Making sex, moving difference

An ethnography of sexuality and diversity in Dutch schools

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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 fore 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 allochthones[47] 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

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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, & Mouthaan, 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

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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 Instragram, 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:

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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.'

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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!'

Suzy 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 multiculture.

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 to 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.