapter engages with questions of diversity in secondary schools. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork in three secondary schools in the Netherlands, the analysis traces sites and situations where diversity was articulated by, or emerged as a problem, for pupils and their teachers. I will use the analysis of the different ways in which diversity was enacted in schools to reflect on the concepts of intersectionality and super-diversity. The paper shows that the categories of social life are not coherent, homogeneous and consistent, to be found in a person or in the body. Instead, they can *become or fail to become* real in social interactions. Emphasizing the making of identities in mundane school situations, I will describe moments in and outside of the classroom in which identities and categories of difference were, or were not, articulated. By drawing out such moments, I argue for a spatial, contextual and relational understanding of diversity-in-practice. In contrast to a super-diverse reality, the analysis shows an enduring importance of physical appearance and categorization into one of four main ethnic minority groups resulted in a continuation of difference and a continuation of group-thinking

Introduction

The notion of diversity was popularized in the United States in the 1980's to describe a wide variety of social differences including race, ethnicity, gender, class, and age (Vertovec, 2012). It is now common in European social analysis as well. While often used, the term is hardly explained or defined. This allows for different uses and goals being combined under its flag – and it is precisely this ambiguity that makes the word useful (Ahmed, 2012). The term seems to resonate, too, in higher education institutions, many of which have institutionalized diversity through policies, officers, and courses. At the same time, it is criticized by scholars for its managerial and individualizing undertones, when diversity can take the form of celebrating difference without asking for a reconsideration of values, or when it does not lead to social transformation (Valentine, 2008). This literature also criticizes common notions of diversity for relying heavily on ethnicity. To counter this overreliance, the concepts of intersectionality and super-diversity are helpful. These concepts inspire us to move away from considering exclusions and distinctions as playing out on separate axes of difference, but rather as complex entanglements. Analytically, however, social scientists inspired by these concepts often use pre-established categories of difference, such as class, race, religion and gender.

In this chapter, I argue that a thorough commitment to the complex process and politics of differentiating requires analytical attention to the mundane situations in which such categories of difference *are*, or, *are not* enacted. I contribute to discussions on diversity by exploring how differences are made, interact, and come to matter. This discussion is based on a study into sexuality and diversity in secondary schools in the Netherlands. Remarkably, in these secondary school spaces the term diversity was often met with resistance, instead of being celebrated, as in higher education institutions. Although school managers told me that diversity did not matter, concerns with diversity appeared throughout the fieldwork. I argue that a thorough commitment to the complex process and politics of differentiating requires analytical attention to the mundane situations in which categories of difference are or are not enacted. In other words, an analysis of diversity-in-practice.

Theorizing difference: super-diversity and intersectionality

The term ‘super-diversity’ emerged in the context of ‘new conjunctions and interactions of variables’ (Vertovec, 2007, p. 1025) in UK immigration patterns. It illustrates that ‘in addition to more people now migrating from more places, significant new conjunctions and interactions of variables have arisen through patterns of immigration’ (*Ibid.*). These interactions are said to surpass the ways in which diversity is currently understood in public discourse, policy debates and academic literature in general. Coined by migration scholar Vertovec, the notion of super-diversity, first interrupts the use of the multiculturalist frame of ethnic groups and integration; the idea of a majority group and several, more or less fixed, ethnic minority groups. Secondly, the term signals to social scientists and policy-makers that they should ‘take more sufficient account of the conjunction of ethnicity with a range of other variables when considering the nature of various “communities”, their composition, trajectories, interactions and public service needs’ (Vertovec, 2007, p. 1025). Moving away from the static categories implied in multiculturalism, migration and ethnic background are the key variables in this turn to super-diversity. In empirical studies, the concept is used in analyses of, for example, health care access (Green et al., 2014) interaction in education, the labor market and public space, to ask in what way ethnic and religious differences matter (Prins, 2013). Others use super-diversity as a demographic fact in large cities, and speak of ‘individuals in super-diversity’ (Blommaert & Rampton, 2011, p. 14).

The framework of intersectionality, which originates in Black feminist scholarship (Crenshaw, 1989) and is heralded as one of the most important contributions of gender studies (Davis, 2008), also offers a way into the study of diversities beyond the category of ethnicity. The framework provides a rich and powerful way to question the entanglement of gender, sexuality and ethnicity. From an intersectional perspective, these categories are not treated separately but are seen as working together in the construction of identities and societal positions. Criticisms have also been raised, however. Given its history in black feminist thought in the US, it is unsurprising that the black woman has become the quintessential ‘intersectional subject’

(Nash, 2008) at the crossroads, simultaneously experiencing oppressions of gender and race. This has led some to argue that in many usages, intersectionality inevitably ‘produces an Other’ (Puar, 2012, p. 52) – namely women of color. The listing of categories constitutes a recurring debate in studies of intersectionality. Which categories should be taken into account? The notorious ‘etc.’ at the end of such lists is taken by some as a sign of exhaustion (Butler, 1990). Others question the extent to which categories are analytically comparable (Yuval-Davis, 2006). Intersectionality assumes categories as given, knowable and stable: it is based on a knowledge of which categories matter, and who belongs to them. Furthermore, as pointed out by Ahmed (2012), the concept is often used in a way that neutralizes its critical potential: it is used to theorize difference without examining power structures.

In empirical studies, those starting from the framework of intersectionality often study multiply marginalized individuals and populations. The analysis focuses on self-definition and resistance in the face of oppression (see for example Froyum, 2010; Leurs & Ponzanesi, 2011; Mirza, 2013). In contrast, in studies that take their lead from super-diversity, the object of analysis is often a neighborhood (Den Uyl & Brouwer, 2012; Wessendorf, 2013) or other social setting inhabited by people from different ethnic backgrounds (f.e. Prins, 2013) – almost exclusively urban settings. It is the task of social scientists then, to study how the groups live together. While the objects and objectives of analysis differ, these studies share an understanding of the categories of difference that are deemed important. This chapter differs in that it does not locate diversity a priori in neighborhoods or populations. Instead, it is interested in the processes of making differences and similarities in practice.

Ethnicity and multiculturalist frames of diversity in the Netherlands

Diversity was important in my study into sexuality since problematizing sexuality often results in the making of separations, for example between boys and girls, religious and secular, ‘native Dutch’ and (children of) immigrants.

Introducing my study to school administrators invoked different reactions. ‘We do not do sex education. There are no allochthones⁴⁷ in this school’, stated one school manager. Asserting that children with ‘native Dutch’ parents have no problems with learning about sex, he communicated a familiar story. The story holds that Dutch children talk openly about sexuality and relationships with their parents, but that this is a problem for children of migrants. Since these children do not attend this school (according to the manager), sex education was not important. At a second school, I was told by administration that ‘ethnicity is not an issue’ and that it is misplaced to label schools as ‘black’ or ‘white’ – reaction against the ‘black school’ label that was often applied to their school.⁴⁸ A third school manager also explained that diversity was not a problem, but for different reasons. He explained: ‘the number of people from a foreign country [in this area] is very small. And we notice that the kids have biased and very stubborn opinions about ethnicity, which originate with the parents.’ Again, diversity was not an issue in this school, but this time because it was attended mostly by white pupils. This homogeneity, in the managers’ view, contributed to racist attitudes among the pupils, attitudes that originated, he explained, outside of the school, and were problematic, but not primarily a problem for the school itself.

The fact that all managers understood diversity as ethnic diversity might not come as a surprise in the Netherlands, where there is a long tradition of monitoring migrants and their children. Over the past decades, gender and sexuality have been listed among the main issues that separate ‘Dutch’ from ‘migrants and their descendants’ and have been central to the articulation of belonging to the Netherlands (Bracke, 2012; Mepschen et al., 2010). It is against the supposed Dutch norm of sexual progressiveness that the presence of migrant populations is often seen as posing problems (see for example Schalet, 2011). This is also reflected in schools, for example through

47 Aggregate term for (children of) migrants that is widely used in the Netherlands, although the NISR and the Cultural Bureau of Statistics decided to discontinue its use in 2016 because of its negative connotations.

48 In the Netherlands this distinction is often made; schools in which over 50% of pupils are (children of) migrants are named black school, despite criticism of the terminology (Abacioglu et al., 2017).

difficulties in discussing homosexuality in ‘multicultural classrooms’ (Van den Bongardt, Bos, & Moutaahan, 2013).

In educational research, ethnic minority students have been studied as well. Studies have focused, for example, on the achievements of ethnic minority pupils, on the relationship between the ethnic composition of a school and pupils’ achievement (Veerman, Werfhorst, & Dronkers, 2013), on conviviality (Hollingworth & Mansaray, 2012), school satisfaction (Verkuyten & Thijs, 2002b) and on racism (Picower, 2009; Verkuyten & Thijs, 2002a). In the Netherlands, distinctions between different schooling levels in the educational system are made early (Van Daalen, 2013). Many studies have documented the effects this has: it results in a separation of groups along the lines of both class and ethnicity (Coello, Dagevos, Huinder, Van Der Leun, & Odé, 2014). Although the relations that such studies point to, for example between ethnicity and educational outcome, can be helpful to indicate difference, they do not tell us anything about the processes that lead to these outcomes (Leeman & Saharso, 2013). Moreover, they have potential additional consequences, such as stigmatization (Coello et al., 2014; Paulle, 2013), and naturalization of ethnic groups. This naturalization leads to a lack of understanding about the ways in which schools are sites in which differences can be (un)made.

This chapter shares the concerns that the frameworks of intersectionality and super-diversity put forth: namely that of an over-determination of ethnic background in social science research and a lack of engagement with the simultaneous positioning of (groups of) people along different axes of inequality. To further the discussion on how to engage with differences that the terms have instigated, this chapter will break from understanding differences as stable and pre-existing, to be ‘encountered’ in certain neighborhoods, or as intersecting in certain populations. Rather, it will consider social differences as the effect of interferences in specific practices. The optical metaphor of interference, a reaction to realist and mathematical metaphors (Haraway, 1997), pushes us to think of differences as relational: as emerging from specifically located material practices. This notion of interference encourages us to look for the coming together of differences - such as gender, race/ ethnicity, sexuality, disability, and class

– and to understand how these can work with or against one another to make certain identities and differences (Moser, 2006). They allow for an understanding of differences and similarities as made and unmade within specific spatial contexts (Valentine, 2007). As the ethnographic examples in this chapter reveal, these relational differences can be made durable, but can also be forgotten. They can be fragile (M'charek, 2010) or become solid. Instead of locating diversity in multi-ethnic urban neighborhoods, or multiply oppressed populations, this makes diversity an empirical question to be explored in practice. This study grounds this exploration in schools.

Study details

The empirical material that this chapter draws on stems from a study on sexuality and diversity among youth aged 13-16, in secondary schools in the Netherlands. The schools were selected on the basis of educational level (vocational, higher general secondary, or pre-university education). Furthermore, the schools are located in different geographic settings (in a large city in the Randstad, the central urban area of the Netherlands; in a city in one of the provinces; and a village in one of the provinces), to allow for comparisons and potentially emerging contrasts. Studying three schools allows for an analysis of the ways in which differences emerge in interactions within specific geographical contexts (Valentine, 2007).

Bernarduscollege is a relatively strict and traditional school for higher education and pre-university education in a provincial town. Rijnsbergcollege is a small school for vocational education that is situated in a rural area. Finally, Nexus High is a large school for vocational education in a large city, situated in the central urban area of the Netherlands. In these three schools I observed classroom interactions, had lunch with pupils, joined school parties and field trips, and listened to and engaged in many (in)formal conversations over the course of one and a half years. Based on this fieldwork, the current analysis explores (1) locations of diversity, (2) articulations of diversity, (3) solutions of diversity 'issues'.

Locating diversity

On the surface, the white composition of Rijnsbergcollege seemed to imply to teachers that race, ethnicity and migration were peripheral issues. However, talk of ethnicity and ethnic belonging was often present. For example, an intern who was wearing a headscarf was in the school for a day, and her presence was constantly questioned by people in the hallways. One pupil in the hallway pointed to the visitor, exclaiming: 'not normal! In front of me on the bus was a headscarf, behind me was a headscarf ... who are all these people?'. The otherness of the visitor is emphasized here by referring to the headscarf – where the persona is substituted by the scarf – a gendered symbol of Islam. In this instance, the space of the school was produced as a white space invaded by 'others' when the Muslim female is marked as 'out of place' by the pupil. These affective responses invoked by Islamic dress resonate more widely in the Netherlands, where the corporeal presence of women who engage in the practice of face-veiling invokes high levels of discomfort (Moors, 2009). These feelings of discomfort have become attached to the object of the veil, and the reaction in the hallway is thus one that invokes and is invoked by these pre-existing emotional and political attachments.

Those who were supposedly not 'from here' figured vividly not only when physically encountered and recognized, but also when symbolically encountered and recognized, in stories that were shared in the school. During a focus group on leisure time with her four friends, Brianna shared a story about a birthday sleepover party at her place some time ago. She was sleeping in the living room with her friends when she joked: 'Watch out, there is a Turk in the bushes'. The story was challenged by Daisy, 'NOOO it was a Moroccan!!'. Brianna replied that she had 'no clue what it was'. The episode was met with laughter and seemed to function as a moment in which the girls played up the similarities between them by estranging themselves from outside: outside, where a dark man was lurking in the dark, invoking widely circulating notions of gender, race and predatory sexuality that culminate in a sexualized, dangerous other. When Daisy interfered in the story to assert that 'it was a Moroccan' Brianna, the one who hosted the

party and came up with the joke, dismissed this distinction. The brushing together of Moroccans and Turks into one category is not uncommon in the Netherlands, and this move of glossing over this difference functions to make clear that the most important difference is that they are not autochthone like the girls are.

The other difference mobilized here is that of gender, with the ‘man in the bushes’ a familiar trope to warn girls to not stay out late or to be on their own, which could risk making them into victims. The retelling of this story in the context of a focus group on leisure time and friendship worked to re-establish the oppositions between the white teenage girls in their pyjamas and the Turkish man outside, lurking in the shadows. It shows that sameness, bonding by laughing together, is the effect of taking distance from ethnic others, revealing how ‘white identities are expressed through the fixed construction of contrasting racial otherness’ (Nayak, 2010, p. 2386). A similar story was told by Jordan, who once proposed to her mom that she would sleep in the shed in their backyard. She was not allowed to, with her mom, explaining: ‘you can’t sleep there by yourself because the foreigners [de buitenlanders] might come and get you!’ Laughter resulted in the group of girls to which this story was told, a story in which Jordan’s mother feared rape and abduction, and used the image of the foreigner both to scare Jordan and legitimize denying her request.

Articulating diversities

During a PE class at Nexus High, Michelle, Sabiya, June, and I were hanging out at the side of the sports fields. Scrolling through their phone while engaging in small-talk, Michelle says that someone mistook her for a Mocro,⁴⁹ and that this was a common occurrence. The next day, in a focus group discussion, I ask why she thinks that is the case.

Michelle: I don’t have an issue with it

Sabiya: many people think that I’m a Moroccan too

49 Slang term for those of Moroccan descent in the Netherlands

Michelle: yes a lot of people think that. Many times.. my sister and older brother had that as well.
June: ... you look like an Antillean
Michelle: noo man!!
June: that is what they say
Sabiya: June, you look like.... I don't know what you look like!
Michelle: you look like everything mixed!
Willemijn: You talk a lot about Surinam. Is that where your family is from?
June: yes
Sabiya: and Holland
June: Well I was not officially born here. I have been half born here, let's say it like that.
Sabiya: my mom is Dutch and my father Palestinian-Lebanese. But my family lives in Syria.

In this case, although Michelle said she 'doesn't have an issue with it', in other ways she makes sure that it can't be mistaken that she is in fact from Surinam, for example by showing pictures she has on her phone, and sharing stories of holidays there with her family in public school spaces, and, importantly also by using a certain vernacular. Also, despite their unconcerned reaction to my question of mistaken 'Mocro' identification, their earlier interactions on this issue made me realize that they saw this as an accusation. Likewise, Michelle quite strongly refused the label 'Antillean'. Ethnic labels were used by these girls to describe others as well. When June received a 'like' on a picture of herself on Instagram, she reacted: 'Yuck!! A tata is liking me'.⁵⁰ June's disgust expressed in these terms in reaction to the 'like', and the act of expressing this out loud, provided a moment to foreground her Surinamese-ness and to reject Dutchness.

Ethnic demarcations were also made at Rijnsbergcollege, for example, when going out was discussed by five boys in a group interview. When asked to describe a monthly teenage party that they attended regularly, a party called Hangout at a café in the area, Paul explained:

⁵⁰ Tata is a derogatory term derived from 'potato', postulated as the defining food for Dutchmen, and is used in slang to indicate Dutch descent.

Well, Hangout is a space [draws an imaginary map on the table with his finger]. Here is where you enter, and then here is the dancefloor. And it is always divided like this. Here is the entrance, and here are often... Who are there?

[...]

Mike: then you go left and there is Noordveld

Paul: no way, that is not where Noordveld is. You enter and then on the first part of the bench there is Middletown, on the corner is Noordveld, then in the middle it is mixed, and that is where the fights are. And if you go a bit further then to the left is Groenhurst and Parkstad and on the right ... is Morocco. There it's all the Moroccan...

[does not finish sentence]

Roberto: no one there is of a different...

Paul: no

[...]

Paul: if you pass there by yourself you will not return in one piece.
(Rijnsbergcollege)

The different 'backgrounds' that are described by Paul and his friends relate to small villages, a provincial town, and to Morocco. The space that Paul describes and draws out is segregated along the lines of these 'ethnic' backgrounds, with a mixed area in the middle. Walking around here, and especially entering the 'Moroccan zone' will cause trouble, according to Paul. The map might seem static, but the partygoers move, they mingle, they make out, they get into fights. Some weeks later, hanging out at the bike shed, I overhear Paul saying to Timmy: 'you know, Youssef and Amin, you know, those Moroccans from Hangout that always get into fights, they are actually really nice. I talked to them.' Encountering the same people in a different space, not in a party but during the day, in the village, evoked different reactions and changed Paul's attitude towards them. The Hangout space thus worked to amplify differences. The same café and party came up in a group conversation with Brianna, Jenna, Anna, Samantha and Daisy. Asking what the party it is like they told me:

Samantha: I hate Hangout.

Anna: But you have never been!

Willemijn: why not?

Samantha: half of Noordveld is in there and I hate Noordvelders

Willemijn: why is that?

Samantha: I don't know

Daisy: my grandma is a Noordvelder. My father is half a Noordvelder

Samantha: half of my family too.

The identity of 'Noordvelder' is similarly constructed as more traditional ethnic identities. It is seen as comprised of a distinct set of characteristics that are passed on through blood. It is in a way biologized, it can be inherited; it is an identification created through social action that in turn invokes biological ancestry (Bauman, 1999; Nash, 2005). Among many pupils, Noordveld was a place they aspired to belong to, or, the opposite, that they absolutely did not want to be associated with. The 'ethnicity' came with particular looks, dialect/language and attitudes, the most important of which was to reject immigration and immigrants. Alyssa's statement that she would never date a particular boy because he looks like a Moroccan, was an attempt to get closer to her friends from Noordveld, rather than reflecting her attractions. One of her previous boyfriends had a Moroccan background, but she played down this fact in the conversation in school, by locating it firmly in the past.

When ethnicity becomes an issue

Reversing the comment of Nexus' principal, that ethnicity 'was not an issue', this section presents three moments in which ethnicity became 'an issue' and looks at how these issues were dealt with.

At Rijnsbergcollege, the identity of 'Noordvelder' was often romanticized: seen as special, interesting and worthy of attention. To the non-Noordvelders this was oftentimes painfully clear. When a school benefit day of Rijnsbergcollege was reported by local media, a girl who attended Rijnsbergcollege but lived in a small village next to it sighed: 'it is always

the girls and boys from Noordveld who are in pictures and interviews'. I saw her trying to attract attention from the journalists present, but in vain. Teachers underscored this special status of Noordvelders, who were recognized through a particular style of clothing and make-up. Teachers confirmed the supposedly racist nature of Noordvelders: racism was seen as inherited by pupils from their parents, and the general feeling was that the school could not counter those strong attitudes, simply because 'that's how they are'. Indeed, I did not see many sustained challenges to racist remarks or attitudes, although there were some exceptions, primarily in attempts to silence racist remarks, such as when an administrator was compared to a monkey during a painting class. In general, however, teachers found it difficult to actively counter racist attitudes. Sometimes they contributed to these by making comments about 'oostblokboeven', criminalizing Eastern Europeans, and by reiterating condescending words that their pupils used to refer to non-white people.⁵¹ Deflecting the accusation of racism to pupils from Noordveld, racializing them and naturalizing their racisms, makes it possible to distance themselves from racism and maintain the image of the school as a neutral place and themselves as non-racists, professing non-racism (Coenders & Chauvin, 2017).

On several occasions, ethnic denominators or suggestions were challenged by those they were attached to, for example when a group of girls were hanging out in a corner of the PE classroom in Nexus High. The PE hall was divided into areas for different sports, which resulted in a gender separated ordering of the space. The majority of the boys started to play soccer, taking up half of the hall, while some played floorball. Three girls played badminton, but most of the girls remained seated on the bench, fiddling with each other's hair, braiding or combing it. When Dewi's long hair was braided, someone remarked:

'Hey now you look like the Chinese Rapunzel'

Dewi reacts with annoyance: 'I am not a Chinese!!'

Another girl interferes: 'Hey on that picture your mom really looked like a Javanese woman.'

51 such as 'neger' to refer to Morgan Freeman when watching a movie during an English class.

No one reacts to the last comment and the conversation is shut down, or changes direction when memories of hair being braided in childhood come up. Almost all girls join the conversation and focus on how painful this could be, and that their moms told them to 'not nag and sit still' in order to be made pretty. Here we see that commonalities are found in gendered experiences, which help overcome the racial difference that was just established through the [rejected] marker of 'Chinese'. Thus, Dewi's refusal of being cast differently in terms of ethnicity is overcome by foregrounding 'universal' experiences of 'growing up girl' (Walkerdine, Lucey, & Melody, 2001) – a strategy that works very well in this highly gendered space of the PE hall (Evans, 2006).

At Bernarduscollege, the school which the principal told me 'has no allochthones', I followed a class in which two girls referred to themselves as the only two 'black spots on a white page'. They considered their blackness to be the reason they were being disciplined for talking in class. One of them was continuously referred to as 'peanut' by others (mainly boys) in the class – referring to her Indonesian roots/looks and because of the linguistic closeness to her name. Two other girls in this class were often called 'Chinese' or 'Spring roll' (loempia). The fact that the principal said there were no 'allochthones' is interesting in this case. The point here is not that at least four pupils in this particular class could or should be categorized as such, following the guidelines of the Central Bureau of Statistics, but rather, that their ethnicity was erased through their class-position. The school was seen as a somewhat elitist school for higher middleclass children. So despite its discursive absence, class acted to unmake the label of the allochthone for the principal, while racial slurs were directed at these pupils. In this sense, ethnicity is an issue there – even though it is rendered invisible to teachers. This glossing over of ethnic or racial differences did not happen consistently, as the following example makes clear.

During a history class about the Dutch Republic, teacher Visser again confuses the names of Kim-Li and Suzie.

Discussing the way society was categorized along the lines of social groups determined by income, Visser lists: 'nobility,

aristocrats, laborers, common people. Which group is missing here?’ The class remains quiet for a moment.

Visser starts counting ‘When I look around I see 1,2,3..’

Stefan shouts excitedly, thinking he knows the answer: ‘foreigners!’

Suzu objects: ‘that’s mean!’

Visser laughs, as do some pupils. ‘No’, corrects Visser, ‘I meant women or girls’

When Visser implied the missing group can be visually detected in class, the pupils turned around in their seats to scan one another. The first thing that stood out to Stefan was, apparently, the foreignness of some, which is not a surprising division to make in a country where debates over immigration and integration have been continuously present for years. The comment was all the more painful given the many times teachers mistook Suzie for Kim-li and vice versa. Laughter filled the moment of tension that hung in the air after no one responded to Suzie’s objection. Once the laughter died down, Visser continued his class with a short discussion of the exclusion of women in the Dutch Republic.

Discussion: Not here?

Diversity: where to be found?

Though diversity might seem to fit the Dutch context well because it sounds tolerant and harmonious (Essed, 2002), school managers were quick to point out that diversity was ‘not there’. This ties in with debates on ‘black and white schools’, where diversity is conflated with ethnic minorities and educational inequalities (Vink, 2014). Imaginations of diversity and its problems that are thought to reside in urban spaces, particularly multi-ethnic neighbourhoods (Nayak, 2008; Van Gent & Jaffe, 2017), contrast to the village, which is seen as a pure and organic unit; a purity threatened by strangers who might always be approaching (see Ahmed, 2000). The analysis showed, however, that even in schools where diversity was said not to exist, it does have effects. Focusing on two schools that could be characterized as super-diversity’s

'others', namely schools in small cities identified as white, highlights the effects the 'super-diverse city' has beyond its geographical boundaries: it works to group together people from a non-migrant background as 'the same', and as untouched by migration or multiculturalism.

The way in which race/ethnicity was present in talk, fantasies, and encounters in and around these schools, however, shows that the traditional argument that race issues are not relevant to the countryside does not hold (Neal, 2002). In practice, it means that diversity becomes locked in the bodies of those who are considered non-normative, which in this case came to include Noordvelders. As Sara Ahmed suggests, the word diversity is mobile but not without baggage: it may be "sticky", sticking to some things more than others, even if it has different associations for individuals and groups' (Ahmed, 2007, p. 246). This does not mean that these individuals and groups are always marked as other, as differences do not always matter: for example when ethnic minority pupils are not marked as 'allochthone' because they attend a 'white' school, or when ethnic differences between girls are made irrelevant through an appeal to shared experiences of being a girl. The constitution of Noordvelder as an ethnic identity with specific characteristics in terms of attitude and appearance, shows that making ethnic boundaries and giving meaning to ethnic identities are processes that also occur in schools characterized as white or homogenous. It is the kind of demarcation that differs: here they are situated accomplishments (Valentine, 2007).

Diversity: what/who counts as diverse?

Despite super-diversity's claim that the diversification of diversity (due to increasingly diverse migration patterns, differences in religion, etc.) is an empirical reality, many of these diversifications did not seem to matter at Rijnsbergcollege. What did matter was physical appearance, for example when 'looking like a Moroccan' made dating impossible. Likewise, at Bernarduscollege, difference was literally read from the body in response to a class question on social groups. In contrast, at Nexus High, June and

her friends had difficulties describing themselves in the main aggregative categories of ethnic minorities in the Netherlands. Nonetheless, they were ascribed to these very categories by others. Based on their physical appearance, they were categorized into certain groups – those that are among the migrant groups that are large in the Dutch imaginary: Moroccan, Turkish, Surinamese and Antillean. These groupings emerged in part due to the ‘governmental “shoe-boxing” of migrants, their children and grandchildren, into sealed off categories’ (Paulle & Kalir, 2013). Though they might think of themselves as ‘everything mixed’, they are not in control of defining. Others define them as well, and these definitions depend on the available categories; a positioning ‘within hegemonic social narratives that are not of their own making’ (Valentine & Sporton, 2009). While super-diversity could have been considered an ‘empirical reality’ in this particular instance, in practice, this diversity was downplayed in favour of categorizations based on the aforementioned four groups. Physical appearance (M’charek, Schramm, & Skinner, 2014), standing out visually and recognizing diversity from the face/looks of someone, were paramount in categorizing classmates. Yet these appearances should not be taken as biologically fixed or unchangeable. Rather, these corporeal symbols of race extend beyond phenotype (M’charek et al., 2014; Veninga, 2009) to include, for example, changeable elements such as hair styles and color and clothing.

Dealing with diversity

When diversity became ‘an issue’, or, when ethnic differences between pupils were explicitly made, the response was to make this difference disappear as soon as possible. The uneasiness that resulted from making this difference, with the ever lurking accusation of treating people with unfairness or racism, was resolved by deflecting racism to an easily recognizable racist figure (here in the form of Noordvelder), by foregrounding sameness (think of the shared experiences of ‘growing up girl’ (Walkerdine et al., 2001) in the PE hall), or by laughter and ignorance (as in the history class).

First, the romanticizing of Noordvelders as an authentic group, and localizing racist attitudes and practices within this group, results in a deflection of racism onto this group. Constructing Noordvelders as different, as non-normative, as racist figures, born into racist families, shielded other racisms from view. It constructed the school as a neutral place that works to alleviate inequalities by treating everyone as equal, despite their background. Instead, by not addressing the racist tendencies when they manifested, the school became a space for reproducing racial others as dangerous. Locating the problem of racism firmly within the pupils inhabiting the school, makes it difficult to address the ways in which some school practices and teacher interventions perpetuated racisms. As noted earlier, deflecting racism to racist figures sees racism as located in the bodies of some, rather than practiced in institutional spaces such as schools (Ahmed, 2012). It makes it possible to maintain the general idea of the Netherlands as a country that is non-racist (for a critique see Wekker, 2016).

A second way in which issues of diversity were solved was by foregrounding similarities; moms braiding or combing their daughters' hair, for example, eased the tension that arose when the remark 'Chinese Rapunzel' was unappreciated by the girl it was directed to, despite it being meant as a compliment. An important signifier of both gender and race (M'charek, 2010; Veninga, 2009, p. 122), hair functioned here to undo racial differences. As Moser has pointed out, 'working to undo some differences often rests on the making of others' (Moser, 2006, p. 557). The gender difference that was already made in the spatial ordering that came with the PE hall (with different locker rooms for boys and girls and with boys playing soccer while most girls sat on benches), thus became even more strongly articulated. This process is not captured by intersectionality and the metaphor of intersecting of differences that purports the idea of a fixed positioning of subjects. Instead, differences here are first made (the signifier of Chinese), then unmade (through the reference to a shared memory of girlhood); a forgetting or unmaking of differences that is facilitated through the PE hall's gendered ordering of space and activities.

Third, at Bernarduscollege, the school in which 'no allochthones' were to be found according to the principal, a tense moment unfolded during

the history class on the Dutch Republic. The image of the school as ‘white’ was linked to its history as an elitist catholic school, that was somewhat old-fashioned and thought of itself as strict and decent. This image left its imprint on the pupils who attended the college: due to the conflation of non-whiteness with lower class (Wekker, 2016), the non-white pupils attending Bernarduscollege were in a way whitened. When Stefan undid this by using the word foreigner to designate classmates, Suzie reacted immediately with anger. The rest of the class, including the teacher, seemed to be at a loss for words to react to this unusual manifestation of racial difference in the school. As a result, the issue of why a white pupil in a Dutch classroom at the time was likely to come up with such a racial answer, was not addressed, leaving intact Stefan as the one who made a racial difference, and the four girls in the classroom as those who embodied this difference. This moment of tension makes clear that race does not necessarily materialize in a person’s body, but in the relations between different bodies (M’charek, 2013); in this instance that of the school, those inhabiting the classroom, and those brought into the question about social categories in the 17th century Dutch Republic.

Conclusion: diversity-in-practice

This chapter aimed to contribute to the question of diversity and difference and traced how differences were (un)made in three schools in the Netherlands. In other words, it studied diversity-in-practice. The analysis was guided by initial reactions of principals and managers to my research questions on diversity. They responded by asserting that diversity was ‘not there’ or ‘not an issue’. In contrast to these claims, the analysis explored the emergence and manifestation of diversities in the schools. Rather than locking diversity into particular neighborhoods or bodies, as studies based on super-diversity and intersectionality risk doing, studying diversity in practice shows diversity as an *effect* of interactions between specific relations, spaces and contexts. The form and effects of these diversities were not unitary: who counted as similar or different was made and remade in daily life practices such as going out, chatting with friends, and attending class. Diversity

became an issue in every school, in one way or another, but was not attached to certain bodies, at least not in consistent or predictable ways. In contrast to a super-diverse reality, an enduring importance of physical appearance and categorization into one of four main ethnic minority groups resulted in a continuation of difference and a continuation of group-thinking. Given the negative connotations with this ethnic minority in relation to educational inequalities, it was not surprising that school managers thought of diversity as always residing elsewhere. Whenever the opposite became apparent, when diversity became an issue in one of the schools, it was rapidly dealt with in one of three ways: through emphasizing similarities, deflection onto others, or simply by ignoring it. Making diversity irrelevant requires work that depends on a deflection of racism onto others and in effect endures the negative connotations of diversity and locks its problems into some schools and bodies and not others.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

Girls cheered in the PE hall as the teacher decided they were to use the changing room with the mirror from now on. Tags used to identify teams for a ball game were described as having a menstrual colour. In the afternoon a pupil and her class teacher discussed a fight that revolved around calling someone's mother a slut. In another classroom, a lively conversation on masturbation was proceeding amidst expressions of joy, excitement and laughter, but also tears, expressions of anger and loneliness. These moments from my first day of fieldwork in a secondary school foreshadowed the themes of this dissertation. On that first day, I was surprised by the many times and ways in which sexuality and gender were evoked, and to what effect.

Most studies of youth sexuality set out to understand problems with sexual health. According to the World Health Organization (2006), to be sexually healthy means being in 'a state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being in relation to sexuality' while problems such as teenage pregnancy, sexually transmitted disease, early sexual activity, homophobia, and sexual violence undermine this broadly defined state of sexual health. These problems of youth sexuality have been addressed by scientific disciplines ranging from sexology, epidemiology and public health to sociology and anthropology. All have focused on solving a particular part of the puzzle of youth sexual health – a puzzle consisting of behaviours, contexts, attitudes, norms, and drives.

Insights from such studies inform public campaigns, health policies, insurance provisions, contraceptive methods, school-based sex education and individual counselling. Different though they may be, these interventions all aim to improve sexual health and wellbeing by persuading individuals to change their behaviour. In the Netherlands, many of these interventions are set in schools, where adolescents quite literally form a captive audience.

School-based sex education in the Netherlands has been effective in changing the ‘predictive determinants’ of behaviour including attitudes, knowledge and intentions. Such outcomes – combined with favourable rankings in country comparisons of teenage pregnancy⁵² – portray the Dutch as successful teachers of sexuality in schools.

But as the preceding chapters have shown, both the interventions and the problems they are said to address are not self-evident, stable entities. Scholars do not just study problems, and interventions do not just address them – both actively shape how problems are defined. The current study, in contrast, did not set out to solve a predefined problem, but to understand how sexuality is enacted within mundane school life. What practices come together in school life? What do these practices make of sexuality? In particular, I was interested in how sexuality becomes part and parcel of the making of differences and similarities among youth. In this concluding chapter I outline the dissertation’s main contributions to the field.

Enacting sexuality

Sexuality is often used as a self-evident concept, one that is rarely defined or explained in scholarly work (Spronk, 2012). Obligatory references to broad definitions of sexual health (like my quoting of the WHO above) notwithstanding, sexuality is generally treated as if we already know what it is, thus hiding the work that goes into the making of definitions and the consolidating of understandings. This in turn leads to the naturalization of sexuality. To counter this tendency, I did not begin this study with a definition, but with the idea that what sexuality is remains an empirical question. Sexuality emerges through practices of social commentary, arranging classes, making jokes, dressing up, flirting online, and much else. Nor is sexuality an object that exists independently from the doings

⁵² Determining the causes of favorable outcomes such as low rates of teenage pregnancy is far from straightforward and beyond the scope of this study. While causality is often attributed to sex education in schools, this ignores the normalization of the use of the contraceptive pill among teenagers (used by 66% of 15-year old girls in the Netherlands versus the European average of 30%) (Inchley et al., 2016).

of researchers, an object that can be described from a distance, its various factors clearly separated and added up. As Mol (2002) argues, different ways of studying an object do not add up to a single coherent object, but enact different versions of it. Sexuality, although presented as singular in theory, is multiple in practice. In some research traditions, it is located in (specific parts of) the body; others locate sexuality in feelings, practices, social norms, intersubjective experiences, desires, stories, moralities, or some combination thereof. In line with the tradition of material-semiotics, the current study has examined how sexuality is enacted in schools.

My ethnographic fieldwork revealed that scientific approaches to understanding sexuality – with their neat separation of factors, causal directions and layered models – stand in stark contrast to the messiness of school life. Dealing with this messiness was a daily reality for both teachers and pupils. When, where, and how sexuality mattered varied a great deal. In chapter three, for example, sexuality emerged in relation to personal wellbeing: teachers questioned the overall wellbeing of a girl (Zoe) whose nude picture had been circulated. Here, sexuality lined up with ‘being troublesome at home’, ‘seeing boys from a different village’, and ‘going down the wrong path’.

The case also revealed that how sexuality matters depends on the place and concerns with which it becomes associated – the context that is made to matter. The fact that the nude picture was circulated in school clearly mattered: it caused ‘unrest’ in a period of ‘sexting panic’ (Hasinoff, 2015), the latest in a series of panics over girls’ sexualisation (Duits & van Zoonen, 2011; Renold & Ringrose, 2011). The panic furthermore left no room for Zoe’s version of the event: rather than seeing herself as going ‘down the wrong path’, she felt betrayed by her friends. For her friends, the problem was the boy she sent the picture to: he attended a different school, a school coded as ‘black’. For Zoe’s friends, the problem had everything to do with race. Despite these multiple dimensions, the sexting case became part of the script ‘when-girl-sends-nude-picture-to-boy’ – a script that divides roles and responsibilities and leaves no room for other versions to appear than the one in which an insecure, naïve, adolescent girl tries to impress a boy she fancied through sexuality.

To say that sexuality is enacted is not to say that sexuality is ‘made’ from scratch, that it can be something entirely different each time, outside of previous understandings of sex, schools, and adolescents. Instead, each enactment involves already-formed ideas about sexuality, including racialized, gendered and classed notions that grace academic and popular knowledge. Some ways of doing sexuality in practice are more obvious than others because they have been more solidified, or *scripted*, through repetition. In the remainder of this chapter, I turn to three common refrains about youth and sexuality: sexuality as a natural attribute of the body; sexuality as a cause of problems when silenced; and sexuality as individual identity. After outlining the various effects of these understandings, I revisit through the dissertation’s chapters how sexuality is enacted in schools, where it is tied to sociality and friendships, and to the making of similarities and differences.

Bodies growing up

*You’re changing!
A lot changes in puberty. Your body is growing up.
Sometimes you’ll feel insecure or awkward.
You’ll also be more independent, start going out with friends perhaps.
You may fall in love and get a boyfriend or girlfriend.
How is it affecting you?
(Long Live Love, 2012, p. 1)*

The lines above open a widely used sex education teaching pack in the Netherlands. They suggest that puberty begins with bodily changes that affect psychological wellbeing (feeling insecure or awkward), one’s social life (becoming independent, spending time with friends) and which fuel romantic feelings (falling in love). They prepare pupils for the topics that will be covered in sex education, and for how they will be addressed: in an individualized, personal tone. This is about you and your body. Your body is ‘growing up’, ‘things are happening to you’ (Long Live Love, 2012, p. 1). While the approach is exemplary of sex education curricula, it is not always

accepted by pupils. One student wondered aloud when it was announced that the next class would be sex education: 'why did sexuality suddenly become so important?' Although the question was addressed to no one in particular and disappeared in the buzz of voices in the classroom, it confirmed the inevitability of sexuality in the secondary school.

The inevitability of sexuality in secondary school stems from the omnipresent biological narrative of its blossoming during the life stage called adolescence (Lesko, 2001). When pupils are still in primary school, teachers and parents often read sexualized behaviour or references to sexuality as play – and therefore as not real (Kuik, 2013; Thorne, 1993). But the meanings attached to sexual behaviour and utterances change when pupils enter adolescence. This biological understanding of sexuality – which feminist science and technology scholars have shown to be deeply culturally inflected (Jordan-Young, 2011; M'charek, 2005; Martin, 1991; Richardson, 2013; Roberts, 2007) – posit adolescence as one of the most important life phases of sexual development.

Adolescence is gendered from the outset. The onset of puberty in boys is defined as first ejaculation; for girls, first menstruation. Boys' changing bodies thus have to do with sexual pleasure; for girls, reproduction (Holland et al., 2004). Teeming with adolescents said to be experiencing profound physical changes, secondary schools become sites for regulating sexuality. Problems caused by raging hormones, peer pressure, media influence, or a lack of reflection are considered inevitable, a part of adolescence and the development of sexuality. As the preceding chapters have shown, a multitude of problems were explained by referring to adolescence and sexuality: deteriorating grades, the crossing of private boundaries, wanting the wrong kind of attention, being boisterous in class, sexy posing for pictures, tight clothing, etc. Through such rationales, used by both pupils and teachers, this biological understanding of sexuality – its unruliness and problems necessitating regulation – gained in reality.

Problems and speakability

*Say clearly what you do and don't want
Talk beforehand about how far you want to go
If you don't like something, say so
(Long Live Love, 2012, p. 19)*

The same teaching pack emphasizes the need to talk about sexuality. Pupils are encouraged to talk about what they want, what they do not want, and what they are ready for. This need to talk goes beyond the negotiation of sexual acts between two teenagers; it is a general imperative. 'Speakability' – the ability to engage in dialogue with others about sexuality – has almost become a goal in itself: to talk is to prevent problems, while the repertoire of disclosure is seen as crucial to individual empowerment. Nevertheless, the speakability imperative can also lead to silencing same-sex experiences that do not follow the narrative of coming out (Jivraj & de Jong, 2011; Wekker, 2009). As Hardon and Posel point out, there is the risk that “the prescription to be ‘open’ about these issues will become monochromatic, blunt and unduly coercive, based on a misreading of more nuanced ways of knowing and telling” (Hardon & Posel, 2012, p. S3).

As Foucault argued, talking about sexuality is not only a matter of providing information; it brings sexuality into being. Rather than turning its back on sexuality, modern society has “put into operation an entire machinery for producing true discourses concerning it” (Foucault, 1976, p. 69). The cases discussed in this dissertation revealed that sexuality becomes speakable only in a highly specific format, one that excludes how sexuality is discussed among youths themselves – that is, talk about who is posting pictures that are sexy, or too sexual; gossip about who has kissed or made out; about who is attractive and who is not. Such concerns, however, were not recognized as proper ways to talk about sexuality within the format of sex education. In the format of speakability, sexuality is pertinent to youth and natural. But it is also risky: problems are expected, given the lack of reflexivity that adolescents are said to suffer from.

In ‘making sexuality speakable’, adolescents are called upon to become rational agents capable of choosing their own partners, sexual activities, and contraceptive methods. But during adolescence, rationality is seen as compromised: hormones cloud decision-making while peer pressure leads individuals to engage in things they otherwise would not. Establishing who you *really* are, and what you *really* want, become key goals of sex education, reinforcing the idea of sexuality as a stamp of individuality (Foucault, 1976).

As anthropologists have shown, such authentic identities or representations of the ‘real’ are never outside of culture (Alldred, 1998; Garcia, 2012; Spronk, 2016). Appeals to rational choice, authenticity, and talk all invoke a notion of neutrality that often suffuses Dutch treatments of sexuality.⁵³ In this constellation, the Dutch are said to deal with youth sexuality pragmatically rather than through moralism (Schalet, 2011). Studies of youth and sex in the Netherlands often posit a division between normative and pragmatic approaches to youth sexuality. The former is the terrain of religious influence; the latter – the ‘Dutch approach’ – is that of secular realism, posited as politically and morally neutral and therefore desirable. Nevertheless, my study revealed that this neat division breaks down in practice. Pragmatism did not replace moralism as normativities were embedded in, maintained, and reproduced through everyday dealings with sexuality. Speakability, then, becomes the right way to ‘do’ sexuality, while engaging in ‘open’ sex talk in public becomes a way of doing Dutchness.

Enabling an environment of openness in secondary schools where talk about sexuality could emerge was difficult in practice as teachers had to deal with tricky questions from pupils, who used the promise of ‘open and honest communication’ to breach the personal boundaries of teachers or to disrupt the class. As we saw in chapter four, interventions do not take place in a vacuum, but in classrooms where pupils and teachers have already established patterns of interaction, a hierarchy of popularity and, importantly, of ‘speakability’ (who is to speak, when and where, with what audience). While speakability was encouraged in the classroom, it was also highly regulated and policed, reinforcing and destabilizing the notion of speakability at the same time.

⁵³ Not only in regards to sexuality: see Vogel (2016) for an analysis of how science is posited as value-neutral in Dutch debates on overweight.

Kinds of persons

*What kind of person are you when it comes to love?
Do you have certain rules for what you do? Or are you more spontaneous?
Tip: Always trust your intuition. If it feels right, it's OK
(Long Live Love, 2012, p. 14)*

In the teaching pack, the relation is made explicit: what one does when it comes to love⁵⁴ is bound up with the kind of person one is. Choosing and acting almost become synonymous. We see, as in many public health accounts of sexuality, a focus on the intuitions, rationales, and choices of individual persons. But as my ethnography clearly revealed, school life is collective: all pupils begin the day at the same time, have their morning breaks together, and eat lunch in one of two designated time slots. Classmates have the same timetables, teachers, and tests. A sense of togetherness was omnipresent. Whereas sex education usually contrasts the responsibility of individual choice to the dangers of peer pressure, being alone – for pupils – meant being vulnerable to jokes, gossip, and bullying. This bracketing of the influence of peers informs the ideal of individual responsibility in most sex education projects; to become a good sexual citizen, one must learn to exert individual agency and to take responsibility for one's choices and actions (Cameron-Lewis & Allen, 2013; Elliott, 2014; Fields & Tolman, 2006).

Nevertheless, personal choices regarding sexuality have consequences outside of romantic and sexual relations and individual health. The choice to engage sexually with a boyfriend has consequences beyond the two romantically involved teenagers. As we saw with Jenna in chapter five, her actions led her to be ostracized by her friends. Befriending a different group of girls was her solution to keep both her boyfriend and friends at school. While this worked on some days, two lunch breaks during the week did not coincide with that of her new friends. Jenna thus had to hang out with the group that previously spread false rumours about her having an abortion.

As argued by Foucault in *History of Sexuality Part 1*, sexuality in the nineteenth century emerged as a stamp of individuality as well as

54 Ironically, the word love is used as a euphemism for sex in the curriculum.

an indication of a society's strength – it “ exists at the point where body and population meet” (Foucault, 2003, p. 252). This was apparent in the twenty-first century classroom as well, with sex education celebrating the notion of rational agency while presenting the Dutch national character as quintessentially modern and enlightened, one that knows how to deal with sexuality. Chapter two showed that this national character gains reality through the research practices of recruiting participants, assigning ethnicity, making groups, testing differences and advancing recommendations: “the kind and the knowledge grow together” (Hacking, 1995, p. 361). When asked in sex education class whether they have ‘rules or are spontaneous’, pupils turned the discussion towards religion and culture, which they considered the sources of rules. Thus secular and tolerant Dutchness became the mirror opposite of Muslim orthodoxy and intolerance. In many ways, this was hardly surprising: youth do not stand outside of the politics of sexual nationalism, but imbibe and solidify the connections made between sexuality and national cultures in sex education curricula, in questions by teachers, and in remarks by classmates.

None of the participants in my study openly identified as gay, lesbian or bisexual at the time of study. In her school ethnography, Youdell (2010, p. 94) explains how she felt compelled to read some girls as ‘lesbians-in-the-making’ despite her concern not to essentialize her subjects. I have been asked to make such assessments by colleagues worried about the oppression of otherness and heterosexual norms dominating the school environment. Individual sexual identity is indeed a common trope in sex education. But I did not ask participants to identify themselves in terms of sexual identity; my interests lay elsewhere, in the workings of heteronormativity. As I argued in chapter five, heterosexuality – light-heartedly incorporated into friendships and teaching relations – not only affects individual sexual orientations but the making and maintaining of friendships. This complicates the common trope of coming out of the closet during secondary school: it is not (only) about expressing a sexual orientation that might not be accepted at school, but one in which friendships can be at stake. At issue is not lack of acceptance by friends, but the inability to participate in friendship activities where heterosexuality is central. The focus on kinds of people, and on individual identities, obscures such processes.

Sexuality, sociality and schools

*Emotional rollercoaster – Stormy?
All these changes might lead to arguments
with your parents or friends
(Long Live Love, 2012, p. 1)*

The chapters of this dissertation highlighted the role of sexuality in schools – at times ‘stormy’ and leading to arguments, at times enjoyable and fun. As in the Long Live Love teaching pack, pupils in secondary schools were often addressed as individuals, albeit as individuals easily influenced by their peers, especially when it comes to sex. As I set out to examine the role played by sexuality in the making of collectives, I saw that my study participants were already part of numerous (tight or loose-knit) groups: groups that cycle to school together, classes, schools, families, villages, neighbourhoods, cities and social media networks. They were also made to be part of other collectives: of pupils, generations, adolescents, educational track levels, ethnic groups, and genders – categorizations that mattered, as argued in chapter two, in creating knowledge about youth sexuality. Sexual activities such as kissing, taking sexy pictures, dating and making out played out in, and were constitutive of, these collectives. From the making and breaking of friendships to outing a peer as sexually active, from positioning oneself or someone else in a ‘cultural group’ to establishing similarities and differences between the sexually active or attractive and the others – all of these different collectives became important at different moments. Chapter six, which focused on diversity, showed through the examples of hair brushing and the questioning of social groups in history class how collectives are mobilized to emphasize or undo differences, for instance how a collective of girls undoes differences of ethnicity.

Taken together, the dissertation’s chapters pointed to the prominence of sociality over the rational, individual subject that often takes centre stage in sexuality research. For example, the chapter on friendship and heteronormativity showed how female sociality was constructed by expressing cross-sex desire together (watching six-packs on *hot or not*).

The youth whom I studied were highly invested in establishing similarities. As Paul once explained to me, the most important thing in school is not to be alone. While being able to ‘be yourself’ is a requirement in dominant discourses of self-realization, in the schools that I studied, ‘not being *by* yourself’ was more important. This depended on one’s ability to blend in, to be authentic, but not visibly different. Similarities, then, involve a process of *making* – just as difference does not follow naturally from the body. Continuous investment was needed to remain ‘the same’ as someone else. But forming socialities also required the distancing of others – often in terms of sexuality, for example in the case of sexting described in chapter three.

Making moves

Who makes the first move, a boy or a girl?

Jay, age 15: ‘I think boys should make the first move. We don’t often get a bad reputation. If a girl starts chatting up boys, she could be seen as a bit of a slag’

Sharon, age 16: ‘I took the initiative. My boyfriend liked that.

He likes girls who know what they want’

(Long Live Love, 2012, p. 7)

The fields of sexual health and sexology largely focus on behaviour, with their different schools and streams employing specific methods to measure sexuality and categorize sexual behaviour. Ultimately, the aim is to reduce instances of sexual behaviour deemed unhealthy. Due to this focus on (mapping) behaviour, health scientists are sometimes seen as ‘extreme empiricists’ (Parker & Aggleton, 2007, p. 3) who do not take into account wider structural factors influencing youth sexuality. Their categories are said to be reductionist by ignoring the social dimensions of sexuality (Young & Meyer, 2005). Although implicated in nationalism and identity politics, their focus on behaviour gives these studies the appearance of moral neutrality (Adams & Pigg, 2005).

Critical studies of sexuality have emerged in opposition to approaches

that rely on measuring and mapping sexual behaviour. Building on Foucault, this literature argues that the sexual sciences are implicated in the making of sex. Authors in this tradition emphasize the social production of sexuality, and focus on the ways in which discourse and power constitute the domain of sexuality. Queer theory has further deconstructed the presumed natural relation between sex, gender, and desire (Butler, 1990; Rubin, 1984). As for youth sexuality, queer theorists often focus on ‘subjectification’, thereby privileging the moment in which discourse constitutes identity (Nelson, 1999; Valentine, 2007). Within studies of sexuality in schools, the focus on power dynamics has resulted in ‘a relentless search for “agency”’ (Talburtt & Rasmussen, 2010, p. 2) and for liberated subjects and liberating moments (*Ibid*, p. 2). Heteronormativity is presented as the universal adversary; the school as the universally heteronormative institute *par excellence* (Rasmussen, Gowlett, & Connell, 2014). Paradoxically, this risks universalizing discourses of gender and sexuality, as the process of how subjects are constituted is abstracted from time and place.

The literature on sexuality thus moves between two poles, one that posits sexuality as natural and another that explores sexuality as a social construction. These positions are so pervasive that it becomes difficult to explore the notions of ‘adolescence’ and ‘sexuality’ without getting caught up in them. This is not merely an academic discussion as these understandings enter into schools as well, where different understandings of sexuality co-exist.

The dissertation’s first *theoretical move* was one away from discursivity and subjectivity. I did not foreground the process of gendered subject formation through performativity, citation and repetition, but focused on other discernible movements and actors in the making of sexualities and diversities. While acknowledging concerns surrounding the role of power, politics, and the sciences, I opted for an approach that brings together feminist theory, material semiotic scholarship, and the anthropology of sexuality to further our understanding of the relations between sexuality and diversity in schools. The dissertation’s second theoretical move was towards *relationality*, of analysing sexuality in relation to sociality. As we saw in the previous chapters, sexuality is not an isolated, individual asset or

drive, but emerges in and through the relations of which it is a part. These go beyond romantic relationships to include friendships, teacher-pupil relations, and family. The third theoretical move concerns *enactment* – that is, studying sexuality as it is brought about in practice. The enactment of sexuality variably involved pupils, teachers, school buildings, bike sheds, mobile phones, pictures, popular media, and scientific and popularized understandings of youth, adolescence and sexuality.

In part, these theoretical moves follow from my choice of methods: ethnography, immersion in different schools for long periods of time, relying on observation as well as gleaning insights from (group) interviews. Taking on the sensibilities of material-semiotics allowed me to engage with mundane practices that may have otherwise remained outside of the ethnographic account and analysis. Through the methods I employed, I was able to trace the connections between social networks and sexting, the making and unmaking of similarities, and the temporary (dis)identifications of youths.

Research methods are political and never innocent (Law, 2004). They are implicated in the categorizing of people, the prioritizing of issues, and the locating of problems. Nor are my own methods neutral: from the outset, I was committed to engaging with issues that mattered to youths rather than to health researchers, parents or teachers. I systematically followed the processes through which sexuality emerged in the secondary school, and the differences that were implicated in, and resulted from, these processes of making sex. I did not focus of predetermined subgroups of young people, but explored the fluid distinctions that they themselves drew. These processes of making sex alert us to a final move that I wish to make here, concerning interventions.

Drawing new lines: intervening through practice

*Where do you draw the line?
How far will you go?
What do you want when it comes to sex?
And what not?*
(Long Live Love, 2012, p. 13)

With the naturalization of sexuality comes the naturalization of its potential problems. Schools intervene to counter these problems, in part through the provision of sex education. In the *Long Live Love* program, the metaphor of drawing the line is used to stop a certain situation from running its expected course. This expectation is based on a solidified script of sexual interaction, which in turn is related to the individual and his or her sexual intentions and readiness for sexual activity. In the way it is used in the curriculum, where to draw the line is something to be thought out before the actual occasion materializes.

But there is more to this line, as the analysis in this dissertation has shown. The line that ends a sexual interaction connects to other lines such as those of autonomy, self-determination, speakability, liberalism, modernity, gender equality and Dutchness. Drawing the line in the hypothetical sexual encounter that pupils are confronted with in *Long Live Love* is getting out of a specific sexual encounter by entering accepted discourses of sexuality and self: 'I do not want this'. By describing these lines – as well as by making present others that are severed, obscured or simply ignored – the current study makes other ways of drawing lines and connections possible. It makes an intervention by approaching sexuality as enacted in practice, by exploring how sexuality is done, and by eschewing taken-for-granted understandings of sexuality, its problems, and the actors involved. These are all matters to be studied in practice. Crucially, this makes it possible to think of enacting sexuality otherwise.

Employing ethnographic methods in different schools allowed me to describe the *processes* of making sexuality. This stands in stark contrast to survey and interview research that seeks to understand and predict

behaviour and to evaluate intervention *outcomes*. In public health research, outcomes are defined *a priori*, often in the form of behavioural intentions. But in the schools that I studied, problems were rarely formulated in terms of individual health. Instead, problems concerned disrupted relationships, friendships, and classroom order. Sexuality was said to influence grades and instigate fights, and otherwise threaten orderly conduct in schools. Teachers as well as pupils met such disruptions with different kinds of interventions: appreciation, bullying, compliments, class reprimands and parent phone calls, among others.

Describing practices and processes is an intervention because it destabilizes problems, actors, and contexts. This approach is open to the varying specificities in which a problem is recognized. It asks: what is the problem here? For whom? Who is the intervention for? What does it do? An intervention, then, is not a message to be communicated or a behaviour to be changed, but something that requires constant and evolving deliberation and action: intervening becomes interfering in already evolving situations.

Ethnographic stories and analyses can draw new lines and connections, helping us to understand situational complexities. For example, my analysis of the sexting case in this dissertation, which complicated singular narratives of female victimization, was published on websites covering social affairs and youth issues.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, website editors sought to illustrate the text with pictures of sad-faced young women, a reminder that we cannot predict or control where ethnographic interventions end up having an effect (Latour, 1988). A year later, I learnt that a youth worker had used one of my articles in a workshop to educate police officers about sexting (see Gabeler, 2017). Hopefully this series of translations did not reduce the case to yet another story of a sexting victim and a perpetrator. Instead of divorcing theory from practice, then, the current study intervened theoretically by studying practice, thus embracing the notion of pragmatism often ascribed to Dutch dealings with youth sexuality. Pragmatism – in the sense of focusing on practical effects rather than moral or theoretical principles – helps us to rethink interventions, not at an abstract level where individuals are abstracted from their social situations and relations, but in practice.

55 See Krebbekx (2016a, 2016b).

Talking about or dealing with boyfriends and girlfriends, thongs, bras, six-packs, sleeping over, kissing, cheating, showing too much skin, too much closeness, fancying someone, seeing someone, school hallways, classrooms, mobile phones, pictures, popular media understandings of youth, scientific notions of adolescence and sexuality – all were involved in the making of sex in secondary schools. All were implicated in the making of differences and the evaluations that led to the making of these differences. The aim of this study was not to produce a single, definitive account of sexuality in schools. Rather, it resisted such consolidation by approaching sexuality as enacted – as brought about in practice, as relational and situational. What matters changes from one situation to the other, and over time. What remains stable is that sexuality matters, and that differences move.

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Making Sex, Moving Difference.

An ethnography of sexuality and diversity in Dutch schools

Summary

This dissertation is about sexuality in secondary schools in the Netherlands, a country that is often presented as an exemplary case for their pragmatic dealings with youth and sexuality. How does this relation between youth and sexuality in the Netherlands play out? Sexuality is often understood as a biological process that takes off during adolescence, as a natural part of growing up. To guide this sexual development, schools in the country address it in their curriculum. This study, as outlined in chapter 1, explored sexuality as a social phenomenon: tracing what it is made to be, and what it does in schools. To guide this exploration, it asked: *How is sexuality enacted in mundane practices in schools and how is this process of enactment implied in the making of differences and similarities among youth?*

In chapter 2, together with Rachel Spronk and Amade M'charek, I analyzed studies into youth and sexuality in the Netherlands. Focusing on the way ethnicity was taken up in these publications, we brought several contradictions to the fore. These led us to break down the ways ethnicity was studied into four steps - (1) compiling an 'ethnically diverse' sample; (2) determining ethnicity; (3) statistically calculating and comparing; and (4) making recommendations. The analysis revealed ethnicity to be a slippery concept: definitions were unclear and contested, and ethnicity was operationalized in many, often non-coherent ways. These difficulties and non-coherencies, however, seemed to disappear in further research steps. As a result of this smoothing out, the research practices contributed to the naturalization of ethnicity and sexuality and the relation between them. Given that research, policy and sex education are intimately related in the Netherlands, ideas of ethnic minorities as forming separate groups that are sexually distinct become embedded in common sense knowledge.

Thus, knowledge about youth sexuality contributes to making distinctions between self and other in the Netherlands.

In chapter 3, the focus turned to schools, and to the phenomenon of sexting, a portmanteau of sex and texting that refers to the exchange of sexual images via mobile phones. Rather than treating sexting as self-evident, I show how it became widely recognizable as a particular phenomenon, summarized in the line ‘when-girl-sends-nude-picture-to-boy’. This sentence does not just *describe* the phenomenon of sexting, but also *enacts* it in a specific way, determining how teachers, parents and peers react to a girl whose nude picture is ‘going around’ in school. Through analysing the reactions to the case and the understanding of ‘what really happened’ I articulate the script commonly at work in cases of sexting. Three things were repeatedly highlighted: that the girl had sent the picture, that she was guilty of its spread, and that something was wrong with her. Several aspects were made invisible: that the racialization of the network of friends in which the picture first circulated increased the negative reactions of friends in the school; the practices of boys sending nude pictures of themselves; the ways in which technological affordances increased the circulation of the picture; and the way in which taking, sending, and relating through pictures was a daily activity for pupils. As such, the sexting script was stabilized: certain aspects of the case did not get incorporated into the story while others were reiterated. This made it possible for those involved to understand what happened as one of those stories that is captured by the sentence ‘when girl sends nude picture to boy’ – and thus to incorporate it into the sexting script.

Chapter 4 presented three cases of sex education. These cases troubled common logics of sex education, in which adolescents are conceptualized as in need of knowledge to individually develop a healthy sexuality, which is threatened by the negative influence of peers (peer pressure). Studying sex education in practice, showed the school to be a space/time for sexuality, illustrated how sexual knowledge is produced and used in class, and how sex education rather than countering peer pressure plays into and depends on processes of (gendered) popularity. Furthermore, the analysis pointed to the ways in which comprehensive sex education either emphasizes or ignores issues such as homosexuality. For instance, teachers emphasized

homophobia for those who are deemed non-Dutch, while ignoring it, or, not noting it, in case it is shown by youth deemed Dutch. Finally, the analysis of sex education in practice complicated the ways in which sex education is conceptualized and measured as a health intervention, by showing how context, determinants and effects are hardly separable.

Chapter 5 attended to the ways in which heteronormativity is made relevant in secondary schools. It analyzed heteronormativity in realms of social life in which sexuality seems to play a marginal role, namely friendship and teaching. Practices of forming, consolidating or breaking friendships, and the pleasures that can be derived from it, were enabled by, and reproduced a heteronorm. With regard to the relations between teachers and pupils, the findings showed that the ways in which heteronormativity was constituted is not universal: in two schools heterosexuality was 'drawn in' to ease teaching relations or establish a common ground between teachers and pupils, whereas at a third school emphasizing (hetero)sexuality was seen as being at odds with academic achievements and therefore relegated to the private sphere. I conclude that through its centrality to mundane practices of relating among friends and between pupils and teachers in schools, heterosexuality becomes iterated and reinstated as normal.

Chapter 6 studied how differences were (un)made in three schools in the Netherlands. The analysis was guided by initial reactions of principals and managers to my research questions on sexuality and diversity: diversity was 'not there' or 'not an issue'. Rather than locking diversity into particular neighborhoods or bodies, as studies based on super-diversity and intersectionality risk to do, diversity emerged in the study as an effect of interactions of specific relations and situations. The shape and effects of these diversities were not uniform: who counted as 'similar' or 'different' was made and remade in daily life, for example through going out, chatting with friends and attending class. Contrary to what principals and school managers claimed, diversity became an issue in every school, in one way or another. It was not, however, attached to certain bodies, at least not in consistent or predictable ways. Whenever diversity became an issue in one of the schools, it was rapidly dealt with in one of three ways: through emphasizing similarities, deflection onto others, or through ignorance.

Making diversity irrelevant depends on a deflection of racism onto others. In effect, the negative connotations of diversity endure, locking its problems into some schools and bodies and not others.

This dissertation traces how sexuality is enacted in schools and how this process is implied in the making of differences and similarities among youth. Chapter 7 revisits the findings and articulates three common refrains about youth and sexuality: sexuality as a natural attribute of the body; sexuality as a cause of problems when silenced; and sexuality as individual identity involved in making sex. It highlights the theoretical moves made in the dissertation. The first *theoretical move* was a move away from discursivity and subjectivity. The second move was a move towards *relationality*, of analysing sexuality in relation to sociality. The third move concerns *enactment* – that is, studying sexuality as it is brought about in practice involving varying actors such as teachers, mobile phones, and knowledge about (kinds of) youth and sexuality. Finally, the thesis helps rethink the notion and practice of intervention based on studying processes of making sex, and the differences that move with these processes.

Samenvatting

Dit proefschrift gaat over jongeren en seksualiteit op middelbare scholen in Nederland. Nederland wordt vaak gezien als een land waar seksualiteit van jongeren genormaliseerd is. Seksualiteit wordt daarbij vooral gezien als een biologische ontwikkeling die in de middelbare schoolleeftijd een vlucht neemt. In deze studie wordt seksualiteit onderzocht als *sociaal* fenomeen: wat het is en wat het doet in scholen. De centrale vraag in dit onderzoek, geïntroduceerd in hoofdstuk één, is: *Hoe krijgt seksualiteit vorm in alledaagse praktijken op scholen en hoe is dit proces geïmpliceerd in het creëren van verschillen en gelijkenissen tussen jongeren?*

Hoofdstuk twee analyseert wetenschappelijke en beleidsmatige studies naar jongeren en seksualiteit in Nederland. In deze studies kwamen verschillende contradicties naar voren in de hantering van het concept etniciteit. Om deze contradicties te begrijpen, werden de onderzoeken opgedeeld in vier stappen. Ten eerste, het samenstellen van een 'etnisch diverse' steekproef, ten tweede, het vaststellen van de etniciteit van een individu, ten derde, het vergelijken van groepen en het voorspellen van gedrag, en ten slotte, het doen van aanbevelingen. In de eerste stappen bleek etniciteit een 'glibberig' begrip te zijn: definities waren onduidelijk en tegenstrijdig en het concept werd ingezet op vele verschillende, vaak niet-coherente manieren. Deze moeilijkheden en tegenstrijdigheden leken in latere stappen echter te verdwijnen. Zo dragen onderzoekspraktijken bij aan de naturalisering van een bepaalde relatie tussen etniciteit en seksualiteit. Wanneer het op jongeren en seksualiteit aankomt, kan men een nauwe relatie tussen media, onderzoek en beleid waarnemen. In die nauwe relatie kwam de idee tot stand dat etnische minderheden aparte groepen vormen, met een eigen invulling van seksualiteit, ingebed in populaire kennis. Kennis over de seksualiteit van jongeren draagt daarmee dus bij aan het maken van onderscheid tussen 'zelf' en 'ander' in Nederland.

In het derde hoofdstuk wordt sexting geanalyseerd. De term sexting – een neologisme van de Engelse woorden *sex* en *texting* – beschrijft het versturen van seksueel getinte boodschappen en foto's via Internet. Het

hoofdstuk laat zien hoe sexting een herkenbaar fenomeen wordt met een specifieke voorstelling die samen te vatten is in een enkele zin: 'een meisje stuurt een naaktfoto naar een jongen'. Deze zin, zo luidt de these van dit hoofdstuk, *beschrijft* het fenomeen sexting niet alleen, maar *vormt* het op een specifieke manier. Aan de hand van een casus waarin een naaktfoto 'rondgaat' op school wordt het script geanalyseerd dat bepaalt hoe sexting wordt begrepen en hoe erop gereageerd moet worden. De betrokkenen herhaalden en benadrukten steeds drie elementen: dat de leerlinge de foto had gestuurd, dat zij schuldig was aan de verspreiding ervan, en dat er iets mis zou zijn met haar. Andere aspecten bleven onzichtbaar: ten eerste, dat de negatieve reacties op school groter waren doordat de vriendengroep waarbinnen de foto eerst werd verspreid aangeduid werd als niet-Nederlands. Ten tweede, het feit dat ook jongens naaktfoto's van zichzelf stuurden. Ten derde, dat de infrastructuur van de school het delen van foto's faciliteerde. En ten vierde, dat het delen van foto's een dagelijkse activiteit is voor jongeren. Alleen door sommige aspecten te herhalen en anderen niet op te merken of als irrelevant te beschouwen, konden leraren, ouders en leerlingen ook in dit geval het script 'als meisje een naaktfoto stuurt naar een jongen' in gang zetten.

Bestudering van seksuele voorlichting focust vaak op effecten, met name in termen van gezondheidsuitkomsten. Hoofdstuk vier bespreekt drie momenten uit seksuele voorlichtingslessen op verschillende scholen aan de hand van de vraag: 'wat doet seksuele voorlichting *nog meer?*' Aan de hand van de drie lessen wordt de algemene logica van seksuele voorlichting geproblematiseerd. Deze logica stelt dat adolescenten feitelijke kennis nodig hebben voor het ontwikkelen van een gezonde individuele seksualiteit. Deze kennis wordt tijdens seksuele voorlichtingslessen formeel overgedragen van docent op leerling. En deze kennis wordt meestal stilzwijgend geplaatst tegenover de invloed van leeftijdsgenoten, die een gezonde ontwikkeling in de weg zouden staan. Het bestuderen van seksuele voorlichting in de praktijk laat zien dat de school bij uitstek een tijd en plek is voor het informeel leren over seksualiteit en dat seksuele kennis wordt geproduceerd en gebruikt in de klas. Ook laat het etnografische materiaal zien dat seksuele voorlichting in plaats van weerstand te bieden aan sociale druk juist inspeelt op hiërarchieën van (gegenderde) populariteit. Daarnaast

blijkt dat onderwerpen zoals homoseksualiteit strategisch werden benadrukt ofwel genegeerd tijdens lessen over seksuele voorlichting. Homofobie kwam bijvoorbeeld uitgebreid aan bod in klassen waarin leerlingen zaten die werden gezien als niet-Nederlands, terwijl homofobische uitlatingen niet werden opgemerkt of werden genegeerd wanneer zij werden geuit door jongeren die als Nederlands werden gezien. Ten slotte bleek uit de analyse van de praktijk van seksuele voorlichting dat de conceptualisering van seksuele voorlichting als gezondheidsinterventie veel gecompliceerder was dan algemeen aangenomen. Het werd duidelijk dat contexten, determinanten en effecten van seksuele voorlichting in de praktijk niet gemakkelijk van elkaar te onderscheiden zijn.

Heteronormativiteit beïnvloedt ook delen van het sociale leven die doorgaans worden beschouwd als losstaand van seksualiteit, namelijk vriendschappen en onderwijs. In hoofdstuk vijf wordt aangetoond dat heteroseksualiteit van belang is in het vormen, bestendigen of beëindigen van vriendschappen. De analyse laat zien dat in de sociale relaties tussen docenten en leerlingen heteronormativiteit niet universeel is. Zo werden in twee scholen heteroseksualiteit en het praten over liefdesrelaties en verliefdheid gebruikt om een gemeenschappelijkheid tussen leerlingen en docenten te creëren, terwijl op een derde school seksualiteit werd gezien als onverenigbaar met goede schoolprestaties. Door haar centrale positie in de alledaagse omgang tussen vrienden en tussen docenten en leerlingen, wordt heteroseksualiteit steeds opnieuw bevestigd als de norm.

Hoe verschillen worden gemaakt of juist worden tenietgedaan wordt bestudeerd in hoofdstuk zes. De analyse begint bij de reacties die schoolmanagers uitten bij het zien van de onderzoeksvragen over seksualiteit en diversiteit die centraal staan in deze dissertatie. Uit de reacties bleek dat diversiteit 'er niet toe deed' of 'geen probleem vormde'. In plaats van diversiteit te lokaliseren in een bepaalde persoon of wijk – zoals in studies die uitgaan van de concepten intersectionaliteit en superdiversiteit vaak gebeurt – gaat het hoofdstuk in op de manier waarop diversiteit in de praktijk wordt gevormd. De vormen van diversiteit en de effecten van de gemaakte verschillen waren niet overal hetzelfde: wie telde als 'hetzelfde' of 'anders' werd steeds opnieuw vastgesteld in dagelijkse bezigheden zoals

uitgaan, kletsen met vrienden of naar de les gaan. In tegenstelling tot wat schoolmanagers beweerden, deed diversiteit er op een of andere manier juist wel toe, en dat geldt voor elke school. En wanneer diversiteit er toe deed, werd er snel op ingespeeld. Dit gebeurde door het benadrukken van gelijkenissen, het afwentelen van verschil op anderen, of door het ontstane verschil te negeren. Het irrelevant maken van diversiteit, door het voor te stellen als van belang of problematisch voor slechts sommige scholen en lichamen maar niet voor de eigen school, houdt de negatieve connotaties van het concept in stand.

In vijf hoofdstukken, over onderzoekspublicaties, sexting, seksuele voorlichting, heteronormativiteit en diversiteit, traceerde dit proefschrift hoe min of meer stabiele noties van seksualiteit in scholen worden gevormd; hoe zij effect sorteren; en hoe zij geïmpliceerd zijn in het creëren van verschillen en overeenkomsten tussen jongeren. Dit onderzoek laat zien dat seksualiteit en diversiteit niet vaststaan, maar op verschillende momenten, op verschillende plekken, en in verschillende omstandigheden, steeds opnieuw worden gevormd.

List of publications

- Krebbekx, W., Spronk, R., & M'charek, A. (2017). Ethnicizing Sexuality: An analysis of research practices in the Netherlands. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 40(4), 636–655. doi:10.1080/01419870.2016.1181771
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