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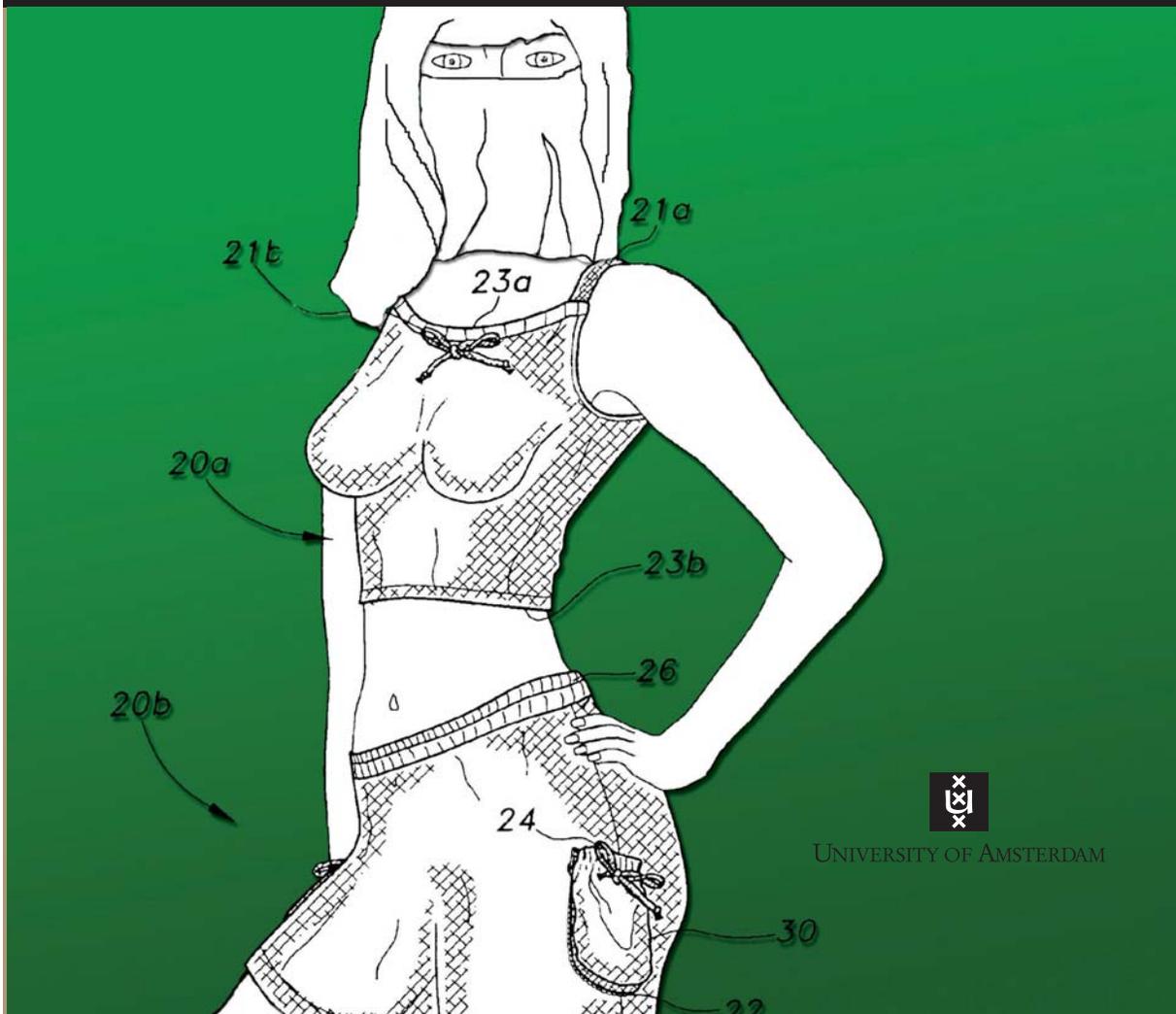
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Multi - Girl - Culture

An Ethnography of Doing Identity

Linda Duits



UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM



Multi - Girl - Culture





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MULTI - GIRL - CULTURE

AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF DOING IDENTITY

ACADEMISCH PROEFSCHRIFT

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor

aan de Universiteit van Amsterdam

op gezag van de Rector Magnificus

prof. dr. D.C. van den Boom

ten overstaan van een door het college voor promoties ingestelde
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Amsterdam, April 2008





Part I

Introduction





Chapter 1

Disciplining Girls' Bodies

1.1 Headscarves and porno-chic

In 2003, several Western-European countries faced so-called 'headscarf affairs'. Fuelled by incidents of Muslim girls being expelled from school because they wanted to wear a headscarf in the classroom, countries like France, Germany, and the Netherlands debated the place of Islamic symbols in the public sphere. However, a headscarf was not the only attire that could get a girl into trouble at that time. The French Assistant Secretary of Education talked about banning G-strings in schools, because 'school is not a nightclub' (quoted in Van Beemen, 2003: 56). In 2002, a Dutch school banned belly shirts (also known as crop tops), going so far as to suspend a girl for coming to school with such a bare belly in February 2004¹.

These two debates form the antecedents of this study. As disconnected as they may appear, they are in fact related in three ways. First, most of these issues are centred on the school: a crossroads between the public and the private. Second, they are part of a single hegemonic discourse about women's sexuality. Third, both debates deny girls their agency and autonomy. I first discuss these three connections in more detail, and then go on to define the central question of this study.

School and the multicultural

In discussions about both the headscarf and porno-chic, adversaries focused on the school, and argued for government intervention and self-regulation. Situated halfway between the public and private spheres,

Chapter 1

the school is an extraordinary place, and it is no coincidence that one of the major historical Dutch political struggles centred on such an institution. The so-called ‘school struggle’ (1878-1917) addressed the limits of government intervention and the separation of church and state (De Liagre Böhl, 1993: 116). Since then, ‘special education’ has had a different legal status in the Netherlands, meaning that the government cannot control all parts of the curriculum. Henceforth, treating all religious and non-religious groups equally ensured the neutrality of the Dutch state towards religion. In France, at about the same time, a comparable school struggle led to the opposite system of *laïcité*, in which government neutrality in religious affairs is ensured by the “irreligiosity of the public sphere” (Göle, 1997: 64). Some one hundred years later, the headscarf affairs seem to have produced a new school struggle, which also deals with the place of religion (Islam) in the liberal state and the extent to which the government should intervene in religious matters.

The headscarf issue is also part of the much wider debate that multiculturalism has placed on the agenda. Indeed, an extensive analysis of the headscarf debates in Western-Europe (Duits & Van Zoonen, 2006) has revealed that these discussions are actually about Islam as an alleged misogynistic religion, about the place of the Other in the West, and about the separation of church and state. The term ‘multiculturalism’ is contested. Pierik (2006: 887) distinguishes three different denotations of it. First, it is a factual description, i.e. it describes a reality of cultural pluralism. Second, it can be a normative prescription of the organisation of society, arguing that cultural differences should be respected and accommodated. Third, it sometimes refers to certain governmental policies (e.g. language and/or integration courses, the subsidising of cultural festivals and community centres). In Europe, Pierik states, discussions about multiculturalism focus mainly on migrant workers. In the Netherlands, the largest such groups are Turks and Moroccans (see appendix I), and other minorities, such as the Chinese, hardly ever enter the debate (Chow, 2007). As a result, the discussions about multiculturalism tend to focus on Islam as an Other religion, which shares no common ground with Western culture. The headscarf plays a central role in representing this difference. As Göle (1996: 1) puts it: “No other symbol than the veil reconstructs with such force the “otherness” of Islam to the West”. Currently, the furore about headscarves has abated. However, the school regularly features in debates about multiculturalism, which have recently moved on to focus on the issue of ‘black’ and ‘white’ schools (Paulle, 2007).

Disciplining girls' bodies

Sexuality

The discussions about porno-chic also centred on the school, and brought media and public debates about decency, and norms and values into the school setting (again see Duits & Van Zoonen, 2006). In addition to the call to ban porno-chic in schools, it has been proposed that the alleged sexualisation of girls should be countered by making media literacy a compulsory part of the curriculum. A number of incidents led to the media and government's obsession with an alleged sexualisation or 'pornofication' of society. A gang rape involving an eleven year old girl was connected to 'MTV-culture' (e.g. El Barkany, Van Keken, & Kiene, 2005) and the argument that MTV gives girls the wrong idea about sexuality. A report in 2006 by the Dutch Health Service (Van Dijk, 2006) also caused considerable concern, as it suggested that girls were having sex in exchange for small gifts (e.g. a CD). Although the report did not draw any conclusions about media influence or effects, the Dutch press quickly blamed the media², particularly gender representations in hip-hop music videos. One of the gifts the report mentioned was a breezer, a fruit-flavoured rum drink, from which the term *breezersletje* [breezer slut] was derived, denoting a 'vulgar, dumb girl that can be easily seduced to sex'. The term even made its way into Van Dale's leading dictionary. The Dutch publication of Ariel Levy's (2005) book, *Female chauvinist pigs*, in 2007 also identified with the concern about 'bimbo culture' and unruly girls' sexuality. Indeed, Plasterk, the Dutch Minister of Education recently linked these issues in his emancipation memorandum, arguing that "overtly sexual acts, innuendos and advances" have become "a 'normal' part of youth culture" through their dissemination in the media (Plasterk, 2007: 10). The following quote summarises the issues at stake:

Teenage girls conducting sexual acts in exchange for a drink, a prepaid phone card or expensive jeans; provocative underwear for young girls on the shelves of the department store; girls who undergo surgical operations on their genitalia. We are confronted with these kinds of phenomena through the media on an almost daily basis. This development has been called the 'sexualisation of society'. At the moment, there is a societal debate in which one questions the representation of girls and women as sex objects, unobtainable beauty ideals and the increasing commercialisation and sexualisation of the female body in the media. In this debate, such developments are not only ascribed to the influence of men; the role of girls and women themselves is also exposed. They are thought to (want to) turn themselves and other women intentionally into sexual objects through appealing to a feminist principle (sexual liberation) (Plasterk, 2007: 61, my translation).

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The memorandum goes on to suggest a policy that is directed specifically at girls. According to Plasterk, the emancipation of girls in the next five years should be aimed at educating them about media literacy and sexuality.

Plasterk's formulation is suggestive, as one cannot establish whether this sexualisation is factual, or just purported by media that disseminated these incidents and labelled them 'contemporary culture'. The emancipation memorandum similarly suggests that aesthetic vaginal labioplasty is now common amongst girls, which is highly questionable. Quantitative data about these phenomena are absent. In the journal of the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, Mendonça et al., argue that "[a]esthetic surgery of female genitalia is an uncommon procedure" (Mendonça et al., 2006: 1237). Moreover, the Health Service report about 'breezer sex' explicitly states that the data are based on qualitative interviews, which were mostly hearsay, from which no quantitative conclusions can be drawn.

With this intense spotlight on sexualisation, it is easy to forget that just one or two years earlier the media were obsessing about the headscarf. In that debate, the headscarf was articulated with gender inequality, multicultural excess, and lack of separation between church and state. Although the basic religious motive for covering the head relates to sexuality, this understanding did not enter the debate and was thus deemed irrelevant in a Western context. Implicitly, then, the headscarf is constructed as too decent. The debate about porno-chic was more explicitly linked to the issue of girls' sexuality but headscarves and porno-chic are, in fact, two sides of the same coin, i.e. girls' sexuality. Despite this connection, they are treated as separate phenomena. This suggests a rather one-sided perspective on girl culture. For instance, in response to our analysis of these debates, Gill argues that porno-chic is "mandatory wear" and "virtually hegemonic" (Gill, 2007: 71). A similar suggestion resonates in the discussion about sexualisation. However, such a designation is only possible if one overlooks the presence of headscarf girls. Islamic and Christian critiques on the sexualization of society are discounted as prudish and moralistic (hence non-modern)³, making the old virgin/whore complex a schizophrenic phenomenon in multicultural Europe. Furthermore, this double standard promotes an exclusive understanding of both Western and girl culture.

Disciplining girls' bodies

Agency

A third connection between the headscarf and porno-chic debates lies with the neglect of girls' agency. Girls' own understanding of the clothes they wear hardly ever features in the discussions taking place, to which they are seldom invited. As a result, girls' bodies "have become the metonymic location for many of the social and cultural struggles in West European immigration societies" (Duits & Van Zoonen, 2006: 114). Their bodies function as carriers of broader discussions about decency, feminism, Islam, and consumer culture. Opinion leaders adopt an almost Foucaultian perspective, construing girls as 'docile bodies'. The power of Islam, capitalism and 'men' is, according to them, not only inscribed on girls' bodies, but the girl has also become "the principle of [her] own subjection" (Foucault, 1995: 203). In other words, Islam, capitalism, and 'men' have influenced girls to such an extent that they have internalised these controls and discipline themselves accordingly. What appears to be 'self-determination', Foucault's argument goes, is actually submission to disciplinary power. From such a standpoint, girls cannot be expected to make any independent rational contribution to the debate and therefore, their voices are excluded. Thus, girls are deprived from having the power to define their own actions: their actions cannot be the result of their own choices since these come from Islam or capitalism.

The articulation of a lack of agency *only* with girls is remarkable. The relationship between agency and social structure is an important theme that has occupied many philosophers and sociologists. At the core of the debate is the question whether (and how much) capacity individuals have "to act independently of structural constraints" (Abercrombie, Hill, & Turner, 2000: 9). At the one extreme, it is argued that individuals create the world around them; at the other, the argument is that structure determines all individual action⁴. Whichever position one chooses, in scholarly writings about agency it is unusual to distinguish between groups. Thus, to Foucault no-one is outside power. Whether one is a twelve-year-old girl or a highly learned scholar, all individual subjects are the results of power and are unable to act outside the social inscription of power.

In the debates about headscarves and porno-chic however, a distinction is made between those with power and agency (men – who hold the power to subject and discipline others) and those without (girls – who docilely fall victim to structure). The ascription of agency to one

Chapter 1

group, and the denial of it to another, thus differs from philosophical or sociological discussions about agency. Instead, such a distinction suggests that girls – as non-adult women – have a fundamentally different status. This perspective is seemingly at odds with feminist politics. As Andermahr, Lovell and Wolkowitz (2000: 13-14) maintain, the ability of women to be actors in the world has been central to the feminist project. The possibility of women's agency has been a vexed question, and a fundamental tension lies within feminism's dual understanding of women as both victims of patriarchy *and* as self-determining actors. Notwithstanding this legacy, several feminists deny the possibility of girls' agency in their critique of headscarves and porno-chic. Gill's (2007) response to Duits and Van Zoonen (2006) is an example of this rather striking manoeuvre.

Gill argues against girls' agency and their ability to choose, claiming that girls' understanding is infused by neo-liberalism. Gill argues that young girls are disciplined by a "technology of sexiness" (Gill, 2007: 72). She states that neo-liberalism requires "individuals to narrate their life story as if it were the outcome of deliberative choices" (2007: 74). In other words, girls internalise the demands of neo-liberalism, and present these as their own choices, whereas in fact they are not. Gill herself realised that she too falls victim to her "daily exposure to a cultural habitat of images" (2007: 73) and she describes how she is often surprised by the ways in which she follows fashion. She thus confesses and presents an understanding of her clothing choices, whilst at the same time rejecting the call to listen to girls' understandings as these are false to begin with. Thus, "Gill considers her own reflections on her clothing choices as worthy of publication and reading, while she considers those of girls themselves, the centrepieces of the debate, as problematic" (Duits & Van Zoonen, 2007: 166). The special position of girls, vis-à-vis women and men, is thus at the heart of these debates.

1.2 Problem definition

The debates about headscarves and porno-chic contain several assumptions about girls, namely who they are, what they do, and what to make of that. These are assumptions about girls' identities, their culture, and their agency, but they are unsubstantiated by systematic, empirical research. I argue that such research is necessary to understand contemporary girl culture. Furthermore, I hold that such research implies a

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respectful and critical investigation of girls' own understandings of their culture. This study aims to do so, in order to theorise the ways young girls understand and position themselves in Dutch multicultural society. The following research question (which contains the tensions between identity, culture, and agency) guides the study:

How do girls position themselves in the multicultural society?

To answer the research question, I conducted an ethnographic study at school. This was an obvious research setting, because most of girls' interactions take place there, and school is – as I argued previously – the location in which the public and private meet. This dualism allows investigating how the structure of the school interacts with girls' decisions. To further explore the impact of structure, the study follows girls during their transition from primary to secondary school. In the Netherlands, this transition occurs when children are, on average, twelve years old. It coincides (for most girls) with the bodily changes that accompany puberty. Expectations for girls change drastically. In the final year of primary school, the 8th form, they are the oldest children in school, but secondary school and puberty awaits them.

The central theoretical concept of the study is identity performance. As I demonstrate in chapter 3, this concept emphasises the collective nature of identities, and is especially useful for investigating both micro and macro levels of culture. We can now formulate a first series of sub-questions:

- Which spaces exist at primary school for identity performance?
- How do schools position girls?
- What are the differences between primary and secondary school, and how do these affect identity performance?

A second series of sub-questions will be formulated at the end of chapter 3.

1.3 Approach

My approach is multidisciplinary, making use of the theoretical and methodological contexts of media studies, anthropology, philosophy and cultural studies. In chapter 3, I draw from these diverse fields to build the theoretical framework that directs this study. Before doing so, however, I here briefly elaborate on my approach to girl culture as a subculture.

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Dutch society is diverse, and in Amsterdam, about forty per cent of the population is of non-Western origin. Earlier in this chapter, I argued that in speaking of ‘girl culture’, commentators and opinion leaders only include white girls, thus excluding a large part of the relevant population. To avoid such a one-sided perspective, I employ a sub-cultural approach. I understand the subculture of girls to be a more-or-less-identifiable group within a larger culture, who share a more-or-less coherent set of norms, values, and beliefs. Thus, girls of the same age share a more-or-less coherent perspective on their social world. Such an approach allows me to emphasise the *shared* characteristics of girls aged between 11 and 13 who are living in Dutch society. This is not to say that I approach this subculture of girls as a homogenous or coherent social group, and put aside all the criticisms that the subcultural approach has received (see Muggleton & Weinzierl, 2003). Instead, I speak of multi-girl-culture. In the Dutch multicultural society, girl culture is diverse and constructed by both autochthonous and allochthonous girls (appendix I discusses these terms).

The subcultural approach also means that I only focus on girls. Controversial boys’ wear, like Lonsdale clothing, has been placed in the realm of freedom of speech. For instance, the then Minister of Education, Van der Hoeve commented:

Sometimes people show with their clothes that they identify with certain (political) ideas. A bomber jacket, for instance, combined with a black sweater of a certain brand [i.e. Lonsdale] and black army boots and cropped hair are associated with beliefs of the extreme-right. Prohibiting such clothes may affect the freedom of speech guaranteed in the Constitution (Van der Hoeven, 2003: 3, my translation).

As such, controversial boys clothing has a different status. Controversial boy culture usually consists of violent behaviour, and in the sexualisation discussion boys are exempt. Even in the case of gang rapes, the perspective is that of girls. The striking exclusion of boys’ sartorial choices and boys’ sexuality can only be understood as being rooted in a fundamentally different cultural construction of men’s and women’s bodies (Duits & Van Zoonen, 2006). As a result, any comparison between boys and girls would lead to an understanding of these differences, and not to an understanding of girls in their own right. Furthermore, the subculture of girls is fluid and transitory, and it exists in negotiation with many others, and not only boys. I occasionally discuss these others – parents, teachers, boys – but my main interest lies with girls.

Disciplining girls' bodies

1.4 Outline of the book

This study investigates the ways that girls position themselves in the multicultural society, and as such focuses on identity and agency. The book consists of three parts. The first part introduces the research in more detail. It presents an overview of girls' studies, so as to enable an investigation of the ways in which previous research has approached and constructed girls (chapter 2), and it builds the theoretical framework around the concept of performance, through which girls' identities are investigated (chapter 3). At the conclusion of that chapter, I further specify the main research question in a second set of sub-questions. Chapter 4 describes the methods and methodologies used to answer these questions. Part II of the book (chapters 5 and 6), deals with the first set of research questions, which themselves address the contexts of girls' identity performance. Part III (chapters 5 to 10), addresses the second set of sub-questions, which involve actual performance practices. Throughout this work, agency functions as a leitmotiv. In the conclusion, chapter 11, I tie all sub-questions together in order to answer the main research question and to locate girls' agency in identity performance.



Chapter 2

Girls' Studies

2.1 Introduction

Since this study focuses on girls and their identities, a review of earlier studies about girl culture is necessary to assess the current state of this field. My review only includes studies that focus on girls, i.e. it omits those in which sex is merely a variable. The material comes from all social and behavioural sciences (e.g. sociology, psychology, pedagogy), as well as from interrelated disciplines (e.g. cultural studies and philosophy). I review the field by presenting a chronology of academic research on girls. I chose this specific mode of representation because, on reading the literature, I noticed how the aims and contents of studies about girls had changed in line with changes in feminist thought and activity.

Two contrasting experiences inspired my enquiry into the broad literature on girl culture. First, I felt uncomfortable with feminism. I was born in 1976, and was a beneficiary of second wave feminism. As to many others of my generation, feminism seemed outdated to me. I grew up with completely different chances and opportunities to the generation before me, and I experienced none of the oppressions that feminists 'kept going on about'. Furthermore, long before the Spice Girls, I grew up *girl-powered* by Pippi Longstocking, *Jem and the Holograms*¹, and Madonna. Indeed, when 'girl power' hit the media, I remember dismissing it as passé and a far too obvious a term. Was a feminist approach still relevant?

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On the other hand, when I started to work on this project in 2004, several (male) colleagues suggested that I could make the study (more) interesting and relevant by comparing girls with boys. My experience resembled that of Lees, who noted in 1986:

When I recently published an article that focused on girls I received several letters complaining that my study was biased and meaningless as I had failed to interview boys. One boy wrote it was 'totally biased towards the female point of view'. A study of girls is so unusual that it can be discarded as biased (Lees, 1986: 16).

Lees wrote these words in 1986, and yet they were still applicable to my experience in 2004. Apparently, not much has changed at all, and a study of girls is still not self-evident.

This chapter presents the results of my enquiry. I argue that the development of girls' studies shows an increasing inability of feminist researchers to deal with the choices that girls make. Early girls' studies argued that girls needed to be liberated, whereas later studies argued that the liberation that girls experienced was 'false'. In the next subsection, I discuss the term 'girls' studies'. Starting in the 1970s, the following sections discuss approaches to and understandings of girls. In the conclusion, I discuss the implications for the study of girls.

Approaching girls' studies as a field

Aapola, Gonick and Harris define girls' studies as follows:

Contemporary girls' studies, as we might label this new phenomenon, seeks to understand the gendered specificities of the already popular field of youth studies, as well as the meanings of generation and the impact of feminism in times of rapid social, economic and cultural change (Aapola, Gonick, & Harris, 2005: 9).

As this quotation suggests, girls' studies are not associated with a single discipline, instead consisting of many approaches and methods from a wide variety of disciplines. Although different definitions abound (see Driscoll, 2002; Mazzarella & Pecora, 2007b; Mitchell & Reid-Walsh, 2005), I follow Aapola et al. and understand girls' studies as those that focus on the gendered specificities of youth.

Any historical localisation of a discipline or field is arbitrary. Although my chronology is structured by decade, the boundaries around each period are obviously not as clear-cut. Recent literature suggests that

Girls' studies

girls' studies emerged in the late 20th and early 21st century (e.g. Aapola et al., 2005; Mazzarella & Pecora, 2007b). However, 'girls' studies' were celebrated as a new field in 1991, at a conference which aimed to "build the new academic field we called 'girls' studies'" (De Ras & Lunenberg, 1993: 1; see also Van der Zande, 1991b). I, (as do Driscoll, forthcoming; Harris, 2004b; Kearney, 2006) locate the start of the field in 1976, with a chapter by McRobbie and Garber.

2.2 The 1970s: Bedroom culture

Very little seems to have been written about the role of girls in youth cultural groupings in general. They are absent from the classical sub-cultural ethnographic studies, the 'pop' histories, personal accounts, or journalistic surveys. When they *do* appear, it is either in ways which uncritically reinforce the stereotypical image of women with which we are now so familiar ... or they are fleetingly and marginally presented (McRobbie & Garber, 1976: 209, references in original removed).

With this observation, McRobbie and Garber laid the foundations for all girls' studies to come. Indeed, McRobbie, who continued to write about girls for many years (e.g. McRobbie, 1978, 1991, 1989; McRobbie & McCabe, 1981b; McRobbie & Nava, 1984), is the most quoted author in the field. Because of her "groundbreaking work" (Aapola et al., 2005: 9) that is "deservedly canonical" (Driscoll, forthcoming: x), she has been labelled as the "godmother" (Kearney, 1998: 844) or "foremother" (Mazzarella & Pecora, 2007b: 106) of girls' studies².

McRobbie and Garber address the 'marginality' of girls in subcultures. They conclude that girls are not so much absent in subcultures, but that they relate differently to them. This different relationship is expressed in a girl subculture par excellence: the teenybopper. Teenybopper is a somewhat derogatory term for girls who idolise particular male celebrities (e.g. David Cassidy, Wham!, Robbie Williams³). Musical genres are often gendered (Negus, 1996: 124) and mainstream genres are sometimes labelled 'girl genres' (e.g. Ter Bogt, 1997: 110), because girls in particular are thought to be more easily deluded by record labels' marketing tricks (Driscoll, 1999).

The teenybopper is an easily accessible subculture that is structurally different from male subcultures: everyone can join; participation implies no risk of humiliation, and the obsession with certain celebrities

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“can be a means of alienating the teacher, and, if shared, can offer a defensive solidarity” (McRobbie & Garber, 1976: 220-221). Teenybopper culture, then, requires nothing more than “a bedroom and a record player and permission to invite friends” (p. 220). Two years later, Frith named this ‘bedroom culture’:

Girl culture becomes a culture of the bedroom, the place where girls meet, listen to music and teach each other make-up skills, practice their dancing, compare sexual notes, criticise each other’s clothes and gossip (Frith, 1978: 66).

Bedroom culture should not be understood as merely a description of a safe space for girls (cf. Livingstone, 2002), but as a fundamentally different entitlement to space. Boys were on the streets, and were studied there: no-one “seemed interested in what happened when a mod went home after a weekend on speed” (McRobbie, 1990: 67). The domain of the girl was the home: the personal that feminism aims to make political, visible.

McRobbie and Garber’s intervention put the above-mentioned gendered specificities of youth studies onto the research agenda. Nearly all of the studies that followed start by quoting McRobbie and Garber to legitimatise their focus on girls. As a result, bedroom culture has become an explanation and a conceptual tool with which to understand the specific ways in which girls organise their lives (e.g. Baker, 2004; Brake, 1980, 1985; Brinkgreve & De Regt, 1991; De Waal, 1989; Driscoll, 2002; Griffiths, 1988; James, 2001; Lees, 1986; McRobbie, 1978, 1991; Naber, 1985; Van der Mooren, 2001; Van der Zande, 1991a; Wulff, 1988).

2.3 The 1980s: Feminism for girls

Perhaps inspired by McRobbie and Garber’s original contribution, and probably as a result of feminist researchers taking up positions in universities, girls’ studies proliferated rapidly in the early 1980s. Much of this work was politically engaged as the authors aimed to educate and raise a feminist consciousness. Hence my qualification of this period as ‘feminism for girls’, which is also the title of a volume by McRobbie and McCabe (1981b). Scholars investigated girl culture in everyday life, most notably at schools, but also in community centres. In the Dutch context, De Waal’s (1989) study is illustrative of the engaged, ethnographic work conducted in the 1980s. Two concepts stand out in the ‘feminism for girls’ period: the notion of her own space and the nice girl construct.

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Her own space

1980s girls' researchers argued that girls needed "space and autonomy from men to work out the hows, whys and wherefores of [the oppression of girls and women]" (McRobbie & McCabe, 1981a: 4). The idea of her own space stands in direct relation to bedroom culture – a space without boys. Toilets are also often mentioned as unique girl spaces, and their constant crowdedness as proof of the necessity of 'her own space'. Thus, men have "men's clubs, pubs, football matches or even streets to hang around" (McRobbie & McCabe, 1981a: 22), while girls only have the bedroom and the toilet. Feminist authors therefore call for the creation of all-girls spaces. For instance, Strong (1981) argues to fight gender inequalities in education by instigating all-girl schools.

In youth service work, girls' own spaces were created in the form of special girls' clubs (at least in the Netherlands and in the UK). However, as Van Drenth and Te Poel (1991) note in a historic overview of such clubs, all-girl spaces were bound to fail for two reasons. First, working class girls resisted middle class feminist youth workers. Second, feminist educational goals were difficult to translate into manageable and practicable forms:

What are the concrete interests of girls and how do you realise them in a girls' club? This question arose particularly succinctly when it turned out that girls actually enjoyed behaviour that is deemed not-emancipated, like the eternal talk about boys and dating, and the excessive attention to make-up and clothes (Van Drenth & Te Poel, 1991: 88, my translation).

The notion of her own space, versus the reality of girls' clubs, shows the first split between researchers' and informants' realities. Feminist inspired researchers normatively formulated appropriate behaviour for girls, but girls' actual behaviour did not meet those standards.

I did not encounter further calls for girls' own spaces after 1991, perhaps because of post-feminism, which declared feminism to be dead, if in fact it had ever been alive to the girls participating in girls' clubs in the 1980s. However, in a recent contribution, the toilet is again praised:

In this heterotopia of girls'/women's privacy and intimacy, *we* can be seen, heard, watched, and smelled, and still act *as if* no one is watching. Crouching in liminality between full exposure and existential solitary, we are at once with and alone. We can 'do' the politics of intimate daily life among a group of relative strangers, joined by a thin reed of biology. Like Web sites, zines, chain letters, soap operas, protests, and rallies, all (a)part, for a moment, we create a world (Fine, 2004: xii)

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Fine's rhetoric use of "we" suggests she assumes that her readers are girls and women. Fine stretches the intimate space of the toilet to include genres and movements where girls come together. Her approval of these spaces as 'our' own spaces not only points to a normative approach to girl culture, but also suggests a limited focus to girl culture, i.e. she calls for a focus on 'approved' spaces only.

The nice girl construct

A second concept that characterises 1980s girls' studies is the nice girl construct, which was introduced in 1977 by Fox:

This form of control over the social behavior of women is embodied in such value constructs as 'good girl', 'lady', or 'nice girl'. As a value construct the latter term connotes chaste, gentle, gracious, ingenuous, good, clean, kind, virtuous, noncontroversial, and above suspicion and reproach. ... [T]he concept 'nice girl' is both an instrumental and a terminal value: both a standard for and goal of behavior (Fox, 1977: 805).

The nice girl construct is a way of restricting women's freedom. In comparison to other forms of restriction (i.e. confinement and protection), normative restriction allows independent participation in public life. Social control, however, is internalised and affected through self-discipline. Such restriction works in many ways, for instance in the spaces that women are allowed to occupy (nice girls do not hang about on the streets) and in women's sexualities (nice girls do not carry condoms). Such a form of control is, according to Fox, exceptionally efficient. As one's identity as a nice girl is "never finally confirmed ... one is under pressure to demonstrate one's niceness anew by one's behavior in each instance of social interaction" (p. 809). Thus, the nice girl construct refers to behaviour and not personality, and as such requires constant vigilance. Furthermore, it is the woman herself who is responsible for her actions.

Because it operates through the mechanisms of shared values, norms, and understandings (...) all persons can be involved as control agents. Ensuring adherence to the norms of control becomes everybody's business. In contrast, failure to comply to the norms is solely the fault of the individual woman: thus it follows that responsibility for the negative consequences of noncompliance is that of the transgressor alone. The victim, in other words, will have earned her faith (Fox, 1977: 816).

Although certain behavioural restrictions also apply to boys, a comparable value construct does not exist for them.

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Based on ethnographic work with adolescent girls, De Waal (1987) argues that what precisely constitutes a nice girl varies per social class and per situation. For instance, although cleverness is commonly valued, "it is also considered to be clever – especially in the company of boys – if one does not always show how much one knows" (1987: 33). She states that the girls she studied also distinguished between different *sorts* of boys, teachers, parents et cetera. As a result, girls need to meet different norms in different situations. The nice girl construct then becomes a dilemma, balancing behaviour between too much and too little. Thus, in some situations, girls' behaviour is seen as too clever, and in other situations as not clever enough. The dilemma of too much-too little has been argued particularly about girls' sexuality. Lees (1986) writes about the discourses of *slags*. As with the nice girl, what constitutes a 'slag' is not defined or operationalised in discourse, and this lack of definition makes the construct all the more productive. Thus, a girl "can be deemed a slag both when she approaches [a boy] or rebuffs him" (Lees, 1986: 161). As such, no acceptable sexuality exists for girls (Naber, 1985). The slag construct not only applies to sexual behaviour, but also to clothes, make-up, contact with boys, career choice and so on.

Several girl researchers signalled this balancing of behaviour through the nice girl construct (e.g. Cowie & Lees, 1981; De Waal, 1989; Naber & Peters, 1991; Van Duin, 1983). Their agenda was to deconstruct such normative restrictions and to empower/liberate the girls that suffered through them. In the 1990s, and in response to post-feminism, as I argue below, this agenda disappeared (cf. Kitzinger, 1995), although recent girls' studies have picked up on this issue again (e.g. Bay-Cheng & Lewis, 2006; Ringrose, 2006; Tolman, 2002).

2.4 The 1990s: 'Can do' versus 'at risk'

Despite the growth of work in the 1980s, girls' studies more or less vanished in the 1990s. I defined girls' studies as those that investigate the gendered specificities of youth. Scholars still studied girls in the 1990s, but their aims had changed. Instead of investigating and understanding girl culture, scholars increasingly criticised it (notable exceptions are Hey, 1997; Walkerdine, 1997).

The near disappearance of girls' studies coincided with the rise of post-feminism. McRobbie (2004) states that feminism was at its acme in 1990, when feminist values became widely disseminated in popular texts such as women's magazines. Most Western governments had also

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adopted emancipatory legislation in education, law, et cetera, and as a result, feminism was proclaimed successful, and therefore no longer necessary. The 'post' in post-feminism suggests a period *after* feminism, thereby implicitly assuming that feminism is 'done' and no longer relevant. The term surfaces mainly in journalistic texts as an indication of "joyous liberation from the ideological shackles of a hopelessly outdated feminist movement" (Gamble, 2001: 44). Obviously, feminists responded to post-feminism with severe critiques, arguing that feminism was still alive, relevant and necessary (e.g. Aronson, 2003; Hawkesworth, 2004). As McRobbie observes, objections (e.g. to media representations of gender and sexuality) are "pre-empted with irony" and immediately "run the risk of ridicule" (2004: 259). At the same time, McRobbie argues, academic feminism deconstructed itself, influenced by post-colonial feminists and feminists like Haraway and Butler. Feminism had entered a self-reflexive mode, which clashed with the 'feminism for girls' agenda of girls' studies.

Notwithstanding this academic silence girls, all of a sudden, abounded in the media. Several authors (Aapola et al., 2005; Harris, 2004a) argue that two contradictory but simultaneous discourses prevailed: 'girl power' and 'reviving Ophelia'. I agree with their observation, but add that in scholarly work, the 'girl power' discourse is mostly critiqued, whereas the 'reviving Ophelia' discourse actually informs some research.

Can-do girls: girl power

The cultural space of post-feminism is popular culture, and 'girl power' is its motto. Girl power refers to two phenomena. First, it concerns Riot Grrrls, a subcultural, feminist-inspired movement that developed in the US in the early 1990s, as part of the punk-rock underground scene. It was also the catchphrase of the Spice Girls, an all-female British pop group from the second half of the 1990s. Both manifestations have been associated with post-feminism⁴, and both found expression in genres such as movies, magazines and music. From both perspectives, girl power signifies empowerment based on the celebration of the subject position 'girl'⁵. Girl power "re-writes the passivity, voicelessness, vulnerability and sweet naturedness" of girls (Aapola et al., 2005: 19).

The Riot Grrrl movement never reached the larger public, but nevertheless received much scholarly attention (e.g. Carson, Lewis, & Shaw, 2003; Den Hartog, 2000; Harris, 2003; Kearney, 1997; Leonard, 1997; Negus, 1996; Nehring, 1997; Schilt, 2003a, 2003b). This discrepancy might

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be explained by the rebellious, 'feminist' nature of the movement and the possibility of readings of resistance offered (cf. Hall & Jefferson, 1976). The Spice Girls, conversely, received mainly feminist critique (e.g. Lemish, 1998; Lemish, 2003; Riddell, 1999; Schilt, 2003b; Whiteley, 2000).

The Spice Girls were the prime example of girl power, mainly because they claimed ownership of the term. However, 1990s popular culture was full of "girl heroes":

More than ever before, television programs, films, video-clips and cartoons are providing female leads at least as competent, tough and independent as their male counterparts. In mass-mediated representations, the new girl hero has entered virtually every sphere of male power. The girl of today's collective dreams is a heroic overachiever – active, ambitious, sexy and strong. She emerges as an unstoppable superhero, a savvy supermodel, a combative action chick, a media goddess, a popstar who wants to rule the world (Hopkins, 2002: 1).

Scholarly investigations of girl power entail mostly textual readings of these girl heroes, and reception studies are rare (e.g. Lemish, 1998). Furthermore, disapproving readings of these mass-adored celebrities and fiction protagonists dominate. Girl power heroes are scrutinised for an exclusive beauty ideal, a predominance of white, middle-class, heterosexual representations, a limited focus on the quest for romantic love, and commercialisation (see, for instance, Arthurs, 2003; Dubrofsky, 2002; Durham, 2003; Gerhard, 2005; McRobbie, 2003; Owen, 1999; Ross, 2004). *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* is an exception as it is often praised as a transgressive text (see *Slayage: The online international journal of Buffy studies*). Negative readings, however, outnumber positive readings. Examples of the latter are Hopkins (2002) on girl heroes in general, and Banet-Weiser (2004) on Nickelodeon. Both argue that girl power offers empowering, refreshing images of femininity.

In the previous section I argued that the notion of her own space demonstrates a difference between what feminists like to see girls do, and what girls actually do. This discrepancy seemed even more pronounced with the arrival of girl power. Girl power celebrated girls and offered a message of girls in charge. From the perspective of the 'feminism for girls' agenda of the 1980s, girl power thus offered a promising message to girls. Spice Girl Geri Halliwell called herself a feminist (Riddell, 1999), even at a time when others were proclaiming that feminism was dead. Instead of welcoming this, feminist scholars chose to criticise girl power and its young adherents.

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At-risk girls: Reviving Ophelia

Aapola et al. name the second prevailing discourse in the 1990s 'Reviving Ophelia', after Pipher's (1994) bestseller *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the selves of adolescent girls*. Pipher uses Shakespeare's Ophelia to indicate "a resonating concern about the vulnerability of girls and the potential dangers they face growing up" (Aapola et al., 2005: 41). Whilst, on the one hand, research showed that girls achieved more than ever before, on the other, research in the 1990s focused on those areas in which girls were failing. Girlhood was approached as a period of crisis and potential danger, and adult supervision – by parents, but also by social scientists – was deemed necessary to help guide girls through this crisis (cf. Lesko, 1996).

Mazzarella and Pecora (2007a) and Ward and Benjamin (2004) state that empirical studies on girls in the 1990s generally followed this discourse. Most studies are psychological contributions that focus on similar threats to girls, mainly body image (e.g. Usmiani & Daniluk, 1997) and peer pressure/cliq formation (e.g. Michell & Amos, 1997). For example, Heilman investigates "the social forces that lead to distorted identity formation in adolescent girls" (1998: 202), where 'these forces' mean mass media influences on body image and health, social pressure, future employment, and class issues. Some studies suggest solutions to these problems, such as teaching media-literacy (e.g. Thompson & Heinberg, 1999) or promoting sports (e.g. Baum, 1998). There is special attention in the US on girls with Other ethnicities, thus black and Asian girls (e.g. Milkie, 1999; Ogden & Elder, 1998), or on Turkish and Moroccan girls in the Netherlands (e.g. Vollebergh & Huiberts, 1997).

As with girl power, the Ophelia discourse also clearly manifested itself in the media. In a study of American newspaper coverage of adolescent girls in the 1990s, Mazzarella and Pecora conclude:

Overwhelmingly, the issues raised, the perceived need for intervention/prevention, the silencing of girls' voices, and the reliance on experts in these articles provide dramatic evidence of the construction of girls as a generation in crisis, a crisis that is, more often than not, linked to low self-esteem and poor body image (2007a: 19).

Mazzarella and Pecora argue that the media relied on experts (e.g. psychologists, social workers) to validate the dangers they were reporting and to suggest possible solutions (see also Crone, 2007). They trace these media panics back to the publication of Pipher's *Reviving Ophelia*. Cohen's (1972) discussion of moral panic had already argued that the

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mass media play a crucial role in portraying youth cultures as 'deviant' and problematic to society. Such moral panics specifically arise in relation to the 'dangerous' consequences of media use (e.g. Binder, 1993) and might be seen as a consequence of the criteria of news worthiness (i.e. problems make for better news). The discourse about girls at risk continues well into the current decade, and recent media panics about girls include the 'mean girl', following the movie *Mean Girls* (see Gonick, 2004; Ringrose, 2006), and the 'bimbo culture' discussed in chapter 1 (see Frank, 2007; Pitcher, 2006).

Pipher's success was followed by resonating titles such as *Queen bees and wannabes: A parent's guide to helping your daughter survive cliques, gossip, boyfriends, and other realities of adolescence*⁶ (Wiseman, 2002); *GirlWise: How to be confident, capable, cool, and in control* (DeVillers, 2002); and *Odd girl speaks out: Girls write about bullies, cliques, popularity, and jealousy* (Simmons, 2004). Aapola et al. argue that the recipients of these self-help books are in fact adult women:

This focus on adult women as the real beneficiaries of the girl movement is problematic both in terms of the political efficacy for young women, and for its tendency to commercialize the Ophelia crisis to create an adult (and therefore wealthier) market for books, programmes, workshops and the like (Aapola et al., 2005: 47).

Thus, Aapola et al. claim that the concern about girls in crisis actually represents *women* in crisis. Adult women categorised and explained girls' experiences, without investigating girls' own understandings of the problems they were facing.

2.5 Current girls' studies

Although the Ophelia discourse still governs much work about girls (e.g. Besag, 2006; Goodwin, 2006), there currently seems to be a new zeal in girls' studies. A number of anthologies and monographs appeared that specifically addressed girls' identities and girl culture (e.g. Aapola et al., 2005; Driscoll, 2002; Gonick, 2003; Harris, 2004a, 2004c; Mitchell & Reid-Walsh, 2005). There is mutual referencing, and scholars talk about 'a field'. Contributors share a joint interest, focusing mostly on analysing the construction of discourses surrounding girls, as well as the diversity amongst girls. For example, Harris's (2004b: xx) interest lies with questioning the category of girl and sees "[t]he question of who a girl is, that is, how she comes into our purview as a girl" as the central task for

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girls' studies. Likewise, Aapola et al. (2005: 10) aim to "explore contemporary ways of interpreting girlhood, to identify the issues that confront young women into the new century, and to highlight their responses to new modes of growing up female". Within these 'new' girls' studies, two new approaches to girls arose: the critique of girls as neo-liberal subjects and the interest in girls as producers.

Neo-liberal subjects

Feminist researchers in the 1990s extensively reviewed post-feminism. After 2000, this critique also came to include 'neo-liberalism' and its production of so-called 'neo-liberal subjects'. Neo-liberalism refers to modern, Western governments that require their subjects to "assemble a way of life within the sphere of consumption" and, through their insistence on choice, oblige subjects to "account for their lives in terms of the reasons for those choices" (Rose, 1999: 230, 231). Neo-liberalism produces neo-liberal subjects, "a subject of self-invention and transformation who is capable of surviving within the new social, economic and political system" (Walkerdine, Lucey, & Melody, 2001: 1). With this work, Walkerdine et al. introduced the term to girls' studies. According to Gonick, the girl power and Ophelia discourses led to the theorising of the neo-liberal subject, because both "emphasize young female subjectivities as projects that can be shaped by the individual rather than within a social collectivity" (Gonick, 2006: 18). It should be noted that girls in particular (i.e. not women, men or boys) are theorised as neo-liberal subjects, and that the concept surfaces mainly in British and Oceanic research (e.g. Blackman, 2004; Gill & Herdieckerhoff, 2006; Jackson, 2006; McRobbie, 2007; O'Flynn & Petersen, 2007; Rich, 2005; Tincknell, Chambers, Van Loon, & Hudson, 2003; Walkerdine, 2003).

Walkerdine uses the term neo-liberal subject to argue against the myth of upward mobility, which can only be achieved by a "flexible and autonomous subject who negotiates, chooses, succeeds in the array of education and retraining forms that form the new 'lifelong learning' and the 'multiple career trajectories'" (2003: 240). Although Walkerdine's initial use of the concept attempted to put class back onto the research agenda⁷, the term 'neo-liberal subject' is now used as a designation for all girls growing up in "a cultural context marked by extraordinarily rapid technological change, unprecedented globalisation, and the increasing hegemony of a neo-liberal form of governance" (Gill & Arthurs, 2006: 443). Several authors specifically attack the idea of choice, arguing that freedom has become an 'obligation instead of a liberation' (Gill &

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Arthurs, 2006; Jackson, 2006; McRobbie, 1996). Thus, being free becomes mandatory, and therefore one can no longer speak of being free. As Rich comments on gender inequalities:

Many of those discourses that could help to challenge gender inequality are not only stigmatised as 'unfeminine', but gender inequalities are being masked through a neo-liberal position which in many ways, rather paradoxically feels empowering to young women (Rich, 2005: 506).

McRobbie similarly argues that "[y]oung women are able to come forward on the condition that feminism fades away" (2007: 720). According to McRobbie, girls copy male behaviour, which includes a distaste of feminism. Because girls appear to have gained equality with men, she argues, they feel no need to challenge masculinity. Thus, the argument suggests that neo-liberalism provides a false consciousness that hails girls as free agents, but that actually prohibits them from fighting unrelenting gender inequalities. As such, the concept of the neo-liberal subject positions girls as failing subjects (O'Flynn & Petersen, 2007: 470), comparable to the Ophelia discourse.

Though the picture painted by the critique on neo-liberal girls is mostly a sombre one, some researchers express the need to acknowledge how girls are actively negotiating and questioning this discourse (e.g. Harris, 2004a). For example, "many young women are at the vanguard of efforts to re-think meanings of achievement beyond work, and open up new ways for thinking about measures of success" (Aapola et al., 2005: 78). Aapola et al. remain awfully vague, however, how such "new ways for thinking" can take form. Their optimistic perspective is reflected in the second new approach: girls as producers.

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In the critique of girls as neo-liberal subjects, girls are conceptualised as passive recipients of culture. The interest in girls as producers, on the contrary, sees girls as creators of identity and culture. Several recent studies, for instance, investigate the ways in which girls produce media content (e.g. Bloustien, 2003; Hackmann, 2005; Kearney, 2006; Mazzarella, 2005). Kearney (2006), as an example, argues that recently girls are increasingly making media. She maintains that girls and women have always been cultural producers (from knitting and embroidering in pre-industrial times, via letter and diary writing since the 18th century, to the entrepreneurial fan and youth cultures of the 20th century).

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However, “as a result of their disenfranchised status, girls’ creative expression via such practices was consistently disparaged, marginalized, and ignored, leading to the silencing of this history until quite recently” (2006: 47). Nowadays, girls have easier access to ICT and media production, which is seen in the increasing number of (American) girls who are engaged in *zine* making, filmmaking, popular music production, and web design. The anthology *girl wide web* (Mazzarella, 2005) comparably investigates the internet as a place where girls are producers, creating their ‘own safe spaces’. These contributions praise the internet as a space in which to safely construct gender and sexual identities (Grisso & Weiss, 2005; Thiel, 2005), to actively subvert popular culture messages (Merskin, 2005), to encounter diverse femininities (Walsh, 2005), and to take control over their environment (Clark, 2005).

However laudable this conceptualisation of girls as active producers of culture is, the authors fail to address the actual significance of these new trends. Kearney herself notes that more girls engaging in cultural production does not mean that their status is improved. The contributions in *girl wide web* follow current trends in media research that celebrate so-called user-generated content and the web 2.0. However, as Livingstone points out, active engagement on the net “remains a minority activity when looking across the population, so we should not be misled by the notable instances of creative engagement” (2006: 227). Livingstone argues that “anxious parents, uncertain teachers, busy politicians, profit-oriented content providers” constrain young people’s access to the net⁸. Livingstone’s remarks remind us that any conceptualisation of girls as active cultural producers should also take into account the ways in which their autonomy is limited.

2.6 Conclusion: Listening – but how and to whom?

This chapter began with my unease about feminism. Yet, at the same time, I found myself needing feminism to legitimise a study only about girls. In this chapter, I demonstrated how girls’ researchers have approached and constructed girls and their culture in different ways. The concepts put forward since the launch of girls’ studies in 1976 have never been replaced. Some concepts have been in use since the beginning (bedroom culture), whereas others disappeared only to be recently revived (her own space). My revision leads to three observations about girls’ studies. First, girls’ studies actually reveal more about the researchers conducting them than about girls themselves. Second, as a result, girls’

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studies tend to favour transgressive elements of girl culture. Third, consequently, ethnographic studies in which the voices of 'ordinary' girls can be heard are absent. I address these three observations in turn, before discussing their implications for this study.

Girls' studies are about feminists

Girls' studies do not, so much, provide much insight into girl culture, as tell us something about the people writing about girls, as Aapola et al. argued about *Reviving Ophelia*. Eisenhauer (2004) argues that the notion of the girl has always troubled feminism, and feminists have enquired as to why girls should be included in feminism from early on. The reason for including girls has been that girlhood is the "place from which women come", and that place must be protected to "protect the future of 'women'" (2004: 87). My revision of girls' studies reveals such a tension. The discrepancy between what girls do and what feminists want them to do is indicative of this.

I argue that feminism's struggle with post-feminism paralysed girls' studies in the 1990s. The media pronounced that feminism was dead, and feminists responded by defending feminism. Contemporary feminists – like the youth workers in the 1980s – attempt to convince another generation of the legitimacy of feminism. For instance, Durham (1999: 210) calls for a "collective feminist activism" for girls. The defence of feminism manifests itself in the critique of both girl power and the neo-liberal subject. In this critique, girls' bodies become the terrain of feminists' own struggles and agendas, and feminists superimpose their anxieties onto girls. The feminist answer to the question of 'why are girls not into feminism,' is 'because of neo-liberalism'. Although most of the analyses on girls as neo-liberal subjects are thorough and engaging, one cannot help but wonder why girls, and not feminists themselves, are supposed to overcome the "feminist tragedy" (McRobbie, 2007: 734) of neo-liberalism.

Transgression is feminists' favourite flavour

In 1982, McRobbie and McCabe introduced their feminism for girls:

[Feminism] is about having choice, about not having to wear high heels because you're small, not having to wear flat shoes because you're tall. Feminism is about being who you want to be – and finding out who you are in the first place (McRobbie & McCabe, 1981a: 6).

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The problem that they did not foresee at the time is: what if you chose to wear high heels? This refers to a well-acknowledged dilemma within feminism: how to deal with those who do not want to be 'liberated'? How to understand the choices one does not agree with? One strategy is to favour those girls you do agree with. Such favouritism shows, for instance, in the large number of studies on tomboys (e.g. Burn, O'Neil, & Nederend, 1996; Carr, 1998; Hyde, Rosenberg, & Behrman, 1977; Reay, 2001; Safir, Rosenmann, & Kloner, 2003).

Scholars investigating girl culture tend to focus their attention on the marginal, yet transgressive, elements of girl culture. For instance, disproportionate attention has been paid to Riot Grrrls, and the forms of girl power that the majority of girls actually liked, have been criticised. The same goes for the current interest in girls as producers. *Zines* and websites like those of Riot Grrrls are genres that feminists can approve of. Wald's remark is telling when she states "[t]here is something predictably depressing ... about the global popularity of the Spice Girls, who have appropriated the spunky defiance associated with the English Riot Grrrls in a patently opportunistic fashion" (Wald, 1998: 608). This confirms how feminist scholars think of Riot Grrrl as good for girls but regard the concept's commercial appropriation as bad. As a result, the 'ordinary' majority of girls get overlooked.

Listening to ordinary girls is extraordinary

Another way of dealing with choices that one does not agree with is to not listen to them at all. Scholars have been biased by choosing the girls that they want to listen to, or rather, that they want to hear. Ethnographic studies amongst ordinary girls were conducted in the 1980s, but these almost vanished in the following decade. To me, this absence of girls' voices demonstrates the predicament of girls' studies in the 1990s. The discourses about girl power and Ophelia in popular culture and the press, caused scholars to reflect, and to formulate either support or critique, with very little research that empirically investigated the gendered specificities of youth culture. As a result, we know little of the ways in which girls navigate, and have navigated, gendered adolescence successfully.

The critique of neo-liberalism completely problematizes the ability to both listen to girls and to take their accounts seriously. It is a deficit theory, a term Walkerdine (1989) uses for conventional explanations of gender differences in mathematics. Deficit theories blame the victim

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for that which she is no position to counter. To rewrite Walkerdine (1989)⁹, I propose that 'the idea that girls are neo-liberal subjects, or whatever the next incapacity turns out to be, is not best served by trying to prove either that they really are it or by trying to find the cause for their deficit'. Instead, one should investigate the "hows, whys and wherefores of this situation" (McRobbie & McCabe, 1981a: 4). Furthermore, rather than constructing girls (as Ophelias, as post-feminist victims, as neo-liberal subjects) and proscribing a new 'nice feminist girl' construct, girls' studies should investigate how girls construct themselves.

Implications for this study

I argued that girls' studies are actually about feminists. I realise that this probably also applies to this chapter. My discomfort with feminism, combined with my need for it, has resulted in a review of the wide ranging literature on girls. This review amounts to two major implications for this study. First of all, an investigation of girls' identity and agency should focus on girls' own understandings of their everyday culture. Second, such an investigation should be politically engaged and critical of the discourses and structures shaping that culture. Thus, not everything girls say should be taken at face value. Ethnographic research is not incompatible with a critical perspective. Being critical, however, does not mean being dismissive. The goal is to achieve the best of both worlds.



Chapter 3

Doing Identity

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I unfold the theoretical framework for this study, which is built around the concept of identity. Working from an understanding of identity as a narrative of self that must be reflexively made (§3.2), I argue that identities are constituted through repetitious performances. Section 3.3 introduces the concepts of performance and performativity. In section 3.4, I explain how these performances, through practices of citation and identification, produce subject-positions. Having outlined these analytical tools, in section 3.5 I then establish that these concepts can be studied empirically, by investigating performance practices. The subsequent sections address these practices, focusing on appearance and media. The chapter ends, in section 3.8, with an overview of the research questions. Let us start, however, by addressing the usefulness of identity as an analytical tool.

3.2 Identity in crisis

'Identity' is everywhere. One might even claim that it is the most widely used concept in social sciences and humanities today (Callero, 2003: 7; Jenkins, 1996; Wrong, 2000: 10). Initially, identity was a philosophical concept, found in the works of Aristotle and Hobbes. It gained popularity in sociology and psychology in the 1950s and 60s, through the works of Goffman (1958; 1963) and Erikson (1968) respectively. The popularity of identity in social science reflected in its usage in government policy and, subsequently, everyday life (Frijhoff, 1993). In addition, the advertising

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industry “has long understood that selling things to people often means selling them an identity too” (Jenkins, 1996: 7-8). In his classic work on identity, Erikson (1968: 15) notes how identity is in need of unequivocal definition. Since then, the amount of literature on identity has continued to grow. Several authors contend that in these times of high or post-modernity, people experience a crisis in identity (Giddens, 1991; Woodward, 1997a). In addition, or as a result, scholars have argued that the concept of identity itself is in crisis (Bendle, 2002; Gilroy, 1996; Hall, 1996). In this section, I elaborate on the notion of identity. In light of the above, a prior question arises: if identity is such an ill-defined and all-encompassing concept, why use it as an analytical tool with which to understand contemporary girl culture? Why identity?

Why identity?

Frijhoff argues that identity’s usefulness as an analytical tool precisely explains its popularity. Identity unites the psychic and the social, and thus allows there to be a productive cross-pollination across social sciences (1993: 18). Likewise, Woodward (1997b: 1) argues that “identity matters” because it offers “explanations of social and cultural changes” (see also Gilroy, 1996: 36). For instance, processes of globalisation can be understood by investigating national and ethnic identities, and changes in sexual politics by looking at personal identities (Woodward, 1997a: 13). To Foucault, the self¹ is connected to power. In Foucaultian theory, “regimes of power do not simply control a bounded, rational subject, but rather they bring the self into existence by imposing disciplinary practices on the body” (Callero, 2003: 117). Thus, another reason why identity is a useful analytical tool is the relationship between the self and power.

Stuart Hall (1996) explicitly addresses the usefulness of identity. First, scholars need the concept for want of a better one. Identity has been subjected to extensive critique, but after this deconstruction the concept has not been supplanted with a “truer” one. Therefore, “there is nothing to do but to continue to think with [identity]” (p. 1), albeit now in deconstructed form. Hall locates identity “in the interval between reversal and emergence; an idea which cannot be thought in the old way, but without which certain key questions cannot be thought at all” (p. 2). These key questions are part of his second response to the need for identity. He argues that identity is central to questions of agency and politics. Following Foucault in his understanding of these terms, Hall states:

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It seems to be in the attempt to rearticulate the relationship between subjects and discursive practices that the question of identity recurs – or rather, if one prefers to stress the process of subjectification to discursive practices, and the politics of exclusion which all subjectification appears to entail, the question of *identification* (Hall, 1996: 2).

I return to the notion of identification in section 3.3. Here, I want to point out that Hall, through the notion of discursive practices, connects identity to cultural and political questions.

Deconstructive critique and “a veritable discursive explosion” (Hall, 1996: 1) have thus left the concept of identity in crisis, but since the concept has not been replaced with a better one, we are stuck with it. Having established the usefulness of identity as an inter-disciplinary analytical tool with which to study relationships between the individual and society, we can now face the crisis. I first address definitional problems and different approaches to identity. In the subsection on reflexivity, I discuss the other element of identity in crisis: identity in high or post-modern times.

A definition of identity

Although ‘identity’ is used in different disciplines, each discipline seems to hold its own contradictory definitions (Gilroy, 1996), which are often diverse and descriptive (Fearon, 1999). Hogg, Terry and White argue that different identity theories “occupy parallel but separate universes, with virtually no cross-referencing” (1995: 255). In coming to a definition, several authors (Fearon, 1999; Goffman, 1963; Nunner-Winkler, 2001) first distinguish social identity from personal identity. Social identity refers to membership of a particular category or group: X is a PhD student. Personal identity identifies a certain individual: based on this description and these fingerprints, we can determine that X is Linda Duits (Nunner-Winkler, 2001). Intuitively, or from an internal perspective, these meanings do not suffice. To answer the question ‘who am I’ with ‘Linda Duits, PhD student’ feels unsatisfactory: I am more than my fingerprints and social position.

Consider this example: at the start of many television quizzes, the host asks candidates to ‘tell something about themselves’. Usually, candidates respond by stating their name and profession. They often also state their hobbies and possibly say something about the composition of their family. Benhabib similarly argues that the question, “who I am,” cannot be approached separately from the community of which “I” am

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a part. She therefore argues that identity “is constituted by narrative unity, which integrates what ‘I’ can do, have done and will accomplish with what you expect of ‘me’” (Benhabib, 1992: 5). In line with Benhabib, we can then define identity as a narrative of the self (cf. Finnegan, 1997; Giddens, 1991; Hall, 1996). Defining identity as a narrative has several advantages. It allows the incorporation of several ideas that are central to different identity theories, such as identity as a question of sameness and difference; as a situational, multifaceted, and relative construct; as a site of struggle; and as a performance (Finnegan, 1997: 68). To further explore the idea of identity as a narrative, I now turn to Giddens’ (1991) work on the reflexive project of the self.

Identity in crisis and the reflexive project of the self

Although the concept of identity dates from ancient times, several authors contend that identity mattered differently throughout history. Kellner argues that in traditional times, thus before the rise of modernity, identities were stable. Tradition prescribed choice, individual actions, and social roles. Everyone knew their place and role: “One was a hunter and a member of the tribe and that was that” (Kellner, 1992: 141). People did not experience identity crises or modify their identities; such actions are characteristic of late modernity. Late modernity (i.e. the period starting in the twentieth century) involved several changes, like the rise of phenomena like psychoanalysis, secularism, and the welfare state. These have, as Bendle (2002) asserts, put identity in crisis: the self needs to be ‘explored’ and ‘realised’, and new identities have become accessible. Additionally, the idea of “a subsisting self-sameness” of identity further exacerbates this crisis for identity, because “models that emphasize an almost unlimited degree of fragmentation [and] fluidity ... are in tension with this core notion” (Bendle, 2002: 6). Even those without identity anxiety “will inevitably have been compelled to make significant choices throughout their lives, from everyday questions about clothing, appearance and leisure to high-impact decisions about relationships, beliefs and occupations” (Gauntlett, 2002: 96).

Giddens argues that the current period of late modernity, “the self, like the broader institutional contexts in which it exists, has to be reflexively made” (Giddens, 1991: 3)². He labels this idea ‘the reflexive project of the self’. Giddens defines identity as that “what the individual is conscious ‘of’ in the term ‘self-consciousness’” (1991: 52). Identity is no longer a given, but it is “something that has to be routinely created and sustained in the reflexive activities of the individual” (1991: 52). Giddens

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also understands identity as a narrative, a biography of one's life. Individuals create, maintain, and revise a story of who they are. This does not mean the story can be fictional. Instead, it must have coherence through a past, present and projected future.

The individual's biography, if she is to maintain regular interaction with others in the day-to-day world, cannot be wholly fictive. It must continually integrate events which occur in the external world, and sort them into the on-going 'story' about the self (Giddens, 1991: 54).

This biography is a person's identity, his/her sense of self. Giddens argues that identity under late modernity has become a project. Everyday events and life changing moments need to be continuously integrated and sorted into the story of the self. In that sense, one's identity is never finished or complete, hence the idea of a project. This integrating and sorting is a matter of reflection. A person's understanding of him/herself derives from constant reflection of 'I'. Identity as a reflexive project of the self thus means that the narrative of the self (= identity) is produced through continuous self-observation and self-reflection.

3.3 Identity performance

The idea of identity as a project suggests that identity is something that you do. To investigate this idea of doing identity, I start by exploring identity in terms of social roles. According to Hogg et al. (1995: 256), identity is "a product of social interaction, in that people come to know who they are through their interactions with others". This idea of identity as roles is appealing. Van Zoonen (2003: 10), for instance, introduces identity by reflecting on her own simultaneous roles as a mother and a university professor. From this introduction, she explains how these self-understandings can only come about in relation to larger ideals about motherhood and professorship. Furthermore, she argues, these understandings are firmly tied to existing discourses about femininity. Identities emerge in interaction with others, or, put differently: through "an ongoing and, in practice simultaneous, synthesis of (internal) self-definition and the (external) definitions of oneself offered by others" (Jenkins, 1996: 20). Jenkins argues that the process of identity formation is an internal-external dialectic of identification. Identification is addressed in section 3.4; this section focuses on identity as a role, and identity in relation to dominant discourses. The concept of performance, originally introduced to sociology by Goffman, incorporates these notions.

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Everyday performance and impression management

Goffman (1958) analyses everyday social life from a theatrical perspective. He defines a performance as “all the activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by his continuous presence before a particular set of observers and which has some influence on the observers” (p. 22). Following the theatrical metaphor, he calls the set of observers the audience. In every social situations, participants seek information about the others present to define the situation and to know what to expect from each participant. An individual will thus – intentionally or unintentionally – try to present himself “in such a way as to give them the kind of impression that will lead them to act voluntarily in accordance with his own plan” (p. 4). Goffman calls this impression management: the mobilisation of behaviour “so that it will convey an impression to others which it is in his interests to convey” (p. 4). Although individuals try to produce an idealised performance, this does not mean that performance is premeditated. Each new performance is based on what the individual has learned before: “he already has in his repertoire a large number of bits and pieces of performances that will be required in [a] new setting” (p. 72-73). Socialisation means learning enough “pieces of expression to be able to ‘fill in’ and manage, more or less, any part that he is likely to be given” (p. 73).

Goffman argues that a “status, a position, a social place is not a material thing (...); it is a pattern of appropriate conduct, coherent, embellished, and well articulated”. “To be a given kind of person” means “to sustain the standards of conduct and appearance that one’s social grouping attaches thereto” (p. 75). Goffman states that a fundamental dialectic underlies all social interaction. Since complete information about the situation and its participants is lacking, the individual performer is forced to go by appearances, “substitutes – cues, tests, hints, expressive gestures, status symbols, etc. – as predictive devices” (p. 249). The members of the audience are aware that their appearances are judged and therefore, in turn, they manage the impressions they exude. The audience then becomes a performer. The dialect lies with efficient impression management: “the very obligation and profitability of always appearing in a steady moral light, of being a socialized character, forces one to be the sort of person who is practiced in the ways of the stage” (p. 251). Although Goffman does not use this term, this dialectic points towards performativity.

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Performativity

Austin's *How to do things with words* is often credited as the origin of performativity (Parker & Sedgwick, 1995; Pels, 1999; Scannell, 2007; Schechner, 2002). Austin argues that certain utterances do not reflect or represent a reality, but create a reality of their own. These utterances are acts: the situation does not exist until the utterance is made. 'I now pronounce you husband and wife' and 'I declare this meeting open' are often-quoted examples (Pels, 1999: 102). Performative then means that the utterance performs – achieves – something.

A performative act is a "self-confirming action" (Pels, 1999: 96), or put differently, a "discursive practice that enacts or produces that which it names" (Butler, 1993: 12). Thus, in Goffman's example: if one acts like a moral and socialised character, one becomes a moral and socialised character. Pels explains the notion of performativity through Santa Claus. UFOs, leprechauns, and Santa Claus might not 'exist', but they exist because people believe in them, and their beliefs have 'real' consequences in the material world.

The traumatic realisation that Santa Claus 'actually' does not exist is a perception that exactly grows so slowly because all the words and actions of everyone around you are conspiring to perpetuate that fiction (Pels, 1999: 94, my translation).

Thus, "all the words and actions of everyone around you" make Santa Claus 'true'. Likewise, Pels argues, certain aspects of social reality, like 'the state' or 'socialism' exist because we all believe in them and their 'existence' is constantly confirmed and reified.

The notions of performance and performativity are central to an interdisciplinary field labelled performance studies. The notion of performance has been used in anthropology in relation to ritual, and the work of Goffman inspired further sociological use of performance. A collaboration between the anthropologist Turner and the theatre scholar Schechner, led to further cross-fertilisation between social sciences and humanities in the early 1980s (Schechner, 2002: 11). A performance perspective allows the exploration of the relationship between performer and audience. This perspective is particularly appealing to scholars of identity, because, as I argued in the previous section, identities arise in interaction, or negotiation between individuals, others and society.

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Identity as a performance

Simone de Beauvoir wrote the famous lines “one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman” (De Beauvoir, 1952: 249). Further on she states:

It is not only that girdle, brassiere, hair-dye, make-up disguise body and face; but that the least sophisticated of women, once she is ‘dressed’, does not present *herself* to observation; she is, like the picture or the statue, or the actor on the stage, an agent through whom is suggested someone not there - that is, the character she represents, but is not. It is this identification with something unreal, fixed, perfect as the hero of a novel, as a portrait or a bust, that gratifies her; she strives to identify herself with this figure and thus to seem to herself to be stabilized, justified in her splendor (De Beauvoir, 1952: 502).

The idea that ‘woman’ is not a natural identity, but that women are socialised into woman is a central theme within feminism. Second wave feminists distinguished sex from gender “to differentiate the socio-cultural meanings (‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity’) from the base of biological sex differences (‘male’ and ‘female’) on which they were erected” (Andermahr, Lovell, & Wolkowitz, 2000: 102). The deconstruction of the category of woman remains at the heart of the feminist project. Some radical feminists, most notably Butler, even critique the need for a distinction between sex and gender at all.

Butler (1990; 1993) challenges this distinction by arguing that the biological binary of sex is socially constructed as well. To Butler, the notion of gender as a social construction has led to the view of sex as a biological given. By conceptualising sex as the basis on which gender is socialised, gender is still in a conceptual relationship to the biological body. ‘Gender’ thus still upholds and enables biologically based feminine and masculine identities. Put conversely: “the discourse of gender hides sex’ discursivity by constituting gender as culturally produced and sex as naturally (biologically) produced” (Rodino, 1997: 5).

It is the ‘heterosexual matrix’ that requires ‘intelligible’ genders, “a causal relation among sex, gender, and desire” (Butler, 1990: 22).

The heterosexualization of desire requires and institutes the production of discrete and asymmetrical oppositions between “feminine” and “masculine”, where these are understood as expressive attributes of “male” and “female”. The cultural matrix through which gender identity has become intelligible requires that certain kinds of “identities” cannot “exist” – that is, those in which gender does not follow from sex and those in which the practices of desire do not “follow” from either sex or gender (Butler, 1990: 17).

Butler argues that discourse requires sex to be ‘known’ at the time of birth, and this knowing can only be done in a binary way: a newborn

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needs to be labelled male or female. The very existence of people that cannot be categorised as either male or female (i.e. hermaphrodites) shows that this binary is 'false' (see Fausto-Sterling, 2000 for an analysis of 'sexing').

"Sex" is, thus, not simply what one has, or a static description of what one is: it will be one of the norms by which the "one" becomes viable at all, that which qual-ifies a body for life within the domain of cultural intelligibility" (Butler, 1993: 2).

Thus, at birth one is labelled male or female, in order to be known in the heterosexual matrix. However, the existence of hermaphrodites reveals a "dissonant play of [gender] attributes that fail to conform to sequential or causal models of intelligibility" (Butler, 1990: 24).

Butler then argues that the claim of 'being a woman' has no substance. An individual incorporates her gender and continuously opposes that gender with the other gender³. Gender then becomes so incorporated – such a part of one's identity – that the person feels she "*is* a gender" (Butler, 1990: 21). Gender in the embodied self is again confused with sex, meaning the incorporation of a feminine gender gets confused with being female. Someone *is* a specific gender, because she is not the other gender. This idea, which Butler argues is false, presupposes that gender is binary. It also forces each individual to restrict her thinking about gender within that binary (Butler, 1990: 22). So if the binaries of sex and gender are false, how should we then understand gender?

Gender identity is performative: it only exists because it is done. Gender constitutes "the identity it is purported to be". Gender identity is not a fixed part of oneself, nor are gender 'expressions' the result of stable, universal parts of the self. Instead, gender 'expressions' performatively constitute gender. To sum up in Butler's words:

[G]ender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed. ... There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; ... identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results" (1990: 25).

I started this subsection with De Beauvoir's famous quote. To Butler, this quote would read 'one is not born, but rather makes woman'. By performing 'woman', one not only becomes woman (on an individual level), but through repetition of this performance, one also enables, produces, and regulates the discursive notion of woman. Butler's ideas of gender performance can and have been transferred to other identities, such as ethnicity (e.g. Ehlers, 2006) and age (e.g. Duits, 2007).

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Criticism of identity as a role or performance

The applicability of theatrical metaphors to daily life has been well criticised. One point of criticism is the absence of a division between on-stage and off-stage in daily life, whereas in the theatre, the performance on stage is clearly distinct from the performance off-stage (Wilshire, 1982: 45). This distinction means that in the theatre, a performance ends and a role can be 'taken off'. In the theatre there is a difference between when an individual is performing, and when, after the performance, an actor 'returns' to his/her 'real' self. Identity, on the other hand, is not something that can be cast aside when away from an audience.

A second point of criticism involves the relationship of "the self being performed to the self performing" (Carlson, 1996: 42). Nietzsche and Sartre spoke of an empty self behind the mask of a social role. What is left of the self when all behaviour is nothing but a performance, a part one plays? The idea of identity as a performance then intuitively feels wrong. I argued previously that meanings of social and personal identity do not do justice to our sense of uniqueness. Similarly, a theory that reduces who we are to an empty shell conflicts with our sense of internal coherence and continuity.

Goffman makes no claims about an underlying self, and focuses solely on the ways in which performance function in society. Whether the performer is aware of his performance is besides his point. Likewise, Butler received much critique for *Gender trouble*. People wondered if she really meant to say gender is like a theatrical performance, thereby implying that an individual can change or end that performance. *Bodies that matter* (1993) is a clarification, in response to such accusations.

For if I were to argue that genders are performative, that could mean that I thought that one woke in the morning, perused the closet or some more open space for the gender of choice, donned that gender for the day, then restored the garment to its place at night (Butler, 1993: x).

What follows is a concise argument to emphasise the materiality of the body and its articulation with performance. At the core of this critique is the structure versus agency debate, which I addressed in the first chapter. Following Butler, I want to stress here that identity as a performance by no means implies that identity is radically free, nor does it exist in isolation of the body. In the next section, I discuss how dominant discourse disables performance from being free.

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3.4 Citation and identification

A performance succeeds only because an action “echoes prior actions” (Butler, 1993: 227). One is not free to just perform anything. Performances involve citation and identification, and both concepts involve ‘subject-positions’. In this section, I describe these three concepts.

Citation

Most ‘original’ performative utterances imply a binding power, some form of authority. Anyone can say ‘I now pronounce you husband and wife’, but the utterance is only effective when the speaker has authority. Thus, this utterance is preceded by ‘by the power vested in me’. As such, the utterance is citational – it is in a way a citation – because it calls upon conventions of authority.

[T]he judge who authorizes and installs the situation he names invariably cites the law that he applies, and it is the power of this citation that gives the performative its binding or conferring power. ... Indeed, it is through the invocation of convention that the speech act of the judge derives its binding power; that binding power is to be found neither in the subject of the judge nor his will, but in the citational legacy by which a contemporary ‘act’ emerges in the context of a chain of binding conventions (Butler, 1993: 225).

‘I now pronounce you husband and wife’ has authority because it “emerges in the context of a chain of binding conventions”. A performance can only be successful when it refers back to other actions (‘echoes’ other actions), and repetition is therefore crucial. As Butler states, “no term or statement can function performatively without accumulating and dissimulating historicity of force” (p. 227).

A performance, then, is more a singular act (i.e. Goffman, 1958), whereas performativity refers to the producing effects of power (i.e. Foucault, 1983; 1995). Although ‘sex’ has no real, true substance, it exists because it is constantly cited (remember Santa Claus). Butler argues that the sex is, in Foucaultian terms, a regulatory ideal: a normative practice “that produces the bodies it governs” (Butler, 1993: 1). At birth, one is named male or female, and thus, one is subjected to the norms of sex. This implies that one must live up to these norms. This ‘living up’ is the performance of male/female, and it is done through citing the known norms of masculinity/femininity. Through citing these norms, they are performatively produced and reproduced. Thus, a performance is not

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“an act by which a subject brings into being what she/he names” (p. 2). Instead, performance is an effect of assuming or identifying with cultural norms through a reiterative and citational practice. After one is named male or female, the subject is sexed and is summoned to assume this given sex. Discourse, “the heterosexual imperative”, “enables certain sexed identifications and forecloses and/or disavows other identifications” (p. 2).

Identification

Hall classifies identification as “one of the least well-understood concepts – almost as tricky as, though preferable to, ‘identity’ itself” (1996: 2). He understands identification as a process of construction and articulation⁴. This process is continuous and identification is never complete, as there “is always an over-determination or a lack, but never a proper fit, a totality” (p. 3). The connection of identity to identification emphasises that identity is not a static concept, but “fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions” (p. 4).

Identities have a discursive, material, and political effectiveness, but the process of identification is fictional nonetheless. Hall argues that one always ‘knows’ that the identity is only a representation “constructed across a ‘lack’, across a division, from the place of the Other” (p. 6). Likewise, Butler maintains that identification is “phantasmatic”:

Significantly, [identification] never can be said to have taken place; identification does not belong to the world of events. Identification is constantly figured as a desired event or accomplishment, but one which is never achieved; identification is the phantasmatic staging of the event. In this sense, identifications belong to the imaginary; they are phantasmatic efforts of alignment, loyalty, ambiguous and cross-corporeal cohabitation (Butler, 1993: 105).

Full identification is thus something one strives for, but can never achieve. This highlights process over product, and provides an incentive to investigate identities not as results, but as processes – as performances. Hall defines identities therefore as “points of temporary attachment to the subject positions” (1996: 6). Put differently, identities are points of identification, and identification is ‘temporary attachment to subject-positions’. Citation, in turn, is ‘appealing to known norms or conventions associated with subject-positions’. I now discuss this newly introduced term.

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Subject-positions

To Foucault, the subject is created within discourse. Foucault historicises the subject: he traces the genealogies of discourses which created the subject (Foucault, 1983). For instance, the way we have spoken and thought about sexuality (= the discourse of sexuality), has created specific sexual subjects (Foucault, 1990). Subjects then, are:

figures who personify the particular forms of knowledge which the discourse produces. These subjects have the attributes we would expect as these are defined by the discourse: the madman, the hysterical woman, the homosexual, the individualized criminal, and so on. These figures are specific to specific discursive regimes and historical periods (Hall, 1997: 56).

This is the first sense in which discourse produces the subject. Second, discourse creates a *place* for the subject. Corey and Peterson explain:

For Foucault, discourse is a regulated way of speaking and acting within a system that offers “subject positions” to speaking persons. By assuming a subject position (which is both a personal and social feat) a person takes a place in the social order, making sense of the world from this vantage point while also being subjected to discourses common to it (e.g., expectations, normative performances) (2003: 407).

Subjects must thus *position* themselves in discourse, hence the construct ‘subject-positions’. By taking up this position, a subject then ‘subjects’ itself to the “meanings, power and regulation” of that discourse (Hall, 1997: 56). Such a position contains information about who the subject is supposed to be and how the subject is supposed to act. For instance, by looking at their position in discourse, Crone (2007: 26) analyses the discourse around television and finds ‘viewers’, ‘parents’, ‘experts’ et cetera. These positions all come with expected behaviours. To Butler, discourse (the heterosexual matrix) offers the positions ‘man’ and ‘woman’, which the subject must then adopt.

The notion of subject-positions, unlike identity, underscores that who we think we are, or what we know about our self, is the result of power. We cannot think of man/woman, lower class/upper class, or allochthonous/autochthonous without taking account of the power relationships (i.e. the discourses) behind these constructions and oppositions. As such, subject-positions can be understood as locations (Braidotti, 1994; Edley, 2001). The term encompasses a tension between ‘subject’ (connotations of active agency) and ‘subjection’. Bringing the notions of

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location, discourse, and subject together, I define a subject-position as 'a discursively created location a person can take up, which implies directions for living' (see also Staunæs, 2003:104).

3.5 Operationalising performance: style

In the first part of the chapter, I laid the first foundations for the theoretical framework. After discussing theory on identity and identity performance, I introduced citation, identification and subject-position as analytical tools with which to study identity (see the glossary of terms at the end of this chapter for working definitions). In this second part, I discuss how we can study doing identity in an empirical context.

Butler's book calls for 'gender trouble', to render genders "thoroughly and radically incredible" (Butler, 1990: 141) through subversive bodily acts. One of the criticisms of *Gender trouble* was Butler's imprecision in explaining how such gender parody can be achieved (e.g. Kaplan, 1992). Similarly, I want to add that Butler does not elaborate on how performances and performativity can be analysed empirically. Indeed, Butler is brief about actual practices:

The effect of gender is produced through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding self (Butler, 1990: 140).

Butler thus locates identity performance in the "stylization of the body", describing gender as a "corporeal style" (p.139) and a "stylized repetition of acts" (p.140). A subject can use "styles of various kinds" which, ultimately, realise a subject-position.

'Style'⁵ is a concept closely associated with subcultural research, mostly through Hebdige's (1979) *Subculture: The meaning of style*. This title is deceptive, as Hebdige fails to provide a definition of style. Style is central in his argument nonetheless, and he states "[t]he communication of a significant *difference*, then (and the parallel communication of a group identity), is the 'point' behind the style of all spectacular subcultures" (Hebdige, 1979: 102). His contemporary CCCS researchers understood style as "the materials available to the group for the construction of subcultural identities", a usage resembling Butler's. Within parentheses they added "dress, music, talk" (Clarke, Hall, Jefferson, & Roberts, 1976: 53). Adapting these definitions, I understand style as 'materials used in the distinction of one person or group from the other'⁶.

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I specifically look not only at the suggested dress, music, and talk, but I also expand dress to include appearance, and music to include popular media in general. Talk can take many forms and would justify an entire study in its own right. Instead, I only focus on talk about appearance or popular media.

Performance practices

We now have a definition and an operationalisation of style. Following the performance framework laid-out above, I focus on style to study identity performance. I define a performance practice as ‘a distinctive act (involving style), which performatively constitutes a subject-position’. Let us go through this definition using the example of a girl wearing a skirt. A skirt is a stylistic element and wearing the skirt is an act. This act is distinctive, because a skirt cites known conventions of femininity and thus opposes masculine styles. Furthermore, the practice is performative, because through the action, femininity is effectuated and produced. Wearing the skirt is a practice that performs a feminine identity.

This idea can be transformed to other subject-positions as well. For instance, girls often borrow each other’s clothes. Putting on a girl’s sweater can be read as an expression of friendship. A reading in terms of performance interprets this act as *performative* of friendship. By itself, a sweater has nothing to do with the position of the friend. Through the larger practice and in a specific context, the sweater becomes meaningful.

The word ‘act’ suggests functionalism and voluntarism, but this is deceptive. Butler never intended gender to be understood as a voluntary project, and any such reading of her work is a misapprehension. Butler argues that gender is a construction, but:

it is not necessarily constructed by an “I” or a “we” who stands before that construction in any spatial or temporal sense of “before” ... Subjected to gender, but subjectivated by gender, the “I” neither precedes nor follows the process of this gendering, but emerges only within and as the matrix of gender relations themselves (1993: 7).

Gender is not a construction of the subject, but instead an effect of discourse. Our own need for a sense of agency motivates this misreading. Unlike what we tend to think and feel, style cannot be deployed at one’s own disposition to ‘create’ a chosen identity. Thus, a skirt is instrumental in the construction of gender; however, this construction is not consciously done by the girl who wears it. Nonetheless, by wearing the

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skirt the girl reiterates the norms of gender and as such, makes these norms 'true'. It does not imply that the girl purposefully wanted to construct the notion of gender, or to perform gender intentionally. Comparably, although the friends probably did not intend to give off a performance of friendship by wearing each other's sweaters, the act is performative in the friendship nonetheless. I operationalised style into appearance and media use and talk, which are addressed in the following sections.

3.6 Appearance

I use appearance as an umbrella term for observable features of the body, observable items of clothing, and other observable objects attached to the body, such as makeup, hairstyle, jewellery etc. Although the observable nature of appearance suggests a straightforward analysis, in this section I problematize both the body and clothing as self-evident systems of meanings. The two are discussed in separate subsections and with different theories, but it should be noted that they cannot be separated: "human bodies are *dressed* bodies" (Entwistle, 2000: 6). Clothing is a frame for the body.

The body

Under the Cartesian legacy, the body has long been ignored in social science and philosophy. Feminism, Foucault, and post-modernism increased social scientific interest in the body (Frank, 1990; Oinas, 2001), leading to a discursive explosion of body theorising. Since Descartes, academic thinking considered mind and body to be distinct. When feminists entered academia, they fought this dualism, as they found themselves living in a world in which differences between men and women were essentialized and considered to be biologically determined. Furthermore, they argued that the neglect of the body was not accidental, but the result of the dualisms of this Cartesian legacy and the centrality of rationalism in modernist science. Western thought distinguishes mind and body, and separates human experience in a spiritual and a bodily realm. According to feminist theorists, this dualism works against women:

The female body becomes a metaphor for the corporeal pole of this dualism, representing nature, emotionality, irrationality and sensuality. Images of the dangerous, appetitive female body, ruled precariously by her emotions, stand in contrast to the masterful, masculine will, the locus of social power, rationality and self-control. The female body is always the 'other': mysterious, unruly, threatening to erupt and challenge the patriarchal order (K. Davis, 1997: 5).

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Bordo further argues that this dualism is effectively an instrument with which to retain patriarchal power, by associating the masculine with objectivity and reason, and the feminine with nature and emotion:

The cost ... to women is obvious. For if, whatever the specific historical duality, the body is the negative term, and if woman is the body, then women are that negativity, whatever it may be: distraction from knowledge, seduction away from God, capitulation to sexual desire, violence or aggression, failure of will, even death (Bordo, 1993: 5).

Feminist theory on the body is more than a critique of modernist Cartesian thought; it is a political project that addresses the inscription of power on the body. Here, feminism borrowed strongly from Foucault's work on the body and power.

Foucault argues that the body can only be understood by disentangling the discourses surrounding it. Although the body is central to all his work, *Discipline and punish* ([1975], 1995) provides a strong entry point into his thinking. The book is a genealogy of the modern legal system. In traditional times, Foucault writes, power was centralised and the ruler had direct physical power over his citizens. The ruler established power by the use of public punishments with which to remind the citizenry to be obedient. Urbanisation, population growth, and industrialisation changed the nature of power, and discipline was substituted for the physical exercise of power. In lieu of physical imprisonment and torture came a system of constant surveillance and fear of the state. The same societal trends increased the need for disease control and sexuality restraints. To deal with these concerns, new disciplines emerged: psychology, criminology, and sociology.

The historical moment of the disciplines was the moment when an art of the human body was born, which was directed not only at the growth of its skills, or at the intensification of its subjection, but at the formation of a relation that in the mechanism itself makes it more obedient as it becomes more useful, and conversely (Foucault, 1995: 137-138).

A system of discipline appeared, where the concern was not with repression or obedience, but with self-discipline. Here, Foucault introduces the term 'docile bodies', bodies which effectively function in factories, the military, and in classrooms. Discourse disciplines the body, not by an excessive display of power, but in small steps and through details. The nice girl construct that I described in chapter 2 is an example of such a disciplinary discourse. This is what Foucault calls biopower:

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“the management of life and the government of populations through technologies of surveillance, specialized knowledges and corrective measures” (Howson, 2004: 165). The emphasis is on self-discipline. Instead of state coercion, systems of surveillance ensure that individuals discipline their own behaviour. Biopower is a productive power, as all power is to Foucault. For instance, people believe that disease control is in their best interests and therefore take the necessary measures. We bath each day, brush our teeth, take vitamins – all without thinking about it. Biopower thus shows control through mundane activities.

Descartes argued that alteration or damage to bodies would not alter the sense that a person has of him/herself. As such, he approached identity in a disembodied manner. Conversely, identities are now thought to have a very material basis, and the physical body “is one site which might both set the boundaries of who we are and provide the basis of identity” (Woodward, 1997a: 13). Gender, sexuality and ethnicity, as well as identities related to disability (Aapola, Gonick, & Harris, 2005; Howard, 2000), all have some (discursive) relationship to the body. In addition, in our consumer society, the body has become a form of physical capital, a commodity (Bourdieu, 1984). The body has become the object of maintenance and work, and the shape, size and appearance of bodies can be influenced – from dieting to cosmetic surgery, from exercise to tattooing (Howson, 2004). The body is a site of identity and of performance. This does not mean that anything is possible and that we can simply turn our bodies into the desired form. Butler argues for the materiality of bodies, and following Foucault, she states that bodies are always-already inscribed by discourse (Butler, 1993). The pain and suffering that transgender people go through indicates how body manipulation is only acceptable to a certain degree. Dyeing one’s hair from dark to light blond cannot be analysed in a similar way to the act of bleaching one’s skin.

Clothing

In the first chapter, I argued how different opinion leaders ascribe different meanings to the headscarf, meanings that are probably not shared by the girls who wear it. The idea that clothes communicate is common sense, but how does this actually work and which meanings are communicated? Hebdige (1979) argues that style is intentional communication, a visible construction that exists to be read. However, Hebdige’s analysis of style in the punk subculture was not conducted within this subculture, meaning he never spoke to any punks about their inten-

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tional communication. Therefore, Entwistle (2000: 70) criticises his approach as 'armchair ethnography'. A structuralist reading like Hebdige's presumes an objective meaning, which can be retrieved through analysis; a misconception that is further enabled by the idea of clothes as a language, i.e. as a form of communication with its own vocabulary (e.g. Barnard, 2002; Lurie, 1981).

Clothes clearly contain codes that can be read. When we see someone running through the park in a tracksuit, we assume it is a jogger. However, when we see a girl in a club in an oversized, yet similar tracksuit, we assume she is into hip-hop music. The question then is: is it possible to conjure up an inventory containing all possible clothing codes? Davis (1992) discusses three characteristics of the fashion code that make such a model impossible. First, the meaning of fashion depends highly on the context, as the example of the tracksuit makes clear: who wears it, in what mood, on what occasion, in which place, in which company? Second, there is a high social variability in the signifier-signified relationship. Thus, "the universe of meanings attaching to clothes, cosmetics, hairstyles, and jewelry ... is highly differentiated in terms of taste, social identity, and persons' access to the symbolic wares of a society" (p. 9). It is difficult to have people interpret clothing codes in the same way. Third, in clothing, undercoding is also important. Some clothing codes are meant to communicate an impression, or a subtlety. Furthermore, "as soon as an aesthetic code comes to be generally perceived as a code (as a way of expressing notions which have already been articulated), then works of art tend to move beyond it" (Culler, 1976: 100 in F. Davis, 1992: 11)⁷.

A further problem hinders the reading of clothes as codes. In a critique on what he labels the 'clothing as communication hypothesis', Campbell argues that not everyone intends to communicate meaning.

The critically important point is that ... since consumers cannot avoid wearing clothes they are unable to prevent others from 'reading' meanings into the clothes they wear. Now they may be well aware of this: that is to say, they may anticipate that the wearing of an old, worn suit is likely to lead others to assume that they are relatively poor. But it does not follow from this that because they wear it they therefore *intend* to send such a message (Campbell, 1999: 349).

This example is problematic. Although the wearer is aware of a possible interpretation of his outfit and does not intend to send out that possible meaning, he still wears the outfit. The intentional element is crucial:

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is he or is he not communicating? Is he playing with the message? Does he want to show role distance? Furthermore, amongst young people, appearance is deemed a conscious choice of an active subject. De Waal (1989) argues that girls who lack the means or power to dress expectedly, are 'out'. She describes 'Netty' who claims to look down on her classmates for trying to fit in. Her classmates do not believe her. Netty does not get much allowance and her parents do not allow her to have a part-time job. Her classmates pick on her:

One of her classmates says: 'You can tell from her clothes that she has no opinion of her own'. Netty's defence is that her parents don't give her the chance to dress the ways she wants. Her classmates brush this aside: she should not let herself be bossed around by her parents (De Waal, 1989: 157, my translation).

Netty is made responsible for her appearance, and the meaning of her clothes can only be understood by taking both Netty and her classmates into account.

Instead of approaching clothes as codes comparable to texts, a performance approach is more useful. When Netty's clothes are seen as a performance practice, the analysis of the meaning of her performance would logically consider not only performer *and* audience (her classmates), but also the process and the context. In section 3.3, I discussed impression management and how audience and performer are aware of the other's impression management. Netty not only failed to wear the right clothes, she also failed to convincingly perform role distance.

3.7 Media

The study of youth cultures in the post-war era has focused strongly on popular music (Frith, 1984; Wulff, 1995). As Ter Bogt, Hibbel and Sikkema argue:

Music is often the crystallisation point of a certain style. In the interplay between artists and their audience, there gradually develops a more or less coherent code regarding clothes, hairdo, expression, posture, jargon and manners. A style characterises itself in behaviour, symbols and objects (2000: 24, my translation).

Young people use different popular music genres to create boundaries between themselves and other groups. Christenson and Roberts state that music allows the making of territorial claims:

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Popular music at once expresses, creates, and perpetuates the essential 'us-them' distinctions that develop between groups, and not just symbolically. Whether played by groups in public places or by individual teens in upstairs bedrooms, music stakes a powerful territorial claim. Indeed, it may be the most highly charged 'No trespassing' sign in adolescent society (Christenson & Roberts, 1998: 58-59).

The most fundamental boundary here is the distinction between young people and adults (Frith, 1984), but music also distinguishes different youth cultures. Christenson and Roberts (1998: 59) claim that most cliques in American and Canadian high schools are organised around musical preferences, an idea confirmed by (older) Dutch research as well (De Waal, 1989). Popular music offers identity packages. For instance, goths – people who like gothic music – dress similarly, have similar consumption patterns, spend their leisure time in a comparable way and share the same norms and values (Hodkinson, 2002: 195; North & Hargreaves, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c). Two important points of criticism should be considered though. First, self-categorisation of youngsters into groups tends to be unreliable, as most claim to be 'unique' (Ter Bogt et al., 2000: 20-21). Second, the media often create the distinctions between groups, as Thornton concludes:

[S]ubcultures are best defined as social groups that have been labeled as such. ... Communications media create subcultures in the process of naming them and draw boundaries around them in the act of describing them (Thornton, 1995: 162).

Despite further critiques of subcultural research (e.g. Muggleton, 2000; Weinzierl & Muggleton, 2003), the connection between popular music and youthful identities is persistent.

The relationship between media and youth culture is theorised in youth research in two ways. First, media play an important role in the dissemination of style (Hebdige, 1979; Kellner, 1995; Thornton, 1995; Weinzierl & Muggleton, 2003). Thus, goths in the Netherlands learn how to be a goth through, for instance, representations of American goths in popular media. Second, media offer ways of expressing identity (Bovill & Livingstone, 2001; Christenson & Roberts, 1998; Hebdige, 1979; Ter Bogt et al., 2000; Weinzierl & Muggleton, 2003). It is this second relationship that is central to this research. Common sense holds that one's musical collection says something about a person. From a performance perspective, I argue that music – and other media use – is

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not expressive of identity, but is performative in identity. Thus, listening to goth music is not an expression of identity; instead, listening to goth performatively brings about 'the goth'. Frith makes this argument as he states that "our experience of music ... is best understood as an experience of this *self-in-process* (Frith, 1996: 109). He continues:

What I want to suggest ... is not that social groups agree on values which are then expressed in their cultural activities (the assumption of the homology models) but that they only get to know themselves *as groups* (as a particular organization of individual and social interests, of sameness and difference) *through* cultural activity, through aesthetic judgement (Frith, 1996: 111).

Expanding this argument from popular music to popular media in general, in the next two subsections, I discuss performative media use and performative media talk.

Media use

Sarah Louise Baker (2004) argues that popular music offers a way of enacting and representing different subject-positions. Based on ethnographic fieldwork with girls aged eight to eleven, Baker explored the bedroom as a site for 'serious play'. As a dramaturgical concept, play "invites the exploration of Otherness, a stretching of the boundaries between the familiar, a testing of the new" (Baker, 2004: 83). Her informants imitated their idols, but they also 'played radio', i.e. they created their own fictional radio show. Such media play allowed the girls in Baker's research to 'test' different subject-positions: playing with them, but ultimately making it one's own, thus performatively bringing about a certain subject-position.

Dancing and singing to celebrities and playing radio-host are clear examples of play through media use. Watching television or reading a magazine provide fewer opportunities for play, however, television programmes and magazines titles often have strong target groups, around which a clear image is built (e.g. *Sex & the City*, Dutch girls' magazine *Tina*). Media use is a way of citing the values (the images, connotations, and norms) attached to such titles.

Media talk: discursive identity construction

McKinley studied the ways in which the viewers of the 1990s teen drama *Beverly Hills 90210* talked about their favourite show. She suggests that

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such talk leads to 'us versus them' moralities. The viewers mocked and criticised the text, and gave alternative meanings to it. Furthermore, she argues that much of this talk focuses on appearances, where the viewers are ruthless in their judgments. McKinley calls this type of talk 'identity talk': "talk that presents the speaker as a particular kind of person, within a particular community, subject to certain constraints and alive to certain possibilities" (McKinley, 1997: 7). Following this work, research on soap opera talk similarly argues that soaps invite discursive identity construction (Barker, 1997, 1998; Costera Meijer & De Bruin, 2003; De Bruin, 2005). Comparably, Hermes' (1993) study of women's magazines revealed that readers formed "imagined 'new' selves" (p. 199) based on these magazines. Through reading women's magazines and/or talking about them with friends, readers appeal to morality and thus create shared moral standards, ranging from understanding to disapproval:

Gossip brings together by creating an intimate common world in which (private) standards of morality apply to what is and what isn't acceptable behaviour, about basic human values and emotions ... [R]eading gossip magazines does not evolve around fantasies of perfect selves but around fantasies of belonging: to an extended family or to a moral community. Moreover interpreting the gossip magazine text, readers use and validate their own personal knowledge and experiences (Hermes, 1993: 184).

These studies show how media talk plays a part in the reflexive project of the self. Furthermore, discursive identity construction can be turned around: identity then is not constructed, but performed through media talk. Although these studies do not address identity performance as such⁸, they do suggest that media talk can be a performance practice.

3.8 Summary

I have established that identity is a narrative of the self. Individuals believe this identity to be stable and unique, even though it is an ongoing project. These identities have no real inner core; instead, they are performatively constituted through repetitions of performances in performance practices. Identities can never be fully embodied, and I therefore prefer to speak of identification, thus of temporary attachment to a subject-position. To take the headscarf as an example: wearing the headscarf is approached as a performance practice, instead approaching the scarf as a text with a fixed meaning. The scarf is performative for a

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religious identity, as it cites conventions of a Muslim subject-position. The performance approach allows one to look at the processes of meaning negotiation between performer and audience. It allows asking the girl about her intended meanings, whilst at the same time acknowledging that this process of making meaning is dynamic. It is shaped in interaction with the audience and with discourse. Since audiences change (at school one confronts a different audience than at home), performances should be studied in context.

Research questions

Now that I have discussed the analytical tools necessary to study the doing of identity, I am able to specify the research question as a second set of sub-questions to add to the first set formulated in chapter 1. To study identity performance empirically, one can investigate the narratives that girls maintain and produce about themselves. One can analyse the identifications that girls express by examining various performance practices. This translates into the following sub-questions:

- Which subject-positions do girls take up?
- How do girls use appearance and media to perform these subject positions?
- Which restraints do they face in their performance practices?
- Under which influences do these positions arise?
- What are the criteria governing their performances?

Before we can turn to a discussion of the answers to these questions in the results chapters, chapter 4 describes the methods and methodology employed.

Chapter 4

Method & Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The first three chapters introduced the subject matter of, and the theoretical backgrounds to, this study. From these three chapters, a central research question and several sub-questions were derived:

RQ: How do girls position themselves in the multicultural society?

1. Which spaces exist at primary school for identity performance?
2. How do schools position girls?
3. What are the differences between primary and secondary school?
4. Which subject-positions do the girls take up?
5. How do girls use appearance and media to perform subject-positions?
6. Which restraints do girls face in their performance practices?
7. Under which influences do the various subject-positions arise?
8. What are the criteria governing girls' performances?

I argued that in order to understand the everyday world of girls, one must become submerged in their daily routines. The performative approach to identity, as discussed in chapter 3, assumes that identities are a collective effort, produced in constant negotiation with others. Hence, it makes sense to study an existing group of individuals as they go about their daily lives. An ethnographic design was therefore the most appropriate.

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Ethnographic accounts rarely have the detailed method discussions one finds in quantitative social science journals and books. To some ethnographers, the quality of an ethnography is judged by its ability to generate insight, not by the rigorous depiction of method (Stewart, 1998). However, an explicit discussion of the method and methodology used, “allows for a more informed judgment about which aspects of the study to accept, to reject, and to qualify” (Agar, 1996: 14 in Stewart, 1998: 4). This chapter aims to provide such an insight into how the research was conducted. First I explain the design of this ethnography, and then go on to discuss the different methods used in this study: participant observation, in-depth interviews, additional alternative methods, and focus groups. After elaborating on how the analysis was conducted, I reflect on my role as researcher, on ethics, and on the quality of qualitative research. The chapter ends with a note on writing and representation.

4.2 Design

Ethnography has been defined in different ways and there is no consensus about any definition. To add to the confusion, it has been approached as both a method (a set of procedures for gathering and analyzing data) and a methodology (a theory of how to understand social phenomena). As a method, ethnography refers to research wherein behaviour is studied on a small scale in an everyday, single setting, with observation and/or informal conversations being the main data gathering methods (Hammersley, 1990: 1-2). As a methodology (thus encompassing more than method), ethnography can be defined as

Iterative-inductive research (that evolves in design through the study), drawing on a family of methods, involving direct and sustained contact with human agents, within the context of their daily lives (and cultures), watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions, and producing a richly written account that respects the irreducibility of human experience, that acknowledges the role of theory, as well as the researcher’s own role, and that views humans as part object/part subject (O’Reilly, 2005: 3).

As a methodology, the term is often used interchangeably with qualitative research or interpretative research (Hammersley, 1990: 1; see Van Zoonen, 1994: 131-132 for a discussion). This section elaborates on my use of ethnography as a methodology. The different methods used in this study are described in the subsequent sections. O’Reilly’s definition involves the design of an ethnographic study and the epistemo-

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logical and ontological considerations underlying this approach¹. I discuss these in the context of this study.

The *design* of this study is characterised by an iterative-inductive approach. It is inductive because it is aimed at generating theory (about identity and agency) rather than testing hypotheses; iterative because it has been fluid and flexible, constantly moving between reading theory, conducting fieldwork, and rethinking the research questions. Induction means no theory before data, but within qualitative research it is now commonly accepted that no study can be completely inductive (e.g. Kelle, 1997; O'Reilly, 2005; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Induction refers to an open mind, and an ethnographic research design should be reflexive at all times (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1993). Induction does not mean a blank mind, however, and the project therefore started with an extensive literature review of studies on girls. I also interviewed four experienced 'school researchers' to get an understanding of what I would face in the classroom: Mieke de Waal, who conducted a similar ethnography amongst girls in the first years of secondary school; Suzanne Kuik, who conducted a school ethnography amongst children aged 10-11 (7th form); Lenie Brouwer, who conducted an ethnography amongst Turkish girls; and Juliette Walma van der Molen, a quantitative researcher who has conducted many surveys in primary schools. Moreover, throughout the project I continuously read theory, which shaped my observations and inspired my own theory building (Gilbert, 2001; Willis & Trondman, 2000). Iteration in this sense is best understood as a spiral (O'Reilly, 2005): although it loops, it is also moving forward. Within ethnography, data gathering and data analysis cannot be strictly separated. Because observations are selective interpretations, analysis and interpretation are already an intrinsic part of the data gathering stage. The iterative-inductive approach materialised concretely in memos in which I elaborated on theoretical inspirations and striking observations.

Like most ethnographic studies (but not all), the underlying *epistemology* of this study is interpretivism. Interpretivism holds that we can only understand the world by investigating the interpretation of that world by its participants (Bryman, 2001: 265), meaning we should investigate the perspectives and experiences of the people being studied. Interpretivism is based on a constructionist ontology. The social world and its categories are not external to us, but are constituted in and through interaction (Bryman, 2001: 18). Social constructions are continually constructed and reconstructed, and there are no 'facts' that we

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can know (Deacon, Pickering, Golding, & Murdock, 1999: 7). Interpretivism, then, aims at generating “descriptions, insights, and explanations of events so that the system of interpretations and meaning, and the structuring and organizing processes, are revealed” (Gioia & Pitre, 1990: 588). As well as observing girls, I talked extensively to them, investigating their own experiences and understandings of their performance practices. This is evidenced mainly in chapter 10, where I discuss the repertoires that girls use for making sense of these practices.

Finding the field

Ethnographic researchers use systematic, but non-random strategies to select research cases. The population for this study was selected on the basis of definitional, conceptual and logistical considerations (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999: 112). I started my search with definitional considerations, which refer to which population should be studied and why. As made clear in chapter 1, the intention of the project has been to follow girls in their transition from primary school to secondary school, because I expected this transition to entail a change in the performance of identity. Basing the population on an existing primary school was therefore an obvious choice. This meant that a number of choices regarding the population had already been made: it concerns a topic-orientated ethnography in a single community. In a topic-orientated ethnography, the focus is on one or more aspects of life (Spradley, 1980: 31), in this case, style. Conversely, in a comprehensive ethnography, the researcher sets out to document a community’s complete way of life. A classroom is a single social situation (Spradley, 1980: 30), and this ethnography does not cover other social situations in the lives of girls, such as after-school activities, or the home (although I do, at times, refer to such other social situations).

Second, I formulated conceptual considerations regarding saturation: does the proposed population include enough cases with the characteristics in which I am interested? Cases can be selected to either determine patterns of difference between members of a population, or to further clarify research questions (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999: 113). I originally intended to select typical cases, meaning I wanted to find an average school in an average municipality. After contacting the Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten [Association of Netherlands Municipalities], I discovered that finding an average municipality is a hopeless task. The obvious question is: average in what? In political

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preferences, in number of inhabitants? The central concept of this study is identity, with a specific focus on the multicultural society. As stated in appendix I, about fifteen per cent of Dutch girls between 11-13 years old, qualify as non-Western allochthonous. Many Dutch municipalities meet this condition, including Amsterdam.

Logistical considerations then further narrowed my search for a population. A population in Groningen would be unnecessarily time and money consuming. In my search for a mixed-population primary school in Amsterdam, I discovered two problems. First, Dutch schools are becoming increasingly ethnically segregated (Karsten, Ledoux, Roeleveld, Felix, & Elshof, 2003), and mixed schools are becoming rare in Amsterdam. Gaining access turned out to be a second problem. Often, a school was already accommodating several researchers and student teachers. Moreover, my proposal (attending class two days a week) was quite invasive. The principals I approached feared that I would evaluate their teachers, even though I emphasised that my interest lay only with the pupils. Gaining access is a practical and well-acknowledged problem, which can be facilitated by a sponsor: someone who knows the field and can introduce the researcher (Walsh, 2000). Enquiries within my network led to two possible sponsors: an 8th form teacher who agreed to have me in his class, and a teacher who volunteered her 8th form colleague. Neither school, however, was mixed, but qualified as 'black' and 'white' respectively². I then decided to move from typical case selection to comparable case selection (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999), and from a single-sited ethnography to a multi-sited ethnography.

Multi-sited ethnography

Anthropological ethnographies conventionally take place in a single site. Sociological ethnographies have never been restricted to such a "single tribe approach" (Nadai & Maeder, 2005), but multi-sited ethnographies arose particularly in such interdisciplinary fields as media studies, feminist studies, and cultural studies. Multi-sited ethnography refers to parallel fieldwork, for instance in a distant, exotic field and in a nearby, familiar field, or in different social situations. One advantage of multi-sited ethnography is its ability to overcome the "dominant conception of ethnography as a heroic exploration of otherness" (Wacquant, 2004: 387). Second, as Nadai and Maeder (2005) argue, the addition of one or more sites to an ethnography provides additional empirical grounding of the study.

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The role of comparison in a multi-sited ethnography is not to claim representative differences between populations or situations. Instead, comparison occurs “in the form of juxtapositions of phenomena that conventionally have appeared to be (or conceptually have been kept) ‘worlds apart’” (Marcus, 1995). Muslim girls are ‘Othered’ in societal debates about their choices (Duits & Van Zoonen, 2007). A multi-sited ethnography allowed me to approach autochthonous and allochthonous girls not as distant others, but as equal parts of a subculture of girls (see chapter 1). My aim was thus to get a finely-grained picture of similar processes in different places. I decided to start in the setting that was the least familiar to me.

4.3 The two main fields

I now, chronologically, discuss the different methods of data gathering used in this project. Participant observation is the most common method of ethnographic research, and was the main method of data gathering for this study. The observations took place at two schools, the ‘black’ Gunningschool and the ‘white’ Kantlijn. The observations at the Gunningschool started in November 2005 and lasted for eight months. The observations at the Kantlijn started in February 2006 and lasted for six months. At each school, I spent two days a week in class. In the first three months, I attended the Gunningschool on Mondays and Tuesdays. To sample days and events (O’Reilly, 2005), I changed days when I started at the Kantlijn, attending Mondays and Tuesdays there, and Thursdays and Fridays at the Gunningschool. The observations lasted until the end of the school year, 13 July, 2006. In May, I was absent for a month of travelling, providing a natural break between the more intense participant observation period, and the interview period. I participated in and observed all class activities during the day, including gym classes and museum fieldtrips. I also attended several after-school activities: school football matches; an information evening for parents and pupils; a birthday party; and the graduation ceremonies at the end of the school year. The following sub-sections introduce the two primary schools.

The Gunningschool

Neighbourhood

The school was located in one of Amsterdam’s so-called western garden cities, in a neighbourhood known as a disadvantaged area. The western garden cities were built in the 1950s and ‘60s to counter post-war housing

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shortages. They were built in the New Pragmatism style, with green areas and low-rise buildings. In the 1970s and 80s, many of the original inhabitants moved away and immigrant new-comers took their place, changing the population considerably (Mak, 1999: 286, 308). In 2006, the population of the neighbourhood consisted of a little over 41.000 inhabitants, of whom 56 per cent were non-western allochthonous (O+S, 2006). This distribution varied across areas, but the overall percentage of autochthonous inhabitants in the neighbourhood is decreasing every year. The largest groups of immigrants were Moroccans (22%) and Turks (15%) (Van Zee & Hylkema, 2005). This neighbourhood had the highest unemployment rate in the city (13.5% in 2005). Large-scale urban renewal was planned for the coming years.

General

The Gunningschool was a Christian primary school with about 225 pupils divided between eleven classes. Classes were small in the earlier years, during which the pyramid-method³ was used. In the senior years, classes were large, but so-called *remedial teachers* occasionally took small groups of pupils out of class. The changing composition of the neighbourhood corresponded with a changing population of the school. The school's recent motto, 'colourful with an eye for difference' was meant to refer to the ethnic diversity of the school. However, the majority of the pupils were of Turkish or Moroccan descent, thus making the school population relatively homogenous. Although the school did not provide information about the exact composition of its population, parents and teachers referred to it as a black school. The school strongly adhered to its Christian legacy, mainly because of the principal, who had a strong presence there. The Gunningschool was strict and authoritarian (see chapter 5). Formality manifested itself, amongst others, in language use. Pupils had to address staff members with 'juf' [miss] or 'meester' [±mister], and use the formal 'you'⁴. Staff members regularly complained about a lack of parental involvement and about the difficulties they faced in enforcing the rules. They ascribed this to the ethnic backgrounds of pupils and parents. They claimed that strictness and rigidity were necessary because the school was black.

Faculty

The faculty did not reflect the composition of either the school or the neighbourhood. The team consisted of about 35 people, amongst whom were a Hindustani janitor, a Turkish kindergarten teacher, a Moroccan teaching assistant and a Surinamese teaching assistant. The school had

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a large turnover of staff. The monthly newsletter was filled with notices about sick teachers. Most teachers either left for a new school after a few years, or ended up on sick leave. The principal, Peer Wouda, who fitted the stereotype of an old-fashioned schoolmaster, safeguarded the school's continuity. Wouda was 66 years old at the time of research, and had been principal of this school for 32 years. At the end of the research, in the summer of 2006, the coordinating school board forced him to retire, a decision to which he strongly objected. Wouda had been inextricably bound up with the school, and in all probability the new principal will bring about many changes⁵. As is mandatory these days, a different teacher taught physical education. The teacher of the 8th form, Thomas, was a *returner* who used to work in insurance but changed to teaching later in life.

The class

Year 8 consisted of 27 students; one girl joined the class in October. Most pupils had only ever attended the Gunningschool. Thomas, the teacher, had also taught this group in the 7th form. The class consisted of thirteen boys and fourteen girls. Lessons were mostly taught to the whole class [klassikaal onderwijs] and the level of the pupils' ability was low. The average CITO-score⁶ was 528, whereas the national average in 2006 was 536. This low score corresponded with the neighbourhood, which was Amsterdam's lowest scoring neighbourhood with 531.8 (DMO, 2006). Six pupils were exempt from the test, because they had received a special education advice (see chapter 6). The 8th form was a black class. If white is understood as being Caucasian or of European descent, only two pupils qualified. Appendix II shows ethnic descent as reported in the interviews. All the Turkish and Moroccan pupils indicated that they were Muslim, making seventy percent of the class Muslim. Two girls moved abroad in the summer of 2006 and were not included in the second wave of data collection: Chemaie moved to Morocco, and Betty moved to England.

The Kantlijn

Neighbourhood

The school was located in one of the old working-class districts of Amsterdam, and was built at the end of the nineteenth century when the city was expanding into the polders around the old centre of canals. Traditionally the neighbourhood has been a mixture of social classes: expensive villas in certain areas and cheap apartments in others. Cheap

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housing attracted many students and poorer families. In 1930, the neighbourhood housed 75.000 people. This number has dropped considerably in recent decades, with families moving to other cities for more space. At the same time, the influx of migrants changed the character of the neighbourhood (Mak, 1999). Recently, the neighbourhood has 'whitened'. In the 1990s, it was known as an area with many allochthonous inhabitants, but this percentage now decreases steadily each year. In recent years, many houses have been renovated, replacing cheap rental apartments with more expensive, privately owned houses. In 2006, the inhabitants numbered a little under 32.000, of whom nineteen percent were non-western allochthonous (this is below the Amsterdam average) (O+S, 2006). A large group of foreigners (14%), remarkably, come from Western countries (see appendix I). The unemployment rate in the neighbourhood is under eight percent, which is also below the Amsterdam average.

General

The Kantlijn was a public school [openbare basisschool] with about 290 pupils, spread between twelve classes. Its educational profile focused on the environment and the experiences of the individual child. Its curriculum featured special projects and extracurricular activities, such as museum and theatre visits. The Kantlijn also paid extra attention to creativity and the connection with society at large. It was a black school until ten years ago, and strived to be representative of a colourful neighbourhood. However, the school, like the neighbourhood, has whitened. During the year of research, the school was renovated and all classes temporarily moved to an old school building in the neighbourhood. In June 2006, the school moved back into a completely refurbished and expanded building.

Faculty

Like the Gunningschool, the Kantlijn only had three allochthonous staff members, who again were classroom assistants and lower form teachers. The educational faculty consisted of about thirty people, most of whom had worked at the Kantlijn for years and were very committed to the school. Classes were small, as years were combined (e.g. forms 5/6 together). This year, the 8th form was an exception. Different teachers taught craftsmanship, English and physical education. School management rested with two individuals, a man and a woman, who both also taught. The teacher of the 8th form, Luck, had been a teacher his entire life, although he had originally worked at Montessori-schools.

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The class

The Kantlijn's 8th form had 28 pupils, made up of eleven boys and seventeen girls. Here too, most pupils had attended the school since 1st form, and their brothers and sisters were also pupils. In class, the students mainly worked independently or in small groups. It struck me that the teacher often left the class unattended. The ability level in the class was substantially higher than at the Gunningschool. The average CITO-score was 539 and all pupils took the test. The Kantlijn had scored the average or above each year, but this year's score was particularly high. The average CITO-score in the neighbourhood was also consistently higher than the national average. The 8th form was whiter than the rest of the school, again, see appendix II for the ethnic composition. One girl, Priscilla, had problems at home and hardly ever attended in the final two months. I lost contact with her and she was not included in the second round. Later, one of the girls informed me that she had moved to Portugal.

4.4 Participating and observing

The position of the researcher in the field is important, because the researcher is, in a way, the 'measurement' tool. The role of the researcher affects how respondents regard and approach him/her. Generally, four possible roles are distinguished, based on more or less covert observations (Junker, 1960 in Walsh, 2000: 222). A *complete participant* does his study covertly, similar to an undercover agent, thus creating ethical problems. The *complete observer* can be compared to the fly on the wall: the researcher observes and avoids any form of social contact, often using a one-way mirror. This role risks ethnocentrism: "the observer, by not interacting with the people under study, cannot get at their meanings and so imposes an alien framework of understanding on the situation" (Walsh, 2000: 222). The *participant as observer* role emphasises participation as a means of building a relationship of trust. This involves the possible risk of over-identification with the subjects. The *observer as participant* observes more than participates, which might cause superficiality of the observations. I, like most ethnographers, moved between the latter two positions, as the extent of observation versus participation changed during the research.

Researching children adds another dimension to the role of the observer. Mandell (1988) argues that the researcher's epistemological assumptions about children as social members determine which role an

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adult ethnographer can take up in observing them. When children are conceptualised as intellectually immature and culturally ignorant, and the researcher views him/herself as developmentally complete, the adult can only study children from an *objective, detached position*. When the researcher focuses on similarities between adults and children, the role can be semi-participatory, as a non-authoritative, helpful *adult-as-friend* (Mandell, 1988: 434). Epistemologically this role still views children as inferior by age, cognitive skills and physique. When this epistemological position is completely abandoned, and differences between children and adults are thought to be ideological, the researcher can equate himself with the child and take on a position as *least-adult* (Mandell, 1988: 435), where only physique sets the researcher apart from his subjects. Although I concur with Mandell that children need to be taken seriously in order to fully grasp their life world, it seemed to me impossible to leave all my cultural baggage outside the field.

Informed by this distinction and the advice of the ethnographers I interviewed when preparing my fieldwork, I decided to position myself as a helpful and friendly 'grown-up girl': not exactly one of them, but not a teacher either. The practices at the Gunningschool hindered my embodiment of this position. Thomas told the pupils to address me as 'juf Linda' [Miss Linda], in line with the rules of the school. This form of address is meant to create distance, which I, in following the goals of ethnography, obviously wanted to avoid. Nonetheless, I grew friendly with all the pupils. At the Kantlijn, I experienced fewer problems in my positioning as a girl, instead, at times, having problems embodying the 'grown-up' aspect. On some occasions I needed to exercise adult authority over the pupils, for instance whilst crossing the street at lunch breaks or during museum visits. During the latter, the pupils, at times, rejected my authority, reminding me of my own claims of not being a teacher. I tailored my impression management (Goffman, 1958) to the role of grown-up girl as well. I avoided hip or too feminine clothes and make-up. My favourite observation outfit was Nike trainers, jeans and a plain sweater. My usual use of language is never very formal, but I did pay attention to my vocabulary. I further reflect on my role as researcher in section 4.12.

The Gunningschool

The participant observation at the Gunningschool started in November 2005. My arrival was announced beforehand and the teacher, Thomas, informed me the pupils were excited about a new person in class. I was

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introduced on a Monday morning and the pupils had few questions other than about what I would do if I spotted secret or forbidden behaviour (see §4.10). The class was set up in a classical classroom style of three rows of two tables each. At the back of the classroom, there stood a large, vacant table, which became mine. By sitting at the back of the class, my role was mostly one of observer. I was astonished by how quickly the pupils accepted me. In the first few days I got curious looks, but I felt that the class was comfortable with my presence. Pupils at primary schools often see student teachers and I think that they considered me as they would one of them. Thomas agreed to my presence, mainly because he benefitted from having an extra pair of hands in class. As a kind of a classroom assistant, I would take pupils aside to give extra arithmetic explanations or to help with handicrafts. Later in the research, I made websites with the pupils (see §4.6). I used this time to gain their trust, away from the teacher. Moreover, it gave me a chance to get to know the kids one-on-one. I participated during recess. At snack time, I always picked a group and sat with them. During the breaks outside, I skipped and talked to the girls. At lunchtime, most pupils went home to eat. Only two of the 8th form pupils stayed at school for lunch, so I decided to spend my lunch breaks in the teacher's lounge. This allowed me to listen in on teachers' conversations and impressions of the pupils.

The Kantlijn

The research at the Kantlijn started in February 2006, and by then I had some experience in dealing with pupils. The teacher, Luck, had forgotten to announce me, and the pupils were surprised by my presence. I presented myself as I had at the Gunningschool, and encountered the same main questions. Unlike at the Gunningschool, the tables at the Kantlijn were arranged in small groups. Luck encouraged me to find an empty spot or to pull up an extra chair, and thus sit with the pupils. As the rules at this school were less strict, and the teacher often left the class, pupils spent much of their time chatting to one another. I could therefore participate much more in class. I sat with a different group every day, getting to know all the pupils and gaining their trust. During breaks outside, I took on a more detached position as observer, to balance the two roles, and spent my time talking to Luck. Most of the pupils stayed at school for lunch in a special lunchtime programme (see chapter 5), and I therefore continued my participant observation during lunch.

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Note taking

Some ethnographers choose to take notes covertly, for instance in the bathroom or by using a dictaphone (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995; O'Reilly, 2005: 98). This seemed an impossible task to me, and I favoured the idea that my informants knew what I was writing down about them, providing disclosure about the project (see §4.10). I therefore always took notes overtly and kept my notebook open on the table. I jotted down observations, events and conversations. The pupils frequently wanted to read what I had written, sometimes expressing surprise about why I wanted to know all this. To avoid embarrassment, I noted down certain situations in 'code'. I sometimes scribbled in Spanish or I wrote down a single word or name to trigger my memory of the event (for instance, when a girl farted in class and there was a commotion about it). I elaborated on my field notes on the computer after school hours.

Methodological reflections on ethnography often address issues of writing and representing. Most contemporary ethnographers dismiss naturalistic or empiricist assumptions about the social field, as if it is awaiting "the discovery and exploration of the intrepid explorer" (Atkinson, 1992: 6-7). Instead, it is the ethnographer who, in three ways, constitutes 'the field': it is constructed through the ethnographer's gaze, it is reconstituted by his/her ability to construct a text of the field, and it is reconstructed through the reader's contextualisation. The very term 'ethno-graphy', the writing of culture, already points to the strong dependence it has on language. It is the ethnographer's task to "turn the dense complexity of everyday life into a linear structure" (Atkinson, 1992: 5). As stated in section 4.2, in ethnographic research, analysis and interpretation are already an intrinsic part of the data gathering stage. Observations are selective interpretations that place frameworks and constraints on 'the data' (Emerson et al., 1995: 5; O'Reilly, 2005: 218). By writing field notes, the ethnographer is thus already interpreting and analysing the social situation under study. When I elaborated on my notes, I made connections to theoretical concepts, and I included field note segments in my memos. This iterative approach also allowed me to make more directed observations on the themes that I had signposted early in the research.

4.5 In-depth interviews

Participant observation is the main method in ethnographic research, and some ethnographers only collect data in naturally occurring settings

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(Walsh, 2000: 227). Asking informal questions is part of participant observation, but often, more formalised, in-depth interviews are used to gain additional understandings or information. In June and July 2006, I conducted additional in-depth interviews with all the pupils at the two schools. The interviews took place during school hours in a separate room. An average interview lasted thirty minutes. All interviews were audio taped and fully transcribed⁷. My aim was threefold. First, I wanted to get background information and ask all the girls some standardized questions for reasons of systematic comparison. Secondly, I wanted to ask questions about popularity and these are hard to answer in the classroom setting with friends (and non-friends) around. Third, conducting in-depth interviews gave me a chance to sit down with the children, uninterrupted and in a changing role. As I maintain that performance changes per setting and audience, the interview setting allowed me to see different performances to the ones that the pupils had given in class (i.e. an interactionist approach to interviewing, see O'Reilly, 2005: 115). While they sometimes forgot that I was a researcher in the classroom setting, in the interview setting my role was unambiguous. Hence, they gave more socially desirable answers and were less spontaneous than in class. For instance, Nursen was an out-going girl and very talkative in class. She was excited about doing the interview, but when we entered the room, she became nervous and froze. She gave short answers, spoke slowly, stared at the floor and appeared altogether shy. The second that I turned the tape recorder off, she was talking nineteen to the dozen again. Most of the pupils, nonetheless, enjoyed being interviewed. Unlike in Anglo-Saxon countries, where 'an interview' might have a negative connotation of formality (cf. a job interview), in Dutch daily language the term 'interview' suggests media interviews. Being interviewed thus has a connotation of being special, like someone on television. Moreover, all the pupils appreciated being out of class for a while.

The topic list was built around general themes: family, friends & leisure, media, appearance and ethnicity. It consisted of four types of questions. First, survey-like questions to note and compare family backgrounds (to find out their socio-economic class) and media use. I chose not to put the background questions into a survey, because children of this age have difficulties in answering certain questions without help (Borgers, 2001). The excerpt below shows how a seemingly straightforward question is confusing and imprecise. I encountered this problem with several pupils.

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English:

Linda: Do you have any little brothers or sisters?

Romeysa: No.

Linda: You are the only one at home?

Romeysa: Yes.

Linda: Really?

Romeysa: Yes.

Linda: Okay. Then you're one of the few in class who is an only child, right?

Romeysa: But I do have older brothers and sisters.

[Interview Romeysa, 7 July 2006]

Dutch:

Linda: Heb je broertjes of zusjes?

Romeysa: Nee.

Linda: Ben je de enige thuis?

Romeysa: Ja.

Linda: Echt waar?

Romeysa: Ja.

Linda: Oké. Dan ben je een van de weinigen in de klas die enig kind is, toch?

Romeysa: Ik heb wel oudere broers en zussen.

The interviews were semi-structured, but should not be confused with quantitative interviews. I did allow changes in the order of questions, letting the conversation flow and following up on some of the answers. The second type of questions were central to my main research question: about their motives for dress choices, and their experience of gender, ethnicity, religion and multicultural society. Third, I asked questions about their experiences of popularity and cliques. From my observations, I gained a good sense of the cliques in the class, but I wanted to get a greater insight into their experiences of this. These questions are difficult to ask informally in class. Fourth, I included questions about their opinions of current media issues (video game violence and sexuality in music videos). These topics became the subject of media panics during the fieldwork and I wanted to gain an understanding of their opinions, since these issues directly involved them, yet their voices were never heard. The topic list is set out in appendix III.

4.6 Additional methods

Performance studies foreground processes of construction rather than effects, and participant observation fits this approach. However, I also wanted to tackle my research question in a different way. By asking informants to create data themselves, the researcher gets a different angle into the informants' own understanding of themselves. Creating data means the informant can thoughtfully reflect on the project, instead of providing an instant response to the researcher's question (Gauntlett, 2006). Although teachers often use such methods to learn more about their pupils (for instance, teachers can gauge something about a child

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by his/her drawings and essays), such methods are relatively unused in social science (Baker, 2001; Gauntlett, 2007). I collected such additional data in three projects: the photo project, the website/profile project, and the first day of school essay. In the *photo project*, I supplied all pupils with a disposable camera, and invited them to tell a story about themselves in pictures: 'what is important to you'. I asked them to write down the subject matter of the photo, and I also sat down with them to record this. This method is known as photovoice (Wang & Burris, 1997)⁸, and is often used in research with less eloquent respondents, for instance children (e.g. Clark & Zimmer, 2001; Einarsdottir, 2005). These photos yielded interesting data, although unfortunately many pictures did not come out well because pupils forgot to use the flash. Furthermore, five girls at the Kantlijn lost their cameras, and two other girls did participate but their cameras were lost at the photo shop. To ensure confidentiality, I agreed with the pupils that no visual material would be reprinted in this book. At the Gunningschool, I asked the pupils to make a *profile* on a personal web page. The idea came from Thomas and I worked with the children on the computer during school hours. As this was not possible at the Kantlijn, I asked the pupils there to create a profile on paper. Third, I asked the girls to write an *essay* about their first day in secondary school, focusing on what they wore and how they made friends. To increase response, I raffled two twenty Euro gift certificates from the Hennes & Mauritz department stores. In total, 21 girls participated and emailed me a report. The seven girls who did not take part, all came from the Gunningschool.

Next to participant observation in class, I engaged in instant messaging with the pupils. Instant messaging plays an important role in the girls' lives and offers many opportunities for identity performance. The chatting never really took the form of a conversation. Instead, it was an exchange of different emoticons. As such, I did not collect much data from these sessions, but they were useful as it helped me to gain the girls' trust. Nonetheless, by having all the pupils on my contact list, I observed their changing nicknames and picture profiles.

4.7 Visits to secondary school

Originally, I planned to continue my ethnography by observing the girls in their new secondary school settings. My aim was to find out if/how the performance of identity changed in the transition to secondary school. When the year came to an end, and the girls had chosen which secondary school they were going to attend, I realised that my project was not

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feasible. The remaining 28 girls had chosen eighteen different secondary schools. Interestingly, there was no overlap between the girls of the Gunningschool and those of the Kantlijn. I decided to visit each girl at her new school, to observe her in the new setting, and to interview her about the change. I was specifically interested in their experiences of the new setting and/or new neighbourhood, and if/how their circle of friends had changed. The topic list for these visits is attached in appendix IV.

The visits to the secondary schools were informal. I arranged to meet the girls during lunch breaks or after school, and I asked each of them to show me around school, before sitting down with them to do the interview. I did not record the interview, but took notes which I elaborated on immediately upon my return to the university. These visits to the secondary schools took much time to plan and conduct. The girls were difficult to get hold of on the phone, and they were nervous about my presence in the new school. On three occasions a girl did not attend her appointment, claiming she had forgotten (two girls) or school had finished early and she could not contact me (one girl). After visiting seven girls, I felt I was not learning much by seeing the girl by herself (i.e. not interacting with peers) in the school environment. I therefore decided to transfer the topics of these interviews to joint focus groups instead.

4.8 Focus groups secondary school

As participant observation in eighteen secondary schools was impossible, I conducted focus groups. Such change in research design is part of the iterative approach. I wanted to find out how the girls experienced their transition to secondary school. Moreover, I was interested in their collective definition of certain social situations and their dress choices for these situations. Third, I aimed to confront the girls from the two schools with each other, to investigate how 'politically correct' their previous statements on multiculturalism were. In everyday life, and especially for girls of this age, meaning is often collectively constructed. The reflexive project of the self and identity performance are shaped in negotiation with others. A focus group is not a naturally occurring setting, but it provides "a valuable resource for documenting the complex and varying processes through which group norms and meanings are shaped, elaborated and applied" (Bloor, Frankland, Thomas, & Robson, 2001: 17). Focus groups are thus the most appropriate method for yielding data on group meanings, processes, and norms. Furthermore, they have a practical advantage over participant observation, as they are less time consuming (Bloor et al., 2001: 8). Finally, focus groups can be recorded

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and transcribed, thereby putting a greater focus on language than participant observation does, whilst interaction is nevertheless preserved. The focus groups involved five focusing exercises (Bloor et al., 2001: 43) and several elements of semi-structured group interviews. Appendix V contains the topic list, with a description of the exercises. During the groups, the girls were indeed adaptive to each other's behaviours and opinions, and their interaction resembled their interaction in class. The focus groups took place at the university's research facility, which is decorated like an ordinary living room. The interviews lasted for a little over an hour. All were audio taped and fully transcribed⁹. A student, Pauline Koppe, helped me to conduct them¹⁰. She assisted me with the organisation, took notes on the girls' behaviour, and provided short profiles of the girls, which I compared to my observations. Each girl received a twenty Euro Hennes & Mauritz gift certificate to encourage their participation in the focus groups, and to thank them for their cooperation within the research project as a whole.

Again, the girls were difficult to contact, and even more difficult to bring together at a convenient time after school hours. I initially planned six groups, sorting the girls into groups based on the themes I wanted to explore (tomboys, popular versus unpopular, former friends, same secondary school, and friendship across ethnicity). However, the practical problem of getting the girls together forced me to abandon this idea and to settle for whoever was available. In the end, 21 girls participated in five focus groups. Appendix VI shows the composition of the groups and the reasons why the others did not participate. The last focus group took place after the first four groups had been analysed. The focus groups provided an opportunity for the girls to see their old classmates, and most girls were excited about this. They preferred a group with their old classmates to a mixed group (with girls from both schools). Bianca, who was bullied at the Gunningschool, insisted on the opposite, wanting to participate in a group with Kantlijn-girls and her former friend Amisha. Focus group 3 featured five girls from the Gunningschool. I agreed to pick them up by tram, as they were not allowed to travel to the city centre by themselves. The girls were over-excited to see each other and they could not stop giggling and gossiping. Likewise, group 1 consisted of four girls who were at the same new secondary school. As they were spread over different levels in a large school, they saw each other less often. Their conversation resulted in gossip sessions about other pupils at their new school. All girls mentioned that they enjoyed participating in the focus group and all groups were disappointed when the interviews were over.

4.9 Analysis

Earlier in this chapter, I distinguished method from methodology. The method of analysis of this study is based on the coding principles of the grounded theory approach, but grounded theory was not the methodology of this study. Strauss and Corbin make a clear distinction between methodology, which they see as a vision, and method, which is “the techniques and procedures ... [that] furnish the means for bringing that vision into reality” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998: 8). The grounded theory approach was originally conceptualised by Glaser and Strauss, but their understandings of it has diverged (see Heath & Cowley, 2004 for a discussion of the differences). Strauss, in cooperation with Juliet Corbin, has focused more on developing practical guidance to analytic techniques. As a result, many qualitative researchers only use certain aspects of the grounded theory approach (Bryman & Burgess, 1994; Wells, 1995). As Baptiste (2001) notes, all qualitative data analysis strategies (e.g. conversation analysis, framework analysis, discourse analysis) follow the same, common phases. To me, the advantage of the grounded theory approach, over other forms of data analysis, is the explication of the different coding phases.

Strauss and Corbin distinguish three phases in coding. During open coding, the researcher reads all data (e.g. field notes, interview transcripts) separately to build a code tree. Hence, the code tree ‘emerges’ inductively from the data rather than being superimposed on it, as is usually the case in quantitative content analysis. In the second phase, axial coding, codes are compared, related and ordered. Thus, the researcher selects all data with the same code, and finds patterns, similarities and deviant cases within a code. In this phase, categories and concepts are formulated¹¹. In the final phase of selective coding, the researcher checks the concepts that have emerged and pushes the analysis to a more abstract level. In this final phase, constant comparison again plays a key role. Constant comparison means that coded segments are compared to other similarly coded segments, in order to identify relationships between codes (see Boeije, 2002 for an instruction and demonstration).

After my prolonged fieldwork, I found myself with huge piles of data: field notes, interview notes and transcripts, and focus groups notes and transcripts. I used *MaxQDA*¹², a computer programme designed to facilitate coding. Discussions about Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Systems (CAQDAS) question if CAQDAS improves or harms the quality of the analysis (Fielding & Lee, 1998; Kelle, 1997; Marshall,

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2002; Morison & Moir, 1998). Opponents fear computers bring positivist assumptions and a lack of creativity, whereas proponents celebrate the rigour and speed that computers add to the coding process. Having grown up with computers, this discussion seems tedious and outdated to me. A computer programme merely manages large quantities of data, which is unrelated to acknowledging the interpretative nature of qualitative data analysis. *MaxQDA* allows the researcher to build a flexible coding scheme, because the names of codes can be easily changed, and codes can be easily moved across the coding tree. Furthermore, the programme allows the researcher to retrieve codes yet preserve the context from which the segment was retrieved as well. I created separate files for different data, meaning my field notes were analysed in one file, the interviews were analysed in another et cetera. Most qualitative researchers do not describe the analysis process (Boeije, 2002; Bryman & Burgess, 1994; Van Zoonen, 1994), as this is often a mixture of systematic coding and intellectual reflection that is difficult to describe step-by-step. In this section, I aim to provide the reader with an understanding of the analysis processes, by describing how the analysis of the media use came about. However, I have no illusions that this process can be ever be fully transparent. Although the following might be read as a linear process, it was not. Theorising and thinking are continuous and iterative – again, the image of a spiral is illustrative of this process.

Mapping media use

In the first phases of open coding, I structured my coding into three main coding categories: performance practices, identity markers, and class rituals. The code `PERFORMANCE PRACTICES` followed on from the theoretical framework: which objects do girls have at their disposal to distinguish themselves from others? This code quickly filled up and I added more branches to the tree, dividing performance practices into those related to the body, the media, and to clothing. From the literature review, the sensitizing concepts (Blumer, 1954: 7) gender, sexuality, ethnicity and popularity had arisen. The code `IDENTITY MARKERS` was thus a consequence of the literature review: girls can have different identities and I wanted to mark those instances where these identity markers were mentioned or discussed. Later in the coding process I added codes like ‘school spirit’ (an identity tied to the school). `CLASS RITUALS` was the category in which I sorted the daily routines and behaviours in the 8th form. From the start, I wanted this dissertation to provide an insight into the

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daily lives of girls at a primary school. I therefore sorted my field notes into different times of the day: before school, breaks, lunch et cetera. I added codes such as 'having a birthday', 'week opening' as I went along.

This initial coding reflects my focus in this research. As O'Reilly (2005: 28) argues, all ethnographic research needs to start with guiding questions that focus observations. As the fieldwork and coding moved along, I added new main codes. To quickly retrieve some observations about individual girls, I added `INDIVIDUAL GIRLS` as a main code. As I developed my ideas about the consequences of all these performative practices, I added a category called `SUBJECT-POSITIONS`. This is an example of the ways in which the coding phases are interwoven. The category `SUBJECT-POSITIONS` was a *consequence* of certain practices. Looking for consequences is located in the selective coding phase. I still went through each text, separately coding for this category, and as such found myself back in the open coding phase. The main code `MISCELLANEOUS` is perhaps the best example of the entwinement of coding phases. Here, I systematized notes that were relevant but outside of these categories: peer pressure, future dreams, asking for attention. Most of these free nodes (Marshall, 2002) had a memo attached to them: why was this relevant? Why did it not fit into one of the other main codes? What was the connection to theory or the bigger picture?

The process of coding points the researcher towards similarities between data. Analysis of coded segments turns one's attention to similarities and differences. As the fieldwork took place at two very different schools, I found myself easily making generalisations about one school versus the other. In writing the first drafts of the results' chapters, a one-sided perspective resulted, wherein I granted too much 'sameness' to the girls from the same school. I therefore returned to my data and coded individual deviant experiences. A good starting point was the outsiders in class: why were they outsiders? How did their behaviours and experiences differ from the other girls? Did similar girls also show diverging behaviours and experiences? This is an example of asking questions, an important feature of the constant comparison method propagated by the grounded theory approach.

Basic analysis

After having read through the field notes several times, and having coded almost all text segments, I engaged in the phases of axial and selective coding. I started to create a picture of a typical day at school.

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This view of life at school was mostly descriptive, but it also gave me a fuller sense of events, incidents and actions that were indicative for other, more theoretical aspects of the analysis. During the fieldwork I had already written extensive memos about, for instance, performance in class and the workings of ethnicity at both schools. Whilst writing about life at school, I elaborated on these memos and connected incidents to other notions. A good example is the *Charmed*-discussions in class, which I discuss in chapter 9.

Another basic step in the larger analysis was mapping friendships between the girls. I used two sets of data for this: my observations in class and the girls' listing of friends in the interviews. Using a simple *Excel* spreadsheet, I made lists of who was a friend of whom. I then used *Pajak*, a software programme designed to draw social networks, to get a visual picture of friendship ties. At the same time I wrote about friendships, which in turn caused me to think about popularity. For popularity, I analysed the interview data. I had coded the girls' answers to my questions about popularity in *MaxQDA*. I further coded these on paper, summarising each code with a keyword. My discussion of popularity in section 5.5 shows the results.

Expanding the analysis and comparing codes

In the interviews, I asked several questions about media use. I first coded the interviews in *MaxQDA* solely for any mention of any medium, thus creating the codes of television, radio, internet et cetera. I also marked all segments wherein the girls talked about parental restrictions. I then analysed the profiles the pupils had supplied. Again, I used *Excel* to list favourite shows, movies and games per girl. These lists were subsequently reversed (listed per named show) and compared: what differences existed between schools and between ethnicities? Next, I compared these lists with the retrieved segments from the interview data. I then not only got an idea of the most favoured titles, but I could also connect these to the media use of a specific girl, in combination with the restrictions imposed on her by her parents. I started writing these analyses down in a text document: how the girls made different uses of media, to what extent the media were central in their lives, and how parental restrictions limited the girls' use of media. Whilst doing this, I realised that media use in the classroom was influenced by these practices at home. This put me onto the idea of limitations: how is the girls' use of media limited? I later returned to all data sets to investigate this

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further. In this search, I also read theory and returned to my initial literature review. Hence, the analysis of restrictions was a combination of inductive coding, open coding, reading and thinking. In the end, I reconstructed several restrictions on media and appearance use; these are described in section 8.5.

I compared the uses of media and favourite titles of girls with field note segments and my notes on the individual girls, which were by then coded into the categories of subject-positions and media as performance practices. From here I started to think about the consequences of media use. I distinguished between talking about media, and actually using media in class. I could then analyse the ways in which different girls used and talked about different media with different consequences. Here, I connected these codes to the codes I had created whilst mapping life at school. By linking these different types of codes, I was able to classify incidents in order to provide descriptions of media use and talk. Again, reading theory was helpful in thinking about these processes.

Checking and following-up

By the time I conducted the focus groups, I was well underway with coding and analysis. The focus groups thus allowed me not only to investigate the themes mentioned in the previous subsections, it also allowed me to check my findings. One of the things I had become interested in was the relevance of popular media. From my earlier analyses, I learned that the girls did not ascribe much weight to their media use and I was afraid I had overvalued its relevance. From my observations in 8th form, I had concluded that musical preferences did not function as style dividers. I wanted to validate this conclusion with the girls, and in the focus groups I had the opportunity to do so. Furthermore, I conducted the last focus group when I had finished coding the previous four. I was therefore able to specifically ask about the themes that had emerged from the previous groups. For instance, in the final focus group, I asked more directly about changes in personality (see §6.3).

This section set out to provide the reader with insight into the process of analysis. This description is necessarily fragmented. Spatial considerations are an obvious impediment to providing a full account of how thousands of pages of data came to be represented in this dissertation. However, the nature of qualitative inquiry, with its inductive and iterative character, also limits the extent to which the researcher can fully account for all analytic decisions.

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4.10 Ethical considerations

Qualitative research implies a reflexive and critical stance. Within media studies, ethnographic approaches to media share “a concern with ethical aspects of social and cultural change that necessitates a continual scholarly self-reflexivity” (Drotner, 1994: 343). When I started the research, my faculty did not have formal ethical guidelines, but this did not mean I did not consider ethical issues.

Disclosure

I have always been open with the schools and my informants about the nature of my research. My research was overt and the children knew I was studying them. However, I did not disclose my research questions to them and did not inform them that I was only studying the girls. I considered my research question to be too theoretical for 8th formers¹³. Instead, I told them my research was about youth culture and ‘what it is like to be in 8th form’. This question was not far from the truth, and was recognisable, relevant and logical to this group. Suzanne Kuik had advised me not to inform the class that the research only involved girls, as I might run the risk of sabotage from jealous boys. This caused some problems in the second phase of the research, as certain boys wondered why I did not visit them. At that time, I explained that this specific phase no longer included them. My observations were done in class and although I did not focus on the boys, I obviously gathered data about them as well. In this dissertation my interest lies with girls, but boys are mentioned occasionally.

During my participant observation in the two primary schools, the pupils often forgot why I was there. Most children do not know what a PhD student is or what social science entails. For instance, when I announced the interviews, I was surprised by their response: what were the interviews for? I openly and continuously took notes in class, but I often encountered questions about why I was writing everything down. Participant observers often hope that subjects forget why the researcher is there, thus ensuring more natural behaviour (O’Reilly, 2005: 61). I endlessly explained to the pupils that I was writing a book about them, to which they reacted surprised yet honoured every time.

Informed consent

At both primary schools I had intended to give the pupils a letter to take home to their parents, informing them about the research and pro-

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viding an opt-out¹⁴. However, at the Gunningschool, the principal and Thomas deemed this to be unnecessary and unproductive. They argued that most parents do not read Dutch or would otherwise be unable to understand the letter. They insisted this consent was the school's responsibility. Instead, they introduced me in the monthly newsletter:

Linda Duits, student at the University of Amsterdam, will come in 8th form on Mondays and Tuesdays because of her research into the behaviour and interests of pupils in that age group.

Unfortunately, this did not inform most parents, as the few I met were unaware of my presence. The announcement unsettled me, because it was incorrect ('student'), did not disclose the aim of the research (academic reports) and did not provide an opt-out. Although I disagreed, particularly with the patronizing stance towards the parents, I complied with the school's decision out of fear of losing my access. I did not feel I was in a position to fight school policy.

At the Kantlijn, the teacher agreed with the informing letter. On my first day, all pupils took a letter home promising confidentiality, and informing parents about the research question, the nature of the observations, and the larger PhD project (book, articles). Parents were encouraged to contact me if they objected to their child being in the study or if they had questions. I received no objections, and from later contact with the parents, I learned all pupils had taken the letter home and that some had mentioned me in their conversations with their parents.

In the second phase of the study, I informed all the secondary schools about my visits during breaks or after school. Furthermore, after the summer holidays, I sent all girls a letter to show their parents, explaining the second phase of research and again encouraging parents to contact me with questions or objections. Whilst arranging the focus groups, I talked to several parents on the phone. Before participating in the focus groups, the girls received a letter explaining the procedure.

In the context of this study, it might appear strange that I obtained consent from the parents, and not from the girls. After all, this study aims to take girls seriously and to gain an understanding of their everyday lives. Morrow and Richards (1996) discuss the ethics of research with children, exposing how children's acts and opinions are often trivialised and devalued. Informed consent is difficult to obtain from children, because they might not have the skills to understand what the research is about or what its implications are. Furthermore, a school context might keep a child from dissenting, because most things are

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compulsory at school. Rather than obtaining formal informed consent, I emphasised to the pupils they did not have to take part in the research, giving them the right to say no. One boy indicated twice he did not want to be 'in the book', meaning he did not want me taking notes on him. Both times he later retracted this, claiming he had said this out of anger. Two boys from the Gunningschool did not want to be interviewed, and I complied with their wishes. When I arranged the focus groups, I did specifically ask the girls on the phone if they wanted to participate in the interviews. One girl declined.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality and anonymity are often confused (O'Reilly, 2005: 65). In an ethnographic study, anonymity from the researcher is impossible. Confidentiality, however, means that the data cannot be traced back to the respondents. All the names of the participants (children, teachers) and schools in this study are fictitious. I have kept the characteristics of the participants consistent and therefore insiders, both the girls themselves but also teachers or parents, can and probably will easily work out who's who in this book. The notion of confidentiality was lost on the girls. They could not – for the life of them – understand why they would be given fictitious names. They said they did not mind being recognisable, and I believe they might be somewhat disappointed that the book is not 'literally' about them.

Whilst making field notes, I never wrote anything incriminating in my notebook, which was open to the pupils to examine. Trust was important during the participant observation, and the pupils needed to be sure I would never disclose any secret or forbidden behaviour to the teacher. Eder and Corsaro (1999) describe this as an ethical dilemma: non-intervention can damage children's views of adults, intervention threatens the trust of the researcher. Aware of this dilemma from the literature, I came prepared. I told them I was not the teacher's spy and would never tell them anything, unless there was behaviour that went beyond all reasonable boundaries, such as extreme fights. The pupils repeatedly asked about and tested this position throughout the research period. One incident at the Kantlijn forced me to break my confidentiality. Some girls informed me their classmate had threatened to kill a boy, whilst waving scissors. I discussed what I should do with the girl in question (a strategy recommended by Morrow & Richards, 1996) and although she feared severe punishment, she understood why I had to tell her teacher.

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4.11 The quality of this qualitative research

In this chapter, I have given a thorough description of the research process. Such methodological awareness is one of the many strategies to control for quality in qualitative research. The epistemological positions, and the strong emphasis on philosophy that comes with qualitative research, have led to a cacophony of terms substituting the alleged positivistic notions of reliability and validity. Reliability in quantitative research refers to the replicability of a study, which is usually impossible in qualitative research (Johnson, 1990; Stewart, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Van Zoonen, 1994). Validity refers to the accuracy of the findings under study. Since validity is a statistical concept, qualitative researchers have proposed different substitutes: for instance adequacy, authenticity, credibility, goodness, plausibility, trustworthiness, and veracity. In this heated discussion, different authors propose various strategies to improve or judge the quality of qualitative research (cf. Bergman & Coxon, 2005; Drisko, 1997; Golafshani, 2003; Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002; Seale, 1999b; Stewart, 1998; Tobin & Begley, 2004). Unlike those authors, Creswell and Miller (2000) actually provide guidance in selecting a validity procedure. They discuss nine validity procedures, which they structure in a two-dimensional framework governed by two perspectives: the researcher's lens and the researcher's paradigm assumptions. The framework is replicated in table 4.1. Validity of research matters differently to the researcher, to the people in the study and to the people outside of it, such as readers and reviewers. Although I work from a constructivist (or interpretative) paradigm, I also deployed strategies best suited to researchers in the postpositivistic and critical paradigms.

	Postpositivistic	Constructivist	Critical
Researcher	Triangulation*	Disconfirming evidence*	Researcher reflexivity*
Participants	Member checking*	Prolonged fieldwork*	Collaboration
Readers	Audit trail	Thick description*	Peer debriefing*

Table 4.1: Validation strategies (Creswell & Miller, 2000: 126)

In this section, I discuss the different actions I have taken to increase validity (marked with an asterisk in the table). I used all three recommended strategies to increase validity from my point of view as researcher. Triangulation is a well-known strategy to increase the validity of a study through “the act of bringing more than one source of data to

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bear on a single point” (Marshall and Rosman, 1989: 146 in Van Zoonen, 1994: 139). Triangulation consists of using multiple methods to more accurately assess what is going on and to reduce the flaws of single methods. I indeed used multiple methods, but not to ‘uncover’ a certain truth. Instead, as Seale (1999a: 474) points out, triangulation can also reveal how respondents’ accounts differ. In the results sections, I demonstrate how accounts given to me in the interviews sometimes differ from my observations. Disconfirming evidence means the researcher searches for data that disconfirm the identified categories and themes. I already discussed this in section 4.9. Researcher reflexivity means self-disclosure of assumptions, biases, and beliefs relevant to the study. I provide this account in the next section.

Validity, from the lens of the participants, refers to how well the interpretations represent the participants’ realities. As I argued in this chapter, my respondents could not make much sense of the whole research, let alone read this academic account in a language that is not their own. However, during my time in class, the pupils often read my notes and corrected me if they saw a ‘mistake’, for instance when I had got names confused. They also added things to my notebook. For instance, I once noted down an incident between Thomas and Consolacion. He was giving arithmetic instructions and ordered her to put her pen down. When Consolacion read this, she added in my notebook: “I wanted to finish my sums and I was almost done”, thus providing an explanation. As such, there was minor member checking. A second strategy I used to increase validity from the participants’ perspective was to spend a prolonged time in the field. Prolonged fieldwork increases ‘veracity’ (Stewart’s substitute for validity), because more time means more complex information, more self-correction, and deeper contextual understanding (Stewart, 1998: 20). Collaboration means that “participants are involved in the study as co-researchers or in less formal arrangements” (Creswell & Miller, 2000: 127). Given the unfamiliarity of social science to my respondents, this was not a suitable strategy for this project.

For the readers’ perspective, I do not provide an explicit audit trail, although I do elaborately report on the methods used. The notion of an audit trail entails a positivist assumption that the analysis trail can be known, and in the previous section I claimed otherwise. Second, I provide rich accounts throughout the dissertation. Such descriptions are meant to ‘transport’ the reader to the setting and make the situation verisimilar. Furthermore, I spoke to peers and solicited their feedback. In a PhD project, the supervisor functions as the obvious peer reviewer.

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Furthermore, the work was discussed at (inter)national conferences, in several meetings of the PhD club Popular Culture at ASCoR, and in the Children's Studies group of the department of Sociology and Cultural Anthropology of the Universiteit van Amsterdam.

4.12 Reflection

Empirical data do not yield self-evident meanings, as Ien Ang (1996: 46) points out: "it is only through the interpretative framework of the researcher that understandings of the 'empirical' come about". As social scientists we do not stand outside the world we research, and ethnographic researchers often reflect on the contexts in which ethnographies are produced (O'Reilly, 2005: 211-217). Since the 'reflexive turn' in social sciences, researchers are aware of the *situatedness* of knowledge (Haraway, 1991). Reflexivity means that researchers should "be reflexive about how they analyse other people's accounts of their lives" (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003: 414). Some ethnographers include autobiographical accounts of their experience of the research (e.g. Powdermaker, 1966). In this section, I suffice with situating myself socially and emotionally in relation to my informants (see Mauthner & Doucet, 2003: 419).

Initially, I was nervous about my role as researcher. This involved both my position as a foreign object in class, but also my subject-position as a highly educated white girl. Would I be able to speak to the pupils, would they feel weird about an outsider sitting in class, would they trust me? My own primary school experience was over fifteen years ago. As a sociable and curious individual (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999: Ch. 8), I learned that it was easy for me to connect to the pupils. I never tried to act their age (see also Aalberts, 2006), but approached them respectfully and with interest.

Although the pupils quickly accepted my presence in class, the pupils at the Gunningschool approached me with some curiosity. For example, on my first day, Chema asked me if I acted in movies. As I observed later, blond girls are a rare sight in that neighbourhood. At first, this unfamiliarity was reciprocal: not only was I unfamiliar to them, they were unfamiliar to me. I grew up in a privileged town in the centre of the Netherlands, with hardly any allochthonous inhabitants. When I moved to Amsterdam, I remained within a white circle, as autochthonous Dutch populated the university, the restaurants where I worked, and the bars and clubs I frequented. However, in the class at the Gunning-

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school, I was not surprised by differences, but by sameness. This helped me to approach the *Gunning-girls* as being more like myself. At the Kantlijn this happened more naturally, as this school resembled my old primary school in a number of ways, and the social class of most pupils matched my own whilst growing up.

Completely unexpectedly, the hardest part of the ethnography was observing the differences between the Gunningschool and the Kantlijn. Year 8 is an important year for the future of a pupil, because they learn for the first time how they compare to others and what level they can expect to reach. When the CITO-scores came in, pupils from the Gunning-school learned they could never become lawyers, or doctors, or flight attendants. I found it difficult to see the dreams of the pupils, who had by then won my heart, being shattered. The disadvantaged position of this group as a whole became even more obvious because the pupils at the Kantlijn performed so well. Having always had every opportunity open to me, this seemed to be such an injustice. I also found it difficult to observe the strictness of the teachers at the Gunningschool. This excerpt comes from my field notes on the only day we had snow that year:

Break time is horrific. The kids are not allowed to throw ice balls; they are not allowed to throw at one person when they are with others; they can only throw snowballs whilst standing on the grass field (? How can you see that in the snow ?); and on the square of the other school. Clearly not everyone knows these rules, looking at the faces of those who are being called in as punishment. Instead of the usual three supervisors, a team of five teachers supervises over break. In the end, almost the whole 8th form sits inside for punishment. Instead of fun in the snow, it is a rain of punishment and yelling from the staff. I feel sad and go inside, because I simply cannot bear to look at it anymore. [Field notes Gunningschool, 2 March 2006.]

It was more difficult for me to relate to the teachers at the Gunningschool than it was to the pupils. I empathised with the pupils, who had hardly any choices, and not with the teachers in their lounge, who sometimes made racist remarks (see §5.4). I also did not expect my research to be so arduous. Four days of sitting in class can be tedious, especially when each pupil wants your full attention. Instead of 'going native' (Walsh, 2000: 222), I was thankful when the year came to an end. Spending time away from the field helped me to regain academic distance. However, spending this much time in the field did enable me to understand the social world of girls through interaction and participation. I believe my emotional involvement with the field has made this ethnographic account richer.

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4.13 A note on writing

This chapter ends with a note on writing. Feminist researchers have always been concerned with the power relationships between the researcher and the researched (Van Zoonen, 1994: 129-130). Likewise, the reflexive turn in anthropology led researchers to reflect on how the researcher represents his/her informants (O'Reilly, 2005: 211-217). This project arose from a desire to listen to girls, and to take girls seriously as actors in a multicultural society. However, this account can never be more than a *representation* of girls' experiences. This study does not aim to be representative of all girls in the Netherlands. Instead, it aims to provide a deep understanding (Stewart, 1998) or thick description (Geertz, 1973), in order to theorise the ways in which Dutch girls position themselves in the multicultural society. Coming from an interpretative paradigm, I do not pretend my observations reflect general truths or universal facts. I therefore refer to 'the girls' rather than 'girls', so as to emphasise the specific informants of this study. When I use 'the pupils', I refer to both the girls and the boys. Furthermore, I use the past tense to stress the historic situatedness of this group of girls.

This study is written in English, but was conducted in Dutch. Several authors have dealt with translation issues in qualitative research, for instance when the primary languages of respondent and researcher do not correspond (Esposito, 2001; Temple & Young, 2004; Twinn, 1997). Less discussed is the issue of how to transfer accounts across languages (Temple, 2006). This study was conducted in the Netherlands and Dutch was spoken during the observations and all interviews. All transcriptions were Dutch and the analyses are based on the original Dutch material. Translation did not occur until the time of writing down. I aimed to 'preserve' original meanings as much as possible and to keep the original source language visible, whilst at the same time making the text accessible to non-Dutch readers. Therefore, all presented interview quotes are preserved in Dutch in appendix VII. Furthermore, certain specific utterances are represented in English, with the Dutch original between brackets in the text. Occasionally, I explain a specific Dutch term or practice in a footnote. I translated all quotes as literally as possible. I preserved stopgaps and the original sentence structure that characterises spoken language (in contrast to the practice of editing transcripts to increase 'readability', e.g. Hermes, 1995: 'Author's note'). Nonetheless, I am not a certified translator and some subtleties remained untranslated. Several girls made grammatical mistakes in Dutch, which I

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saw no way of translating. For instance, they mixed articles, using “de” [feminine/masculine article] when it should have been “het” [neutral article]. Since English has no gendered articles, translating such mistakes is impossible. The girls also sometimes used slang. Any translation of Dutch slang into English inevitably loses subtle meaning, first because my knowledge of British slang is limited, and second because slang is group specific (e.g. translating Dutch-Moroccan slang into British-Asian slang is odd).

In the following chapters I present the results of my investigation into girls’ identity performance. Part II elaborates the contexts in which I investigated the girls. In chapter 5, I explore which spaces existed for identity performance at primary school. This chapter provides a detailed insight into the daily lives of girls in the 8th form. In chapter 6, I discuss which differences existed between primary and secondary school, and how these differences affected identity performance. Part III of this dissertation deals with identity performance itself. In chapter 7, I provide an overview of the subject-positions with which the girls identified. Chapter 8 further explores how identity performance was done. I examine how the girls used appearance and media to perform these positions. Chapters 9 and 10 discuss the influences underlying these performances. In chapter 11, I draw my conclusions.



Part II

Contexts of Performances





Chapter 5

Life at Primary School

5.1 Introduction

In this first results chapter, I explore the specific setting of the school as a context for identity performance. Girls mostly interact with friends and other peers at school. Much of girls' social life outside school is also connected to the school. Most girls had known each other all their lives, and most of their friends were children they knew from school. In this chapter, I investigate how the schools positioned pupils, and which spaces existed for identity performance at the two schools. These questions are answered by approaching the schools in three ways. First, I analyse how the Gunningschool and the Kantlijn present themselves to the general public, both on an abstract level relating to certain images, and on a more material level, in the form of a physical building. These presentations, or the schools' performances of their respective identities, structured the space in which the girls from the respective schools performed their identities. Second, I consider the school as a set of routines that shape much of girls' everyday life. Here, I provide a comprehensive view into these routines and rituals, and I describe how they influence identity performance. Third, I approach the school as a junction of actor relationships: teachers & parents; teachers & pupils; and pupils & pupils. Taken together, this chapter, and the one that follows, also set the context in which the remainder of this dissertation is framed.

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5.2 Schools' self-presentation

The Dutch school system is still characterised by the pillarisation that segregated Dutch society according to religious and ideological pillars (Lijphart, 1968). Thus, a main distinction between schools is the denomination, which distinguishes Catholic, Christian, and neutral (or public) schools [openbare scholen]. In recent decades, this distinction has also come to include Islamic schools as well as schools with particular educational methods (e.g. Montessori, Steiner). Parents are free in their choices of school, providing it is within their postal code district. A substantial number of parents' decisions are based on religious denomination (Karsten, Ledoux, Roeleveld, Felix, & Elshof, 2003: 455), but many others do not care about the religious identity of the school. Schools, therefore, also aim to be attractive in other ways, 'advertising' a certain profile and facilities¹. In section 4.4, I briefly introduced the two primary schools. In this section, I elaborate upon these introductions by analysing the images the two schools intended to present to the outside world. Primary schools have several means to present their profile or identity: the official school guide, newsletters, and website.

Missions and visions

The Gunningschool presented itself as a Christian, multicultural school. The school profiled itself in its guide as a "meeting place" where "equivalence" is a central value: "Equivalence means to us that 'being different' is allowed, and that 'being different' is respected. Equivalence also means to us that we learn to take each other into consideration" [School guide Gunningschool: 5]. The difference referred to in this quote also refers to differences in educational needs, and the school aspired to offer "education to size" [onderwijs op maat], which means offering each individual pupil the education s/he needs. The emphasis on difference was further reflected in the school's motto 'Colourful with an eye for difference'. The school communicated with parents and pupils through monthly newsletters. The news here consisted of announcements about school personnel (e.g. who is leaving, who is sick). Other news items included new rules, or information about road works in the school's surrounding streets. Interestingly, the newsletters did not feature news about the pupils. The school's website contained mostly general information about the school and the school's name sake, and was rarely updated. For instance, in the summer of 2007, when the school year 2006-2007 had ended, the site still contained information about the 2005-2006 forms.

Life at primary school

The Kantlijn profiled itself in its school guide as a neighbourhood school that emphasises children's own experience. The school believed this is important "because the world pupils learn about, is their own world, that means family – neighbourhood – school" [School guide Kantlijn: 7]. The school was working in collaboration with several organisations in the neighbourhood, such as after-school care clubs and the library. In September 2006, the school officially became a so-called Community School [Brede School]. The weekly newsletter was produced by parents, and consisted of announcements and reports about school activities. Pupils usually created these reports, writing about special projects or museum visits. The newsletters provided a detailed insight into what had been going on at school. Parents also maintained the website. Next to general information, the site consisted of photos of pupils, an archive of newsletters, and an active discussion board.

The two schools thus profiled themselves in different ways. At the Gunningschool, the faculty was central in the communications, rather than the pupils, or indeed the school as a community of teachers, parents and pupils. The advertised eye for difference was lacking in the school's other communications (e.g. the newsletter). In the Kantlijn's communications, pupils and parents played an active part, and community was highlighted over the school's faculty. As a consequence, I contend that the Gunningschool was 'owned' by its faculty, and the school was a place where pupils were guests. The Kantlijn was 'owned' by parents and pupils, where teachers were also part of the community at large.

The buildings and classrooms

A school building and playground, as well as a classroom, provide spaces for identity performance. These material spaces address pupils in a specific way, and promote specific subject-positions over others. Furthermore, the layout of the class enables (or disables) opportunities for identity performance. The two buildings and respective classrooms had distinct looks and feels.

The Gunningschool stood in a quiet, residential area. The school shared the grounds and the gymnasium with a special education secondary school. The school grounds were fenced, and only opened when school started or ended. There was one large playground with a sandbox. The school installed a slide at the end of the 2005-2006 year. Steps led up to the main entrance, providing a podium overlooking the playground.

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The building had two levels: the younger children were upstairs, and the older pupils downstairs. Downstairs was also a larger, open area known as 'de ruimte' [the space] that functioned as an auditorium. Staff members not responsible for teaching a form had their own small offices throughout the school.

The Kantlijn's original building was renovated in my fieldwork year. The building reopened in June 2006. The temporary building was located at ten minutes walking distance from the original location, in the same neighbourhood. Both buildings were just off busy streets, bustling with traffic and shoppers. The temporary building was an old-fashioned school building, with a small playground at the back of the school. The renovated building, attached to a public library, gymnasium, and after-school facilities, had two unfenced playgrounds. The large playground had football nets and a playhouse. In both buildings, older years were upstairs, with the younger pupils downstairs. The new building had several small spaces, where pupils could work in groups outside the classroom. Non-teaching staff members also had their own offices throughout the school, in both the temporary and renovated buildings.

At the Gunningschool, the 8th form teacher Thomas's classroom had clearly been in use for a while. Many items in the room appeared to have been there for quite a time. The posters' duct tape was coming off the walls; bookshelves had boxes with never used booklets; the linoleum was worn-out; at the back of the room was a table with four stacked computers, of which not even Thomas knew whether they worked; dusty, wooden games rested on top of the cupboards; one of the TL-lights was broken; and along one side of the room were stacks of old paper. The tables and chairs were old and used, and none were alike. Some were light brown, others almost black. Each table had a sticker with the pupils' name on it. Chairs were numbered, and lists with corresponding names hung on both sides of the room. Pupils always found their own chair and refused to use someone else's. Each table had two plastic drawers that held pens, paper and other small things. Pupils rummaged in them a lot, which drove Thomas crazy. In addition, every inch was occupied, which made the room feel cramped. Next to the pupils' own tables, two tables stood at the back where they could sit to correct their work. There was another corner with three functioning computers. At the front was a washbasin, and at the back an aquarium. The function of this classroom was to provide an educational space. Tables were grouped in three rows of two tables each, facing the three-

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pane blackboard. One pane had been made into a week schedule with red tape, and Thomas wrote down homework assignments here. On the back wall were two large, hanging cupboards where all text and notebooks were kept. Nine printouts hung on the inner windows, featuring the “golden rules” of the Gunningschool. A sign by the blackboard instructed pupils to “stop the bullying”. Less space was available for the pupils’ own input, as there were two series of self-made artwork.

As stated, the Kantlijn returned to the renovated building in June 2006. By then, the pupils were practicing for their end-of year play and the classroom was hardly ever used. I therefore focus on the classroom in the temporary building. Tables were grouped in sets of five or six, and these groups were positioned around the teacher’s desk in the centre. The pupils faced each other. At the back was a little corner with a bookcase and pillows on the floor. The room had a small blackboard upon which pupils did drawings and Luck seldom wrote. The only educational element in the room was a skeleton used for a project on the body. The room had a stereo, a television with DVD-player and one computer. Around the blackboard on the wall was a drawing of two candles and a Christmas wreath. There were three large frames with photomontages of Luck’s former pupils. One wall featured professional photographs of this year’s pupils, framed in yellow cardboard. Pupils used the walls near to their tables to put up notes, like their tasks for the week. Tables did not belong to pupils, instead pupils ‘owned’ their drawers. When they changed seats, they only changed the drawers.

The buildings and classrooms described in this section positioned pupils in different ways. The closed playground of the Gunningschool versus the open, community building of the Kantlijn correspond with the different images the schools conveyed, where ownership of the school laid with faculty and the community respectively. Likewise, the classroom at the Kantlijn was less of an educational space than it was a meeting place, where pupils and teacher Luck lived together. As the temporary building was old, it was permitted to draw upon the walls. Through this, the pupils appropriated the room. Conversely, the classroom at the Gunningschool addressed the pupils as students with duties. The tables were aligned in sets of two, and girls and boys did not sit together (Thomas informed me that due to their religion, girls and boys should not be mixed). Furthermore, the room was Thomas’s domain: it contained items he had gathered over the years. As a result, students clung to ‘their’ space: their table and chair.

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5.3 Routines and rituals

A pattern of breaks and extra-curricular activities structured life at both schools. With a strong focus on conventional learning, the climate at the Gunningschool is best described as an educational culture. The Kantlijn, on the other hand, is best typified as a convivial culture [gezelligheids-cultuur] (Te Poel, 1982). Routines and rituals in class differed correspondingly and influenced opportunities for identity performance. At the end of each subsection, I discuss the consequences of the differences between the two schools.

Before school

Both schools started at 8.30. At the Gunningschool, pupils of all years gathered in the schoolyard. The two janitors supervised from the top of the stairs, and sometimes shouted instructions to pupils and parents. The pupils were not allowed in the yard before 8.15; early arrivals needed to wait outside the fence. The pupils could only enter the building when the bell rang. Most juniors were brought by their mothers or the occasional father. Seniors, and especially eight-formers, came alone or with their friends. Two bells signalled the start of school. The first was the cue for the juniors, the second for the seniors. As the pupils entered the class, Thomas stood by the door and welcomed them. Thomas started lessons straight away.

The girls of the 8th form avoided being the first one in the yard, preferring to wait by the fence until they spotted a classmate. The girls never joined their male classmates, and the social outsiders were avoided. They had to wait by themselves until an ally entered. Who stands with who was important. The before school rituals revealed a hierarchy between the girls. Standing alone was to be avoided, but when a 'better' classmate arrived, a girl swiftly moved across the yard to stand with her. Usually, the more popular girls reigned over the conversations, whereas the less popular girls kept an open face and nodded a lot. The girls stood closely together, almost on top of each other, but made room for newcomers to enter the circle. The schoolyard was a vast space, and the girls' behaviour indicates how well they knew the other girls were watching them.

At the Kantlijn, the pupils immediately entered the building and waited in their classrooms. Most parents brought their children inside the classroom, and some parents (an equal amount of mothers and fathers) even accompanied their eight-formers. Some parents waited for Luck to arrive, to ask questions or give instructions. When they left,

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they kissed their offspring, who were greatly embarrassed about that. Luck usually arrived after 8.30, which the pupils happily remarked upon. When he entered, pupils took their assigned seats and waited. Luck started the day with a class conversation. On Mondays, this was a discussion about the weekend, and on other days he discussed other matters at hand, such as who had already applied for secondary school; whose parents could drive to school football; what was happening with Max (a pupil who had undergone a foot operation, due to which he missed much school).

Before school, the Kantlijn-girls took a seat or stood together talking, and often mixed with boys. As this class was more inclusive, no one was left out, although some had their preferences. Here too, the girls stood close and they often touched each other. Sometimes the pupils turned on music, or practiced a dance. When Luck started the day with a class discussion, the pupils aimed to stretch these discussions out for as long as possible, to avoid having to start work. The time before school started provided ample space for identity performance, in the form of talk (both individually and in the class discussion), but also in the form of media use in class.

Working

At the Gunningschool, the curriculum almost exclusively consisted of arithmetic and reading. Thomas usually gave a collective instruction, and the pupils worked individually or in small groups on their tasks as Thomas moved through the classroom to answer questions. Through a rotating schedule, two pupils functioned as classroom assistants for a week, distributing and collecting the books and notebooks when Thomas changed from one lesson to the other. The pupils considered this to be break time and started chatting. Thomas aimed to keep the class quiet at all time, except during fun activities, like drawing or handicrafts². To accomplish this, he punished pupils who broke the rules through an intricate punishment scheme where each incident landed the offender five minutes of detention after school. As verbal communication was hindered, pupils communicated with each other through passing notes³.

At the Kantlijn, Luck hardly ever taught the group collectively, and instead, pupils who were at the same level sat in groups and helped each other. Luck introduced tasks by connecting them to the pupils' lived experiences. For instance, a reading comprehension assignment about gusts of wind was introduced by asking who had ever encountered

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such a gust. The pupils often worked on dissimilar topics, almost as in the Montessori method. Luck set out the tasks for the week, and the pupils decided for themselves which task they did first, with Luck available for questions and corrections. Whilst working, the class was noisy and instead of collaborating, the pupils often just chatted. Moreover, Luck often left the class. At these times, the pupils were loud for a bit, but settled to their work after a few minutes. Punishment was rare at the Kantlijn, and Luck preferred either talking to the violator or a frivolous solution instead. For instance, pupils kept going to the toilets in groups, causing a nuisance in the hallways. Luck repeatedly warned against this and announced that if two or more girls, or two or more boys, were caught together in the toilets, the other sex was to make a childish hat for the others. The pupils took this warning seriously, but in the end two girls got caught together. The boys made them a silly pink hat they needed to put on if they went to the toilet.

The different styles of working offered different opportunities for identity performance. The Kantlijn's regime provided ample room for talk, whereas at the Gunningschool the pupils resorted to order disturbances or note passing. Next to different opportunities for talk, the different styles of working also show the different positioning of the respective teachers. The time between tasks was a way for the pupils at the Gunningschool to enforce time to talk. As tasks sometimes only took ten minutes, Thomas continuously needed to regain order. As such, he struggled with the pupils, positioning himself as their opponent. Luck, on the other hand, positioned himself more as a counsellor, endowing the pupils with responsibility when he left the class. I discuss the relationship between teachers and pupils further in section 5.4.

Opening of the week at the Gunningschool

The Christian Gunningschool opened the week with a bible story. Each Monday, principal Wouda summoned the teacher to bring his pupils to 'the space'. The pupils of the 6th, 7th and 8th forms had to wait and enter separately. Wouda, or one of the teachers, read a story from a children's bible, after which the pupils sang up to three biblical songs, accompanied by Wouda on the piano. The teachers of the three forms stood at the side to police the event. The pupils misbehaved in every way they could, from purposely choosing the wrong seat, kicking the seat in front, to singing too loudly. The teachers had a hard time keeping order, which resulted in sending pupils back to class as punishment. Often, the opening of the week resulted in the collective punishment of shortened playtime.

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This fifteen-minute opening of the week was a traumatic event for pupils and teachers alike. The students wore awkward expressions during the reading, as mine often was when this majority of Muslims was forced to listen to Christian bible stories. The pupils' misbehaviour looked to me like a form of sabotage or resistance to this ritual. On an occasion when lip-synching was punished, the pupils reverted to singing very loudly. Wouda once responded to this: "enthusiasm is nice, but it cannot get too disorderly". This sentence is typical of the Gunning-school regime, where fun was dosed and controlled. The confrontation between religions reminded the pupils that they were different to the faculty, adding to a continuous opposition of us versus them. The week opening was one of the times where year 8 embodied their senior position at primary school. They had the coveted seats at the back of the auditorium and they were often the first to start the mischief. At the same time, the opposition between teachers and pupils about religion also bonded the pupils from the different years.

Discussing the weekend at the Kantlijn

The week was ritually opened at the Kantlijn by discussing the weekend. Luck asked the class if anyone 'had been up to something' over the weekend. The pupils volunteered their stories and the others listened intently. A typical discussion about the weekend lasted over half an hour. The stories often connected and seemed to have been thought up associatively: when one mentioned redecorating her bedroom, others volunteered comparable stories. Below is a summary of the stories told on Monday 6 March 2006:

- Ramin went to see his grandfather and played outside.
- Lars visited the garden house and played in the snow.
- Sophie slept over at Roos's on Friday. On Saturday she went with her parents and their friends to a bungalow park and swam.
- Odecia slept over at her grandmother's and went to the movies, she saw *Nanny McFee*. Sunday she went out for dinner at a Chinese restaurant.

[Luck starts a discussion about Chinese food, and pak-choi cabbage in particular.]

- Katia went to see Max with Maud.
- Sophie went to see Max with Roos.

[Discussion moves to Max's recovery from his operation.]

- Thijs' older brother came for dinner.
- Björn's mother had her birthday yesterday and people came to visit.
- Marisol slept over at Mickey's. They talked about out-of-body experiences the whole time and that was scary.

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- Noa went to the movies with her neighbour and saw *The Pink Panther*. It was fun. Noa's grandfather died last week.
- Mickey saw *The Pink Panther* with her mother. At first she thought it wasn't a nice movie, but later it was.
- Maud took photos for the project, but not many.
- Thirza went horseback riding, and afterwards to a friend in Friesland. [Luck starts a discussion about feeling bad for the horses. He plays dumb.]
- Mehmet went to Arabic school on Saturday. [Field notes Kantlijn, 6 March 2006]

This storytelling provided excellent opportunities for identity performance. Expressing friendships ties in a weekend experience reconfirms these ties. Furthermore, as the pupils listened attentively, they also bonded as a class, adding a sense of collectivity. Moreover, the stories the pupils offered up are unmistakable performances of middle-class identities. Likewise, the Kantlijn's efforts to let the pupils engage in self-reflective talk also point to the middle-class ideal of self-awareness.

Break/playtime

At 9.30 at the Gunningschool, and 10.15 at the Kantlijn, it was time for break. Before they went outside to play, the pupils enjoyed food and a drink. During the break inside, the pupils formed little groups. Again, at the Kantlijn these groups were mostly mixed, whereas at the Gunningschool four groups usually formed, based on the axes of gender and popularity. Food was often shared as a token of affection or friendship. After ten minutes, the pupils went outside to play. At the Gunningschool this was clear-cut: the boys played football and the girls skipped. At the Kantlijn, the playground was small and most pupils flocked together. They played catch, shot marbles, or just stood and talked. When year 8 was outside at the same time as the small children, the pupils often played with them, pushing them around on their small bikes.

Morning breaks were also the times when birthdays were celebrated. Birthday celebrations had been ritualised since kindergarten and consisted of treating the classmates and teachers. Teachers usually got treated to something different to the pupils, for instance chocolate versus a bag of crisps. The birthday boy or girl chose two friends and they went round the other years together. At the Gunningschool, teachers stuck a sticker on a card provided by the principal. At the Kantlijn, teachers gave a small present, like a hair clip or a notebook. In class, the other pupils sang a birthday song before they enjoyed their treat.

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Playtime was an important part of the day. Considered 'their' time, the pupils were in a sense free to do as they pleased. Groups sitting together or standing outside together performed friendship ties and popularity. For instance, the outsider group at the Gunningschool rarely joined in with the skipping. Although they claimed they did not want to when I asked them about it, the decision was never theirs. Instead, they were forced to stand by themselves or play with the 7th formers. The girls that were allowed to join the game found themselves performing as well. As there was much shouting and cursing at each other, the game caused both pleasure and pain. During break, hierarchies between the different years at school showed. The pupils of the Kantlijn perhaps played with small children, but here also only the outsiders played with the 7th formers. Birthday celebrations were important performance practices, as classmates judged the choice of treat and the birthday boy or girl needed to pick two friends. In my eight months at the Gunningschool, only two pupils from year 8 celebrated their birthday. At the Kantlijn, everybody celebrated his/her birthday in class and therefore it happened rather often. This difference might be ascribed to financial reasons.

Lunchtime

In the Netherlands, most primary schools close for lunch. For children who cannot go home, schools arrange a special lunch programme, known as *overblijven* [\pm stay on]. This programme, carried out by volunteers, exists outside school regulation but nevertheless takes place at school. At the Gunningschool, only two or three 8th form pupils participated in this programme, the others went home. Most mothers (and some fathers) stayed at home and had lunch with their children, other pupils spent lunch by themselves. At the Kantlijn, the majority of pupils stayed on at school during lunch. When school ended at twelve, Luck left the pupils in the care of two, semi-permanent, 'stay-on workers' [*overblijfkrachten*]. The pupils had their brought in lunch, after which the group went outside. At the renovated school, the pupils used the school's playground during lunch. In the temporary building, the junior pupils used the schoolyard, and years 7 and 8 usually went to a nearby public playground with a street-football field and playground equipment. Often some pupils refused to go outside, wanting to stay in the classroom to listen to music or hang out. Playing sometimes got out of hand and accidents happened, for instance, one girl broke her arm when she was pushed off the merry-go-round.

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Lunchtime breaks up the day for pupils at Dutch primary schools. Most pupils from the Gunningschool went home – a setting not included in my fieldwork. Lunchtime at the Kantlijn provided similar performance opportunities as playtime in the morning. The pupils understood lunchtime to be their time, free from the control of the school. The stay-on programme at the Kantlijn suffered the problems that Van Daalen (2005) described well in her ethnography of staying-on at Dutch schools. As the programme is organised outside of school, i.e. by volunteers, these workers had no formal authority over the pupils. Since they lacked means of punishment, they lacked control over the pupils. The pupils often defied the stay-on workers: they were habitually rude and did not follow instructions. The stay-on workers could only report incidents to Luck. He would then reconstruct the story by talking to the pupils and subsequently urged them to be more respectful and obedient. However, as Luck was never present during lunchtime, and the pupils acted very differently around him, he never fully grasped what had taken place. The pupils looked down on the volunteers and granted them low social status.

Afternoons

The Gunningschool resumed at 13.15, the Kantlijn at 13.00. Waiting for school to start in the afternoon functioned similarly as the above reading of waiting in the morning, with the exception that the Kantlijn-pupils who had stayed-on entered together. Afternoons had no formal breaks and the two hours were a long time for the pupils. Thomas solved this problem with a fun activity, like drawing or crafts. Luck often let the pupils go outside for extra playtime. Afternoons were generally more relaxed than mornings, with fewer tasks and hence more opportunities for talk and fun. Many afternoons at the Kantlijn were filled with changing the ways the pupils sat in class (i.e. a different clustering of tables). Luck frequently changed the clustering. This had two functions. First, Luck separated people without having to punish them. Second, it fostered a sense of community in the class, including between sexes. As Luck once stated, “only girls is horrendous”. Luck let the pupils work out a new arrangement themselves, which centralised experience, choice and agency for them.

School ended at 15.15 at the Gunningschool with a bell. After that, classroom assistants stayed behind to clean the room, whilst pupils with detention stayed in class to read. Outside in the schoolyard, the janitor sent lingering students home. Friends walked home together. The Kantlijn stopped at 15.00, which was announced by the noise coming out of

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other classes. Detention and class duties did not exist and the pupils left the classroom, although some hung around to ask Luck questions. Many pupils cycled to school, and they left in groups of two or three or with small brothers or sisters and/or parents.

Special activities

On Tuesday and Friday afternoons, the pupils at the Gunningschool had physical education; at the Kantlijn it was on Wednesday mornings. A separate teacher, as is nowadays compulsory in the Netherlands, taught physical education. At the Kantlijn, special teachers also taught handicrafts and English, and a special music teacher taught for several weeks, as part of a music project. This school also participated in a photography project of a local youth theatre. All Amsterdam primary schools participated in a museum project known as *Museumles* [museum lessons]. The municipality organised weekly visits to the city's diverse museums, where a guide showed the pupils around. The Gunningschool only participated once every two years and clustered years 7 and 8 together. As the Kantlijn was located closer to the city centre, we often walked to the museum without extra supervision⁴. The Gunningschool's two forms always went by bus, accompanied by volunteer parents and teachers to keep the groups in check. Furthermore, both schools participated in the yearly *Kunstschooldag* [Art school day], when concert halls, theatres and museums have a special programme for children.

The end of primary school is celebrated in most Dutch schools by an end-of-year play or musical, when pupils play for their fellow schoolmates and parents on the last day of school. Thomas started practice in March, but cancelled the musical in May because the pupils continuously misbehaved during rehearsals. Preparations for the Kantlijn's final play started in June and took up most of the school hours until the end of year, in other words, during this period the pupils received hardly any education (in the strict sense). The play was conceived by Luck with much input from the pupils.

The strong emphasis on special activities at the Kantlijn corresponds with the school's emphasis on experience and learning about the world. It also shows the convivial atmosphere of the school. Obviously, projects outside school and plays inside school offer more opportunities for identity performance than doing arithmetic. At the Gunningschool, the faculty assigned less time for such special activities. Thomas told me he needed all the time he had to teach the basic skills⁵. Luck, on

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the other hand, once remarked that his pupils did not need his teaching, as most came from privileged backgrounds. He noted a strong contrast with the pupils he had taught ten years earlier, when the school population at the Kantlijn resembled the school population at the Gunningschool now. As we often discussed the differences between the two schools in my fieldwork, Luck added the Kantlijn has always emphasised pupils' experience and has always been involved in many special programmes. Perhaps this was the reason why the Kantlijn attracted so many white pupils. Though the neighbourhood was whitening, other schools in this area were not as white as the Kantlijn.

5.4 The teacher, the parent, and the pupil

In this section I approach the school as a junction of actor relationships. Again, I investigate which identities the two schools are performing, and how these school identities set the space the girls had to perform their own identities. The identity of the school is a matter of presentation, as analysed in section 5.2. The Gunningschool presented itself as a meeting place, and the Kantlijn as a community school. It is also a matter of behaviour (rules, routines, rituals), which I investigated in the previous section. The Gunningschool underlined conventional learning, and the regimes at the Kantlijn focused more on social learning. Finally, the identity of the school manifests itself in the relationships between its faculty and the other actors involved. Relationships between pupils are analysed in section 5.5, but here, I focus on relationships between teachers and parents, and teachers and pupils.

Who is in control? Teachers versus parents

The Gunningschool was situated in a neighbourhood with many allochthonous inhabitants, and this was reflected in the school population. Originally a white school, the school has had to adapt to societal changes. One of the problems signalled in the multicultural society is a lack of contact between autochthonous Dutch and allochthonous newcomers, and a lack of knowledge of the other's culture, especially when it concerns Muslims (Kanne, 2004). The relationships between the teachers and parents at the Gunningschool support this observation. Note that my interpretation is based on the conversations of the teachers, school communication and observation at school. Integration and understanding is a two-way street, but since I did not interview parents, I write here solely from the teachers' perspective.

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The relationship between the Gunningschool and parents is at best described as difficult and patronising, caused by misunderstanding. First, religion is a cause of misunderstanding. The Gunningschool actively expressed its Christianity and the parents were, at times, uncomfortable with this. For instance, at the graduation ceremony, principal Wouda read from a bible and pupils received a bible as going-away present. Only eight mothers were present at this ceremony and all looked visibly uncomfortable. In the faculty lounge, teachers often expressed their lack of understanding of Islam. For instance, the arrival of the new moon marks the end of Ramadan, *Eid ul-Fitr* [Suikerfeest], and therefore the date differs in different countries of origin. The Gunningschool teachers repeatedly expressed their annoyance with this. As such, they failed to show respect for difference, whilst at the same time demanding respect for their Christianity. Second, some teachers showed ignorance about developmental differences. When Nazli got a very low score on a CITO practice test, one teacher demanded to know 'why allochthonous are always so dumb'. The explanation another teacher offered involved heredity and not being hugged enough. The teacher then said he did not understand why the government did not do more about this [Field notes Gunningschool, 14 November 2005]. For a teacher teaching underprivileged pupils, the remark stood out, not only for its embedded racism, but also because he was looking for an external explanation.

As well as ignorance about the Other, some teachers also employed a patronising stance towards parents. For instance, when parents were needed to coach the school football teams, Thomas questioned their ability to manage this task. Furthermore, the school assumed Turkish and Moroccan parents spoke poor or no Dutch, and that mothers stayed at home. All the mothers of children who entered Pre-school⁶ were obliged to take Dutch lessons, regardless of their level of Dutch. Principal Wouda often made remarks like "helping your mother to do the groceries", passing on traditional views of gender roles. In school communications about parent-teacher night, parents were advised to bring an interpreter. Although this was based on previous experiences, it positioned (all) parents as distant Others. The patronising stance of the school towards parents manifested itself very clearly when some pupils needed to undergo psychological evaluations to determine whether they needed special education. The pupils and their parents were informed that it involved an additional test [aanvullende toets]. The Dutch *toets* has the connotation of a school exam, and lacks the connotation of evaluation or experiment that the English *test* contains. This was one of the events

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at this school that I was extremely uncomfortable with. Perhaps it is unwise to tell children they need to be psychologically evaluated, however, parents need to consent and have the right to know what is happening to their children. The argument that parents possibly do not understand this is beside the point.

At the Gunningschool, the faculty actively positioned themselves in opposition to the parents, whom they not only failed to understand, but at times also failed to show respect. In section 5.2, I quoted from the Gunningschool's official guide, where it profiled itself as a "meeting place", where "'being different' is allowed, and that 'being different' is respected". However, in the teachers' relationships with the parents, these notions were lost.

Teachers at the Kantlijn faced the opposite problem. Most of these parents were (upper) middle class and put their children on a pedestal. Luck sometimes complained parents were too involved (see also Smit, Driessen, Sluiter, & Brus, 2007). For instance, parents contested the secondary school advice Luck gave their children, on the grounds that they felt they deserved better. Parental involvement was also manifested in the informal conversations they had with Luck before school started. For school football, parents volunteered to car pool their children, and on the field many parents supported the teams. On graduation night, the parents collectively bought a present for the teachers. Girls often played at each other's houses and had sleepovers. Parents, then, knew their children's friends and knew their parents. This adds to the idea of school as a community that stretches beyond the school doors. Parents wanted to be involved in school policy and they participated in the parent council [schoolraad] and advisory board [medezeggenschapsraad]. Parents closely followed the procedures of becoming a community school and when the school got a new name, parents initiated a protest. There thus was a tension between the school as an independent entity and the parents' involvement in the school.

Friend or foe? Teachers versus pupils

Pupils had the same teacher for a year and developed a relationship with him. Year 8 is an important year, because it means both saying goodbye to the familiar primary school, and taking the CITO-test. The relationship between Thomas and Luck and their respective pupils is described throughout this dissertation. Here, I want to briefly note Luck and Thomas's reputations amongst their pupils. As the year progressed, the pupils liked Thomas less and less. First, they claimed he held them

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back. They disagreed with their assigned arithmetic levels and they did not concur with their secondary school advice (see chapter 6). Second, they resented him for punishing them too often and too severely. The pupils were extremely disappointed when Thomas cancelled the traditional farewell musical at the end of the year, and viewed it as an emblematic act. The pupils' dislike for Thomas was connected to ethnicity. They claimed he favoured Bianca, the only native Dutch in class, and they called him racist. Bianca summarises an indicative incident:

Bianca: But so the teacher said to me. No, wait. I'll say it differently. You know I've been feeling a bit withdrawn? And then the teacher said like you can just kick someone if someone kicks you and Nazli kicked me under the table, so I kicked back. Then Nazli said that to the teacher, 'mister she's kicking me'. Then I said 'no, you were kicking me too'. Then the teacher said 'sometimes it's also good to kick back' and then someone said, I think it was Said, said like 'because she's *tata*' [slang word signifying Dutch people], you know. But then the teacher said 'yes, kicking is not allowed'. While she started it first. [Interview Bianca, 29 June 2006]

Thomas often expressed his concern about Bianca's position in class and had probably told her it was okay to kick someone back to make her more assertive. However, this did not go as planned and the pupils interpreted his special treatment of Bianca as racism. Although I have ample evidence of Bianca being favoured, labelling Thomas racist is definitely undeserved. However, the school's continuous opposition of *us* (the autochthonous school faculty) versus *them* (the allochthonous school population and parents) reverberated in the classroom, and by the end of the year, the pupils not only regarded Thomas as their opponent, they saw him as their enemy.

Luck, at the Kantlijn, was conversely very popular amongst his pupils. Some girls told me they liked his educational regime (i.e. working individually over collective instruction). Luck endowed the pupils with a sense of responsibility by often leaving the class alone. Other teachers at the Kantlijn did not do this and some pupils remarked to me they found this 'weird' yet nice. Although Luck hardly ever punished them, he did get angry when pupils misbehaved, and pupils did not want Luck to be angry with them. He thus managed to walk the fine line of being authoritative yet friendly. Where the stay-on volunteers had no authority or control over the pupils whatsoever, a severe telling off by Luck kept them in check for a while. Pupils did not want to disappoint Luck, and I believe this was related to his approach to them as individuals with personality and agency.

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5.5 Friends, cliques, and hierarchies

In the previous section, I described the school as an alliance of relationships between teachers, parents and pupils. The central focus of this dissertation lies with the interaction of girls in the context of school. The relationships between girls thus form a context within a context. These relationships, which had formed over the years, set boundaries for identity performance. This section investigates which different cliques (groups of friends) existed, and how cliques and friends were connected. Related to this is the notion of popularity. Friendships were important and cliques dominated school life, however, the girls did not talk about popularity as a coveted goal. The second subsection shows how the girls understood popularity whilst in primary school.

Classmates were the most important source of friendships, and the girls' social lives consisted mostly of school friendships. Yet this does not imply a steady group of friends. Over the years, some pupils had moved, thereby turning into distant 'friends' or pen pals. Furthermore, the class constituting year 8 at the Kantlijn in 2005-2006 had been split into two years 7/8 in 2004-2005. Friendships and alliances are dynamic, and therefore any description of them is never more than a snapshot in time.

Cliques

Most girls had three close friends in class, and friendships varied in intensity and duration. In addition, some cliques were more popular than others. I ran the self-reported friendship ties in a small social network analysis⁷. Figure 5.1 graphically shows how at the Gunningschool, these ties cluster into two main cliques. The direction of the arrows represents who named whom, so Bianca (left top corner) named Dilara as her friend, but Dilara did not mention Bianca. The arrow between Bianca and Amisha has two heads, meaning they both named each other as friends. The balls are bigger when girls were named by more people, and the different grey scales indicate clusters.

Two coloured clusters appear. On the right we see the popular girls' clique, which clustered around Consolacion. Close to the core of this clique were Naoul, Chemaë and Beyhan. Indeed, the four of them always sat together and picked each other in gym class. Related were Laila, Romeysa and Radia. The second clique visible in the figure clusters around Gülen, Dilara, Nazli and Aliye. Gülen and Dilara were sometimes named as a separate group. Betty, Amisha and Bianca are outsiders,

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although Amisha's position within the group improved when she took off her headscarf (see chapter 9). Bianca was bullied by most pupils in class, and when she fell out with Nazli, her position became almost untenable, culminating in a fight wherein Consolacion's clique cornered and slapped her.

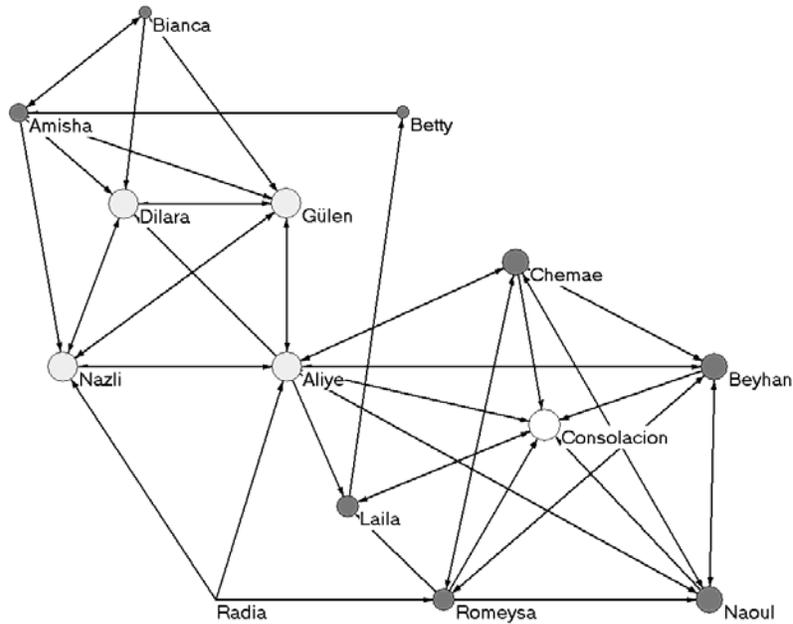


Figure 5.1: Cliques at the Gunningschool

Groups are often defined by what they are not, and the borderline cases thus provide insight into what constitutes the group and what not. Both groups chose Aliye, who managed to move between the two cliques and had many (superficial) friends in class. Betty joined the class in the autumn and counted herself into the Consolacion-clique. None of her classmates agreed with this classification in the interviews, although in practice she did join in the clique's activities (such as the hockey game described below). Radia's position was especially contested, and she knew this. In the interview, she was reluctant to talk about cliques.

Linda: Are there many cliques in class? Can you describe them?

Radia: Yes, well, a few yes. Like er, girl group. And the boys group.

Linda: Yes, and between girls and boys, are there groups again as well? Are there groups amongst the boys and amongst the girls?

Radia: No.

Linda: No?

Radia: No.

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Linda: They all belong together?

Radia: A few girls are alone, so, er, so a group of girls, two groups of girls.

Linda: Yes, so who's in those?

Radia: Er, Aliye and Consolacion and Naoul and Beyhan and Romeysa and Chemaie and Laila and sometimes myself. [Interview Radia, 8 June 2006]

Consolacion, the 'leader' of the clique, mentioned in her interview that Radia was "a close call", because "we don't actually like her". Radia struggled to stay in the clique, which meant she sometimes took abuse from the others in the cliques.

At the Olympic Day [a sports event] one group of girls participates in street hockey on inline skates. The team consists of Consolacion, Naoul, Chemaie, Beyhan, Aliye, Betty, Laila, Romeysa and Radia. Seven girls play, while two others wait on the bench to be substituted. Radia doesn't know how to skate and the other girls make sure she stays on the bench. Thomas and gym teacher E. notice this and force the team to substitute a player for Radia. The girls don't like this and in fact, Thomas and E.'s intervention aggravates them. Radia herself calls to be put back on the bench as well. Although Consolacion clearly isn't the team's best player, all girls make sure she plays constantly. At a certain moment, she's too tired and I advise her to take some rest. This only works for a moment, as all girls call back for her: "Consa back in, Consa back in". [Field notes Gunningschool, 16 June 2006]

Radia knew her poor skating skills threatened further devaluation of her position in the clique. To help the team win, Radia decided to stay on the bench. The teachers' intervention, understood as a 'pity call', worsened the situation, and Radia took the side of the girls against the teachers. At the same time, Consolacion's treatment was a manifestation of her status as leader of the clique.

At the Kantlijn, alliances were more complex and most pupils said everybody in class was friendly with everybody. As shown in figure 5.2, the visual representation of friendship ties shows less distinguishable clusters. Although boys and girls mixed more at the Kantlijn, friendships mostly existed between the same genders. Again, there were a few exceptions and Caruna, Noa, Sophie and Esther named boys as their friends in class. To themselves and their classmates, Caruna and her male friends Ramin and Jessy stood out as a group. They rarely socialized with their other classmates. The remaining girls formed a large group together and they found it difficult to name cliques within this larger group. Likewise, from my observations I could not distinguish cliques amongst the girls. The girls in the middle, e.g. Noa, Madelief, Mickey, and Maud were nodes that connected several friendships.

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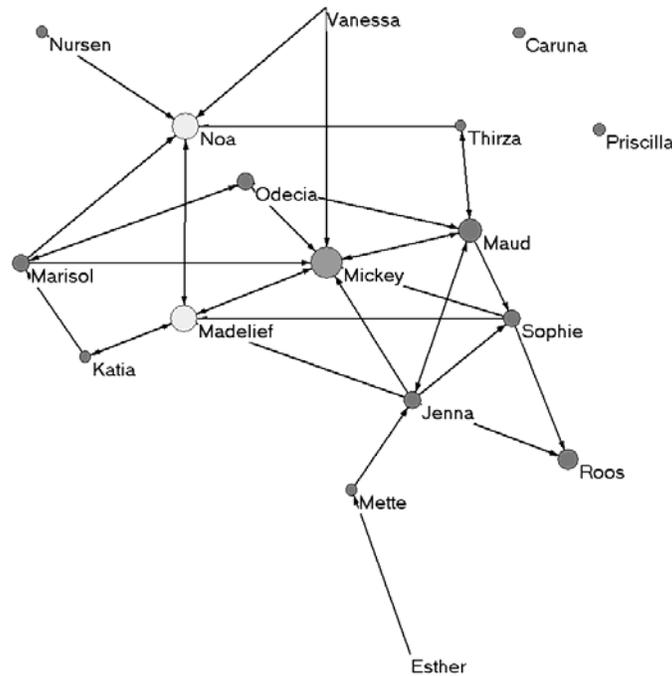


Figure 5.2: Cliques at the Kantlijn

Friendship was sometimes one-sided. In the interviews, one girl named three girls as her friends, but none of them (or the others) named her as friend. In one case, a girl listed Mickey as her best friend, yet Mickey named three friends, none of which was this girl. Rather than being singled out, this has to do with the cliques. Those at the core of a clique had many friends, and were named as a friend as well. Those at the outer limits of a clique belonged to the clique, but the friendship ties were not always reciprocal. The two networks convey little information about the hierarchies between cliques, or in class. I now discuss the girls' understanding of this.

Being popular

In chapter 2, I discussed American self-help literature like *Reviving Ophelia* (Pipher, 1994). Secondary schools are approached as jungles where popularity is all that matters. In the interviews, the girls did not subscribe to this idea at all. Cliques and friendships were not necessarily a popularity contest. Some girls were content with having just a few good friends, whereas others had many friends but were not necessarily considered the most popular. For instance, five girls at the Gunning-school named Dilara as a friend and six named Consolacion. When asked

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about the most popular girl in class, the Gunning-girls almost unanimously named Consolacion, followed at a great distance by Naoul (who named herself). Figures 5.3 and 5.4 visually represent the girls' answers to my interview question on who was most popular in class. Again, dynamics between the girls are less straightforward at the Kantlijn.

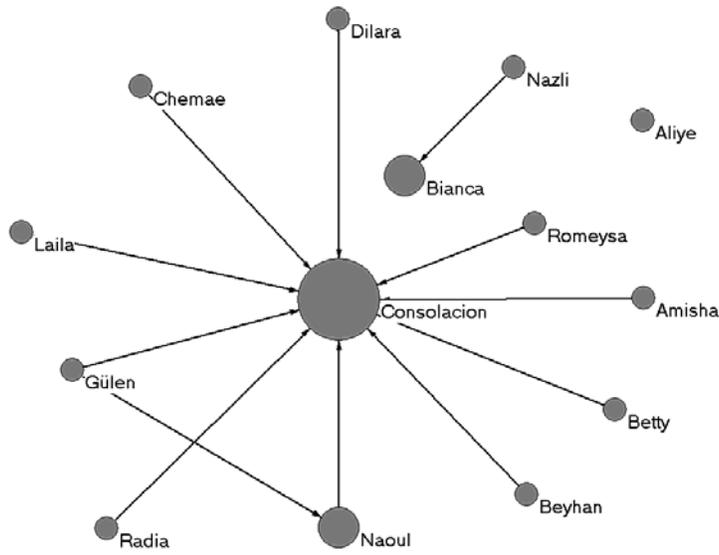


Figure 5.3: Popularity at the Gunningschool

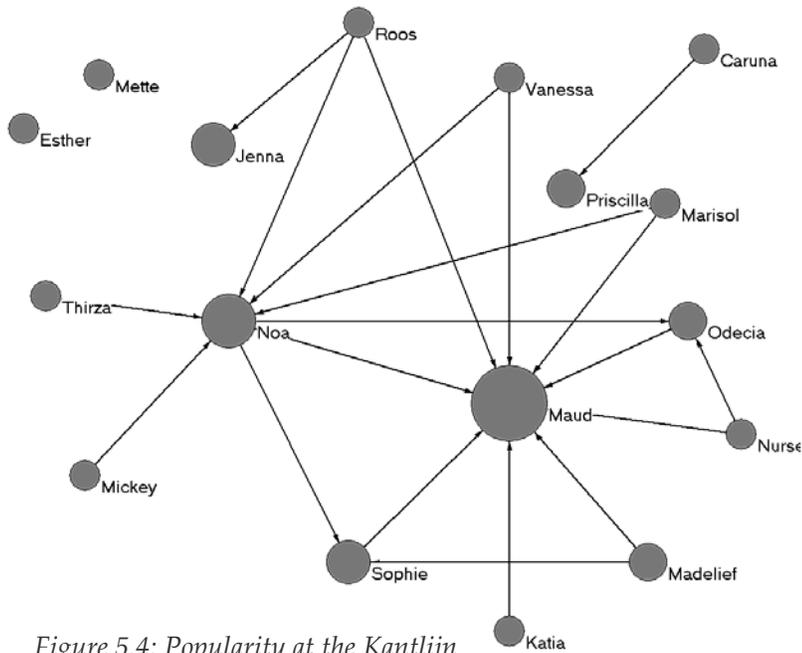


Figure 5.4: Popularity at the Kantlijn

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What constituted popularity was a matter of interpretation and discussion. In the interviews, the girls defined popularity in two ways. First, being popular was equated to having many friends. This way of defining popularity is observational: one can see who is always invited to birthday parties; who is offered candy; who gets chosen in gym class. The girls related having many friends to being friendly and nice, or to being funny. However, girls from the Gunningschool also related popularity to being tough or physically strong. Those who are strong can win fights, and subsequently get more respect. Those who are tough are more daring, and consequently get the attention of the others:

Gülen: Because they dare the most and when they dare something, really people have their attention with them.

Linda: And that's the same for boys and girls?

Gülen: Yes, actually it is. [Interview Gülen, 9 June 2006]

Being nice and being strong were the two ends of one dimension, and popularity thus seemed a matter of the carrot or the stick.

A second way of defining popularity was through appearance, like being pretty or having nice clothes. Popular kids had nice clothes, but the girls were unsure about the direction of this association. The girls of the Gunningschool also mentioned being fat as a factor that impeded popularity:

Consolacion: And also when you look different you know, like when you're fat, then people hold this against you even though it's not your fault.

Linda: Is it bad when you're fat?

Consolacion: No, not really, but that is how other people see it.

Linda: Yes...

Consolacion: And when you think 'it's not bad' and other people start to think differently than you, then they think 'you're not popular, go stand at the back', they think. Radia is a close call because she's fat. [Interview Consolacion, 8 June 2006]

As the body is an aspect of self that girls believe they have a certain level of control over, they also hold themselves and others accountable for it (De Waal, 1989: 156). Consolacion indicated that although one might have a different self-image, others will hold your body against you. Because Radia was "fat", she was on the outskirts of Consolacion's clique. Earlier in the interview, Consolacion remarked Radia was not liked and that was why she was a part of the clique, but only as "a close call". Later, Consolacion said it was because Radia was "fat". Radia felt she had friends in this clique, and she indeed 'belonged' to it, but others in the clique did not name her as a friend and she was not popular.

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Belonging [erbij horen] is not the same as being popular. Consolacion explains:

Belonging is just that you're there, that you put in a word... but when you're popular, popular with the populars, then you're higher than belonging. Then it's just that you're the most popular. Belonging is just different, just a different topic. Look, the difference between Radia... she's a close call in belonging and I am kinda the most popular of all girls, so we're really different. Because she's not so strong and not so funny, but she does belong. Sometimes she can make a funny remark, but then when you look at me and her, then you see a lot of difference. [Interview Consolacion, 8 June 2006]

Other girls (of both schools and differing popularity) shared this idea. They said popularity is less important than having (at least some) friends. The girls talked about this in an interview setting and they were well-aware of the 'correct' answer to such a question, as they are raised and educated to be nice to others, to not judge on appearance, and that bullying is wrong. In their responses to my questions about popularity, the girls used the repertoires of political correctness and authenticity, which I discuss in detail in chapter 10. Three girls argued popularity is not so desirable, because being popular is much work. Many people want to hang out with you and it might involve telling some lies. Interestingly, one of these three girls was quite popular.

This section introduced the different cliques in the two primary schools and showed how the girls understood popularity. Friendships and popularity materialised through performances, and these performances varied per context. In the interviews, the girls used certain repertoires to talk about this topic, and these repertoires do not unequivocally predict behaviour. For instance, although the Gunning-girls agreed bullying is bad, they did bully Bianca. Although the popular girls did not name Betty as part of their clique, I observed she did partake in their clique activities. The performance of friendship and group identities needs to be investigated in context, and researchers in this field need to account for the differences between norms and actual behaviour.

5.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I approached the school context in three ways. This analysis of the schools' self-presentation, routines and rituals, and actor relationships not only provided a detailed look into the girls' most promi-

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ment social setting, it also identified considerable differences between the Gunningschool and the Kantlijn. The two different approaches at these schools had consequences for the contexts in which the girls from the respective schools performed their identities.

First, the two schools had different ideas about the nature of a school. As the Gunningschool performed the school as a place of learning and discipline, the girls there had less space and time for social interactions. The Kantlijn performed the school as a place for social relationships, where learning is connected to broader society and formal education is part of larger socialisation into that society. Furthermore, the Gunningschool and the Kantlijn were 'owned' by different actors. As parents at the Kantlijn felt they owned the school, this sometimes led to tensions. An obvious explanation for these differences would be differences in the ethnic descent of the pupils' parents. However, social economic status of the parents matters. Parental involvement is stronger amongst the upper, middle classes, that is, the parents of the Kantlijn. Another explanation for the differences lies in the specificity of these two research settings. Not all 'black' schools are as strict as the Gunningschool, nor were all teachers at the Kantlijn as easygoing as Luck.

Second, the two schools approached and positioned their pupils in different ways. The Kantlijn actively encouraged the pupils to take on different subject positions and to reflect on their subjectivities. The Gunningschool addressed the diverging ethnicity and religion of the majority of its pupils, and positioned them as Others, *reducing* them to their ethnicity (Bettie, 2003: 25). This led to animosity between faculty and pupils, and created difficulties for, for instance, Bianca who was of Dutch descent.

Third, the two schools provided different opportunities for identity performance. The Christian Gunningschool banned headscarves, thus disabling this performance practice. Furthermore, the strict regime, with less time to talk or play, limited the number of times when the girls could engage in identity performance. The Kantlijn accommodated popular media use in class more than the Gunningschool, thus providing the girls with greater means for identity performance.

Fourth, friendship and cliques in a specific class form and develop from kindergarten. These ties only change slowly and enable/disable the availability of certain identity positions. As I show in the next chapter, the transition to secondary school sometimes offered an 'escape' from this.



Chapter 6

Advancing to Secondary School

6.1 Introduction

Linda: What are the differences between the Kantlijn and the new school?

Jenna: Too many. Everything actually.

Roos: I've forgotten.

(...)

Linda: And Roos, you said like 'I've already actually forgotten it'?

Roos: Well look... In primary school... [At a certain moment you feel it], so that's boring and all.

Marisol: But then... But at the beginning, the first week in secondary school, you really had something like 'oh my God, what do I do', but then later that was really normal, then you're through it a bit, that you've forgotten at primary school. [Focus group 1, 6 February 2007]

This project followed a group of girls in their transition from the 8th form to secondary school, on the assumption that identity performances change drastically in this transition. When I met the girls several months after primary school, they had obviously changed physically. Some had grown taller; all but a few had lost some childish features. It was clear to me they had entered a different biological phase. The question thus arose: what were the differences in identity performance between primary and secondary school?

Whilst still in the 8th form, most girls were anxious about advancing to secondary school. They expressed their nerves and tried to prepare as best they could. When I talked about differences in the focus group interviews, their anxiety had gone. As the above quote shows, the girls expressed differences ("everything actually"), yet at the same time, they

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were unable to discuss differences. Marisol and Roos explained they had forgotten what primary school was like, and they were therefore unable to discuss change. Although the girls discussed practical changes, they did not express changes in themselves. This outcome was puzzling: contrary to my expectations, and their expectations a year earlier, secondary school did not entail a clear change performance. In this chapter, I analyse the differences between primary and secondary school. In addition, I investigate their perception of a lack of difference. I argue that a repertoire of authenticity allows the girls to handle this transition, simultaneously impeding them from articulating identity differences. This makes such an investigation methodologically problematic. The chapter starts with the changing school levels, which in the Netherlands means facing one's position in the intelligence hierarchy. I then analyse the differences the girls perceived. After that, I discuss new friends and the popularity hierarchy. In the conclusion, I discuss these results in light of the above: how to account for the lack of self-reported changes in identity?

6.2 The intelligence hierarchy

The key difference between primary and secondary school in the Netherlands is the division of pupils into separate levels. At primary school, pupils of dissimilar abilities are in class together, but after primary school pupils are divided by ability. Figure 6.1 shows the different levels of education after secondary school¹.



Figure 6.1: The Dutch secondary education system

PO stands for *PraktijkOnderwijs* [Practical Education], a level for pupils who need extra guidance. It has a strong focus on practice-based learning. *VMBO*, *Voorbereidend Middelbaar BeroepsOnderwijs*, is Lower Secondary Professional Education. This level is split again into three levels of varying difficulty. The lowest level has a more practical focus, the highest a more theoretical focus. *HAVO*, *Hoger Algemeen Voortgezet*

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Onderwijs [Higher General Secondary Education] is the middle level. Finally, VWO, Voorbereidend Wetenschappelijk Onderwijs, denotes Pre-University Education, the highest level. Since the 1970s, Dutch secondary schools have undergone a period of mergers, resulting in large secondary schools wherein different levels are offered. Thus, some schools include VMBO, HAVO and VWO levels², further enabling mobility. Generally, each level starts with a one (or two) year bridge period called *brugklas*, when the secondary school evaluates a pupil's abilities, and can decide to promote or demote him/her to another level. When finished with a level, upward mobility is possible, so after graduating VMBO, a student can move on to the fourth year of HAVO (see arrows in the figure).

The primary school (i.e. the teacher of the 8th form) advises which level is best for a pupil. This advice is based on the pupil's educational achievements over the years. The teacher formalises the advice in January and it is discussed with the pupils and parents. The CITO test is the nationally used placement exam which determines the level of secondary education. Secondary schools accept a pupil based on a combination of the advice and the CITO scores. In Amsterdam, schools are allowed to exempt from the test pupils with the lowest educational ability (De Regt, 2004). Thus, if the teacher suggests Practical Education or VMBO with special assistance, this pupil does not need to take the CITO test. Possible CITO scores range between 500 and 550, and secondary school levels are connected to ranges of scores (e.g. 532-541 is the HAVO interval). Throughout the 7th and 8th forms, pupils practice the CITO test, further enabling teachers to provide measured advice. The official CITO test is taken in February and results arrive in March. Thereafter, pupils check out various secondary schools to help them to make their choice³.

The 8th form is a crucial year because henceforth the division of pupils into different levels is official. Although pupils are generally aware of differences in intellectual capabilities before year 8, the official division makes such an understanding inescapable (see also De Regt, 2004). At the two schools, future life chances and different abilities were not central in everyday life. The CITO test abruptly forced onto the girls a discourse of differentiation and distinction based on intelligence. Not only faced with their own (in)abilities, they were also confronted with their place in the 'intelligence hierarchy'. Future dreams are connected to identity, as they form the narrative about self one would like to tell in the future. Thus, facing the hierarchy had consequences for the girls' understandings of their identities, both now and in the future.

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Facing the hierarchy for the first time

At the Gunningschool, the teacher, Thomas, communicated his advices in January, during evening meetings with pupils and parents. I learned about the advices through Thomas, who informed me all but one boy had received a VMBO or lower advice. He told me the pupils were not that let down however, amongst the pupils, I noticed disappointment and envy. Several girls bombarded me with questions about their opportunities after secondary school. For instance, Beyhan sought me out specifically to ask if she could still become a flight attendant with a VMBO theoretical advice. Gülen wanted to become a physician and had also got a VMBO theoretical advice. She wanted to know if her dreams needed shattering. Before the official advice, these girls had realised not everyone was equally adept, but they had hitherto been unaware of the consequences of these differences.

The test results came out on a Tuesday, a day I always attended the Kantlijn. The teacher, Luck, had informed all the pupils and parents of their advice, but the pupils were nervous about the 'official' verdict. Luck told the class that test scores too are just an indication, but quantification lends a notion of evidence. The year before, two boys had got into a fight when, based on a one-point difference in score, one called the other dumb. Luck told me some parents disagreed with the advice he had given their offspring, wanting them to be at the highest level possible⁴. Parents transferred their anxiety about the CITO test to their children, and some pupils were promised presents if their score exceeded the original advice. A test score at a higher level than the given advice may lead to acceptance onto a higher level at secondary school. Conversely, a lower score can result in a lower level. Indeed, one girl performed under the level Luck had advised for her. When she saw her score, she started crying, feeling her world had ended. All pupils eagerly compared their scores, and those with high scores received praise.

At the Gunningschool, according to Thomas, the test scores were received calmly and without ado. When I saw the pupils on the Thursday after, they did not talk about the scores, nor did they converse about new secondary schools. This class was more homogenous in educational level, i.e. the majority had received a similar, low advice. The intelligence hierarchy was virtually absent within the class. Furthermore, these girls had already taken the blow when the advices were communicated. As I argued in the previous chapter, the parents of the Kantlijn children were highly involved and they questioned Luck's advice. At the Gunningschool, defying the authority of the teacher was

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less common. However, some girls later expressed their distrust of Thomas' advice. An example: Aliye had been given an advice for Praktijk-onderwijs and she attended this level at secondary school. When I saw her again, in February 2007, her new school had informed her that she had the ability to attend VMBO and she was going to switch to this level the next year. She and Nazli saw this as proof of Thomas' 'racism', claiming he had purposely given everyone too low an advice in order to hold them back.

Living the hierarchy

Once in secondary school, differences in levels and ability become part of daily life. In large schools with different levels, the girls befriended pupils from the various levels and comparison was of the order of the day. Intelligence, and a sense of connection with those on one's level, had become a part of identity. Gülen was one of the girls I visited at her new school. I talked to her, two female friends, and Ibrahim, a classmate from the Gunningschool. Gülen had a higher score than the advice Thomas had given her, and she was placed in a 'HAVO opportunity class' [HAVO-kansklas]. They talked about stupid and smart people:

Gülen proudly told me she received an excellent report card. Ibrahim, who was in a VMBO theoretical class, repeatedly said Gülen was smart and he was stupid. He made remarks about former classmates Nazli and Aliye, saying they were *really* stupid. Gülen went along with Ibrahim. She recalled an occasion when Nazli was drooling in class. They all laughed about this. [Secondary school visit Gülen, 5 December 2006]

Gülen was a quiet girl at the Gunningschool, and Ibrahim the class' menace. A year before, I would not have believed the two could share a conversation, let alone be close to friends. At the Gunningschool, Gülen was good friends with Nazli and Aliye. They now attended Praktijk-onderwijs and therefore received Gülen and Ibrahim's mockery. This mocking of 'more stupid' peers functioned as a unifier for Gülen and Ibrahim, as they underlined their shared higher position in the intelligence hierarchy. In a different setting, Gülen would have probably mocked Ibrahim in turn, but in the same room, she performatively united with him. Later, whilst I was planning the focus groups, Gülen enquired, with much interest, how Nazli was doing, and she asked to be in the same focus group. Thus, the performance of friendship or alliance with Ibrahim, and the performance of friendship or interest in Nazli caused Gülen to behave in almost oppositional ways.

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6.3 Perceived differences

The girls indeed looked different once in secondary school, but I wanted to know which differences they perceived. I put this question to the girls in the focus groups. Note that the nature of a focus group leads to collectively constructed answers, in other words: answers are produced in negotiation. When I asked the girls what they thought were the main differences between secondary school and primary school, their answers ranged from 'nothing' to 'everything'. Interestingly, only one group (out of five), volunteered differences in personality. Amisha said she had become more insolent, after which Bianca added she was now more self-assured. The other groups did not offer up any personality changes. Faced with this absence of perceived personality differences⁵, I asked the girls in the last group whether they felt they had changed. They answered dismissively. In this excerpt, Mette answers my question reluctantly:

Linda: And do you feel you yourselves have changed?

[Silence]

Mette: Hmm. A little bit. You're more yeah... I'm more er... I don't know. Got own opinion.

Linda: Yes?

Mette: Yes, but other than that nothing much has changed. Well, I do less. I do less actually than at primary school. [Focus group 5, 8 May 2007]

Mette felt she had got more of her own opinions, however, she did not elaborate and swiftly moved on to talk about the practical change of 'doing less'. She explained that she was more tired coming home from school and therefore engaged in fewer social activities. Likewise, all the other groups volunteered only practical changes. These cluster into three categories.

First, the girls mentioned differences in infrastructure. They noticed they had more books and a heavier bag, more teachers spread over different classrooms, et cetera. Maud answered my question:

Maud: Well, I now go to a Montessori school so now I have to work in six weeks and you have to plan all that. And er, well, in any case, it is a much larger school and there are more children.

Linda: How do you notice it is so big?

Maud: Well actually it's not that big because I'm in the D building and that is, that's somewhat bigger than the Kantlijn was. (...) And then there's the B building and the E building and the A building and the C building. [Focus group 2, 12 February 2007]

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Maud had changed school types and the Montessori method requires a different mode of working. Furthermore, in her answer she elaborated on the different buildings, about which it must have been important for her to show her knowledge.

Second, the girls noticed how they spent their time differently. The morning and lunch breaks were very different from playtime and lunch at primary school, and they also spent these with less adult supervision. Furthermore, they had more homework, which put significant constraints on their leisure time.

Third, the girls talked about differences in social interaction. Again, they were pragmatic, as they mentioned there were simply more children and teachers at the new school. The girls also talked about new friends and altered friendships. More children affect opportunities for friendships, and one's place in the popularity hierarchy. I return to this in the following sections. It is noteworthy that the girls from the Gunningschool mentioned they now had more interaction with boys. This meant not they got romantically involved, as almost all the girls from both schools considered themselves to be too young for this. It was, simply, an inevitability after the strict division between boys and girls at the Gunningschool. For instance, Laila told me boys and girls were obliged to sit next to each other at her new school.

The girls thus concentrated on very practical changes. Infrastructural differences made a manifest difference in the girls' lives. Their emphasis on such practicalities as 'having lockers now' reflects a changed everyday life. The girls' world had changed in a very practical way, but this had fundamental consequences. Remember how the girls at the Gunningschool viewed their drawers as 'their space'. Being part of a large school, with up to 1800 students and different classrooms all day, requires a different attachment to the building than at primary school. In this next excerpt, the girls explain how practical changes have fundamental consequences:

Marisol: To me, it seems really very weird if you... If you'd go to primary school and they say: 'okay, go sit at your table and...

Jenna [agreeing]: If I'd had to... yes. And then with a drawer...

Marisol: Now you have everything in your bag, and all, and...

Jenna: Or in your locker.

Noa: So you have to [go to] all different classrooms. You go to a different classroom all the time. And you keep on having different teachers. And, and when you have a break you're not, like, with your teacher or something.

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Then you don't go outside, or something. Then you can just go to the cafeteria, or you can go outside yourself, or to the Albert Heijn [supermarket chain].

Linda: Yes. Does it matter that there's no teacher present during breaks?

?: That's just fun.

Jenna: But also, in a certain way, I feel we're freer in secondary school, but then also not. I mean, in primary school you sometimes had to go outside and you couldn't stay inside. But in secondary school you have to make your homework and you have to do all this and then some more, what you didn't have to do in primary school. [Focus group 1, 6 February 2006]

The changes the girls mentioned point to three changes for identity performance. First, the different infrastructure and routines changed the girls' manoeuvrability and their opportunity to engage in different performance practices. Chapter 8 focuses on performance practices, but here I want to mention that more freedom and manoeuvrability means more time to talk, more opportunities to listen to and share music et cetera. Second, as a variety of teachers teach different courses, teachers' have less control over pupils. The girls felt they had gotten more autonomy over their actions in secondary school, but with that autonomy came responsibility. The girls were thus addressed, and hence positioned, differently by their secondary schools: now, they were positioned (more) as teenagers than as children. Third, as Bianca and Amisha's stories indicated, the change of setting and the different audience opened up the possibility of showing a different side of self. Bianca saw herself as being freed from the terror she had encountered at the Gunningschool. Amisha had slowly transformed from a quiet, shy girl into a more spontaneous tomboy the year before. Yet, at her new school, she told me she was more outgoing and had even got into a fight once.

6.4 Changes in friendship

Friendships that have been close throughout primary school can vanish almost overnight when girls enter secondary school. As the girls saw each other less often, friendship faded. Since most girls lived close to their old primary school, they often ran into their old classmates in the neighbourhood. When I met Nazli and Aliye at their new school, I asked them if they continued to see their former classmates. They met my question with an enumeration of the girls they had seen:

Aliye often sees Laila at the bus stop. They sometimes see Romeysa at the mall. Nazli lives in the same building as Radia. Nazli tells she saw Consolacion once at the Albert Heijn, Aliye saw her at the Dekamarkt [both are supermarkets]. [Secondary school visit Nazli and Aliye, 29 November 2006]

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Aliye and Nazli were keen to be exhaustive in their enumeration; however, this revealed that they only met these former friends by chance. They no longer made plans with them, nor did they hang out together when they met on the street. Nonetheless, to Aliye and Nazli it was important to point out that these girls had not disappeared from their lives either. In sum: although there was a break in social contacts, in their reflections about this issue, the girls emphasised continuity.

The girls did not mourn the loss of these friendships, as they perceived it to be a natural and logical change. Furthermore, as Aliye and Nazli confirmed, their former classmates had not disappeared suddenly. As well as seeing each other in their neighbourhood, most girls still chatted on MSN⁶. Mette explained why this was not, however, enough to maintain a strong friendship.

Mette sees her old friends less because she made new friends. She does not make new appointments with them, which is the main reason according to her. Now it is just asking questions: how is school, how was your school report? But it is no longer about 'do you like so and so', because you don't know all the new people they've met. And that kind of talk was the real fun.
[Secondary school visit Mette, 28 November 2006]

Since most were at separate new secondary schools, the girls no longer shared the same friends, and therefore had less to discuss. The girls that comprised focus group 1 attended the same new school, but they were spread over different levels and their friendship had changed. Since they knew the same people, their focus group interview was like a gossip session. Again, knowing the same people is crucial for friendship, because gossip is a favoured conversation topic.

New friends

In this subsection, I analyse how the girls understood new friendships. Most girls were nervous about making new friends, but after the transition to secondary school, they argued their nerves had been unwarranted. In primary school, the girls had already shared their anxiety with me. Sophie, for instance, repeatedly expressed her fears. She worried about her first day, especially because her mother insisted on taking her to school and she feared this would permanently damage her image. She did not know anyone who was to attend the same school and she worried about new friends. Her report about the first day at school starts with a long 'AAAAH', after which she described how nervous she was. She was keen on making a good impression and agonised about her

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appearance. When I visited her at her secondary school, she told me her nervousness had been in vain. Interestingly, she added that it was “nothing like in those American movies”, referring to American high school movies⁷.

Although most girls agonized about it beforehand, in the focus groups they all said making new friends was easy⁸. To stay with Sophie: she was alone on the first day and she worried others already knew each other, leaving her the only person by herself. To Sophie’s great horror, the “biggest nerd of the class” sat down next to her:

Sophie: I sat next to the biggest nerd of the class [laughter], that was my experience. Some guy sat down next to me right away: hello! And then ‘hi, ha’. (...) No but, now it turns out he’s not a nerd, but not the hunk of the class [either].

Linda: Yes.

Sophie: But he sat down there, and then another guy sat down next to me and he was a bit like, I don’t know, and looking at everybody and oh! I felt a bit uncomfortable because no one knows you and you sit there... Yes indeed, you think what am I doing here, but it wasn’t so bad...

Linda: And when you look back at that? Did you have that too, Thirza?

Thirza: Oh no, I just sat, you know, I just sat... We sat in rows and all of a sudden all these girls sat next to me and they starting to talk to me and we were a real club right away and I thought ‘okay’, then I thought er... yes.

Sophie: They were lucky; they had an introduction day the day before they went to school. In the evening. [Focus group 2, 21 February 2007]

Sophie felt disadvantaged, because the person next to her was not friendship material in her eyes. Sophie said she judged people on appearance, especially in the first weeks. The boy with whom she was so uncomfortable turned out to be not that bad. Sophie also remarked Thirza was lucky, because she had had an introduction in advance. The girls stressed the importance of such events, because friendships sometimes form haphazardly. Having had the introduction before the actual first day, Thirza had the advantage of already gaining some friends. Secondary schools facilitate acquaintances by organising events like a freshmen introduction day or camp. Sometimes these happened later in the year, thus providing possibilities for new alignments and new friends.

Making friends might have been easy, but friendships did not form as randomly as might appear from the girls’ statements. Although Amsterdam secondary schools are more mixed than Amsterdam primary schools, ethnicity is an important divider and most girls flocked to ‘their own’ ethnicity. The girls of non-Dutch origin all described the cliques at their schools in terms of ethnicity. Caruna wrote in her first day of school

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report: "Now I have one new friend who happens to be of the same descent as I am". Likewise:

Aliye: But then we had look, an introduction day. So then this girl came, she said 'yes, are you Turkish' and all, how old are you, yes, actually like that, yeah, that's how you make friends.

Linda: People just come up to you and they ask some stuff?

Aliye: Yes. [Focus group 3, 27 February 2007]

Aliye's example shows the same random pattern that Sophie feared when the 'nerd' sat down next to her: the first person you meet can be your lifelong friend. However, the girl's first question was "are you Turkish" and that one question established a sense of togetherness, of shared identity. We then discussed whether it was important that friends have the same background:

Linda: And with you they asked if you were Turkish? Is that important, that your friends are also Turkish?

Nazli: Yes.

Linda: Yes Nazli, why?

Aliye: For me not really.

Laila: No for me neither, as long as they're sweet and nice, funny.

Linda: And [name of new friend mentioned earlier], is she a Moroccan girl?

Laila: No, Turkish.

Linda: Turkish. And you Nazli, you said to me it is important.

Nazli: Yes.

Linda: Can you tell a bit more about that?

[Laughter]

Nazli: What is it [directed to the other girls]? I don't know, I just think it's important.

Linda: Yes, and could you also be friends with a Dutch girl?

Nazli: Yes.

[Laughter]

Linda: And with Moroccan girls?

Nazli: Yes.

Linda: But do you feel, why is it important then that someone is Turkish?

[Laughter]

Nazli: You ought to know which culture they have and all. [Focus group 3, 27 February 2007]

Laila interjected that she did not find it important to have friends with backgrounds comparable to her own. This is part of a politically correct repertoire (see §10.2), as Laila said it is more important that friends are sweet and funny, namely character above anything else. The girls' awareness of the delicacy of this topic also manifested itself in their laughter.

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Still, Laila's new best friend did have a similar background, as Turks and Moroccans in the Netherlands share the same religion and are faced with the same prejudices in this multicultural society. Girls of Turkish and Moroccan descent befriended each other sooner than they befriended girls of Dutch origin. Nazli explained why shared heritage is important to her: because then you know which culture they have, i.e. several things are already understood. My query into possible friendships with Dutch girls was met with a yes, even though Nazli had just stressed the importance of shared heritage. Shared heritage facilitates friendship, but most were reluctant to exclude other nationalities. Since Nazli had no Dutch friends, her unwillingness to exclude Dutch girls possibly had to do with my Dutch ethnicity or possibly with a politically correct repertoire.

The conversation continued with an interjection from Consolacion, where she negotiated Nazli's position by saying she could not be friends with Dutch girls:

Consolacion: I don't go about with *tata's*.

Linda: You don't go about with *tata's*?

Laila [overlapping]: I do.

Consolacion: No, Dutch people no.

Linda: No, why not?

Consolacion: I don't know.

Laila: Why? That's what you are yourself, right?

[Laughter]

Consolacion: No. [Focus group 3, 27 February 2007]

Consolacion experienced her ethnicity as Spanish-Colombian (see appendix II). Laila and Consolacion were close friends in the 8th form, which made it even more remarkable that Laila did not know Consolacion's descent. However, Latinas are a minor minority in the Netherlands and possibly the other girls did not therefore recognise it, whereas Turks and Moroccans are more easily recognised.

Cultural differences play a role in friendship. For instance, Sophie judged closeness in terms of having been at someone's house. Likewise:

Maud: But I didn't really think I would get to know all these people and all, that it would really become my class. But now it's all really familiar, well not as familiar as they [referring to Madelief-Sophie-Thirza] are now, but er still really, not with everyone and all, but with the most I find. Yeah, have been at many people's houses and all and it's already really close. [Focus group 2, 21 February 2007]

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Coming over and having sleepovers is common amongst the Dutch girls, but almost absent amongst the Muslim girls. This adds an extra hurdle to the possibility of mixed friendships. The girls of Dutch origin downplayed the importance of ethnicity as a dividing force. When I visited her school, I asked Thirza about multicultural relations at her school. She replied her class had people from Morocco, Turkey, Indonesia, Surinam and Egypt. The rest were “normal”. When I pushed her about this, it turned out that “normal” meant autochthonous Dutch.

With all the new faces, secondary school provides opportunities to make new friends and to build a new circle. The girls perceived making new friends as a random process. The randomness of making new friends shows how much friendship is performative: the person that sits next to you and talks to you is your possible friend. When you continue to sit next to that person and continue to talk, the repetitive performance produces the friendship. However, friendships actually do not form completely randomly, as some girls interjected that they judged on appearances in the first weeks, and other girls (un)consciously befriended girls from comparable backgrounds. Note also that the girls only discussed other girls, indicating that friendships with boys were not an option.

6.5 The popularity hierarchy

In section 5.5, I discussed the ways in which the girls understood popularity when they were in primary school. Popularity was defined as having many friends or having a favourable appearance. Most girls indicated at that time they thought popularity would be more important in secondary school than it was in primary school. In this section, I first discuss cliques and the popularity hierarchy at secondary school. After that, I analyse the ways the girls talked about the differences in popularity.

The girls distinguished several groups (or cliques), however, this varied strongly per girl. A shared classification system did not exist, as the girls used different words to designate non-overlapping groups. Here is the full list of Dutch designations, with the English explanation in brackets if necessary:

alto's [alternatives];	gewonen [regulars];	populairen [populars];
barbies;	gothics;	sletjes [sluts];
bitches;	kakkers [preppies];	sufjes [boring people];
brutalen [cheekies];	nerds;	tutjes [prissy people];
gangstas;	normalen [normal people];	

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In addition, they named groups who like the same music (but without a specific subcultural designation), and groups who share the same ethnic descent. Consensus existed only about nerds, a term the girls used solely to designate boys. Nerds are discussed in-depth in section 10.5 on normalcy.

The girls did not see any group distinctions based on musical preference other than goths. This might be due to a post-modern blurring of style (Muggleton, 2000), or perhaps such identities do not occur until later in adolescence (Ter Bogt, 1997). I therefore enquired whether the girls thought such groups existed amongst seniors. Both Maud [group 2] and Mette [group 5] argued that pupils in the senior levels dress more alike.

Maud: Yeah, in junior forms you still pay a lot of attention to what you're wearing and all, you pay a lot of attention. Well actually not, well you do try your own style, what you like to wear and what you don't. And yes those sorts of things and... But in the senior levels especially... My sister and her friends, they just want to get out of school as quickly as possible, they have their own clothes or something, but actually those are more, you don't really see a difference between... [Focus group 2, 21 February 2007]

For these freshmen, senior life is a lifetime away, even if their siblings live in that faraway world. As I did not investigate seniors, and recent ethnographic studies about subcultures in the Netherlands lack, the existence of such groups remains an empirical question. For the girls in this study though, subcultural identities based on popular music genres, like hip hop or rock, played no part in their lives.

Changes in the importance of popularity

When the girls were still in primary school, most of them argued that popularity would become more important in secondary school. The majority of girls argued that at secondary school, there are more children who previously did not know you. As Naoul said:

Because at first [in secondary school], you don't know the children. If you become popular they talk more about you and they get to know you more. But if they know you already, you don't need to be popular anymore. Like here. Here, everybody knows me. So I don't need to be popular anymore. [Interview Naoul, 30 June 2006]

Primary school was a safe environment, where the girls knew where they stood. Faced with an insecure prospect, the girls increasingly feared

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standing alone or being bullied. Popularity was thought to be more important in secondary school because there are more children in secondary school, and these children are also older. When specifically asked if this had anything to do with the start of puberty (as is often assumed within developmental psychology, see Lesko (1996)), the girls hesitated to answer – they said ‘yes’, but could not elaborate, or they said they did not know.

Once in secondary school, I asked the girls if popularity had become more important. Like their answers to my questions about the importance of popularity in primary school, the girls favoured ‘being yourself’ and ‘having some friends’ over popularity. Again, we thus see a continuance rather than a breach in the girls’ performances about popularity. However, a closer reading of their answers shows that popularity indeed became a more governing criterion in secondary school. In response to my question, the girls turned the conversation to specific people in their class, to whom popularity was either too important, or who were too unpopular. Talking about others instead of oneself is a manoeuvre that makes it possible to preserve authenticity. The girls especially mentioned that appearances were now more firmly judged by others. Mette explained some rules for popularity:

I ask Mette if popularity has become more important. She answers yes, you need to wear “good clothes” now, because there are more people and people “look at each other more”. Good clothes are jeans, and trainer pants are no good. She therefore doesn’t wear these anymore. It is also important to be more ‘groomed’. Mette often wears a knitted cap when she cycles to school, which makes her hair look messy, but that is okay. She says it is important not to wear your backpack too low, which means no lower than the top of your pants. Some people have their pack at their thighs, which is bad. Girls wear the pack over one shoulder; boys hold it in their hands. Mette pays attention to this, also to the brand of the backpack. Eastpack is a good brand, and backpacks with more than one front pouch are bad. She doesn’t carry many books in her pack, but keeps them in her locker. [Secondary school visit Mette, 28 November 2006]

Mette was a tomboy and never really paid much attention to appearances in the 8th form. In secondary school she was still a tomboy, but she did also adjust her performance. As I discuss further in chapter 7, being attentive to appearance and looking well-groomed [verzorgd] was deemed more important than being pretty. Mette’s backpack example shows how there are unwritten rules for appearances⁹. Knowledge about these rules determines your place in the popularity hierarchy.

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At some points, the girls indicated they adhered to the rules of popularity, at other points they rejected such rule following behaviour. Their statements thus sometimes conflicted:

Linda: And Sophie, do you feel appearance has become more important?

Sophie: Er, er, well no not really. It's not like you need to have a certain brand or anything, but you do see that you, er, well for instance, in our class a lot of people had Björn Borg underwear for a while.

?: All these boxers.

Sophie: Well, that's nice and all, but er, I'm not gonna spend my money on that, then I'll just wear different underpants you know. Or some also, then she has – then she says 'I don't feel good if I don't wear underpants with something nice on them' or something. Then I think, yeah, you wear pants over them... Well, I think that's nonsense. I don't find it that important, because you want to look kind of nice, or something, but I'm not going to adjust my clothing style to my class[mates], definitely not.

Madelief: No, I'm not doing that either. I'm not retarded or anything. [Focus group 2, 21 February 2007]

Sophie stated she would not adjust her clothing style for her classmates, an action Madelief labelled "retarded". However, earlier in the focus group, Sophie had discussed how she judged her classmates based on appearance. I asked her if she too considered being the subject of other people's possible judgement:

Linda: Okay, did you take into account that other people would judge you like that too?

Sophie: Yes, definitely.

All: Yes, didn't we?

Maud: Only your best clothes on and all... [Focus group 2, 21 February 2007]

Context is important here. This previous excerpt comes from a part in the interview where the girls discussed how they judged others. They were aware they would be judged in turn. To say they were not would be untrue and illogical, hence inauthentic. Maud also stated she had had conversations with classmates about their first impressions: what did you think of X when you first saw her. Such conversations are examples of the reflexive project in action. The first excerpt is actually an example of such as a conversation: Sophie reflected on designer underwear, and why it is silly to wear this or to give weight to this. In this more reflective context, she again stressed authenticity. To say she would subscribe to a silly practice would be inauthentic.

Not all girls were as popular as Sophie and Maud, and some girls stated they merely strived to be average: to be neither singled out as

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popular nor as unpopular. Group 5 unanimously agreed that they did not want to be conspicuous on their first day at school:

Gülen: I don't know, that you... Not really. You want the attention, but not that much.

Linda: Yes. Mette?

Mette: Yes. Not standing out. Normal, like others.

Linda: Like others. Caruna?

Caruna: Yes the same. Not standing out. [Focus group 5, 8 May 2007]

In sum, the girls believed popularity had become more important, and most of them adapted their performances to this increased importance. Popularity is thus a performative construct: by naming it and acting by it, it becomes true. Sophie and Maud were both popular girls, at the top of the hierarchy at their former and their new schools. Their reflexive gossip is constitutive in the rules that govern behaviour at these schools, and logically they perform up to the standards that they and others have set. As De Waal (1989: 147-149) argues, girl culture is a practice ground, where girls learn about the world through constant observation. These observations are then thoroughly discussed, categorised and ranked amongst themselves. Girls like Mette were also aware of the rules, and, as the girls indicated, no-one wants to be at the bottom of the popularity hierarchy. Furthermore, the need for authenticity hinders them in 'admitting' such adaptations. Moreover, the need to be considered normal often implies not standing out at all, not calling attention to yourself in any way. I return to these themes in part III of this dissertation.

6.6 Conclusion: some methodological considerations

I set out to investigate the differences in identity performance between primary and secondary school. In the method chapter, I explained how ethnographic fieldwork proved impossible, as the 28 girls I kept in contact with went to eighteen different secondary schools. Instead, I interviewed some girls individually on location, and 21 girls in a focus group setting. Without participant observation in the new secondary schools, I had limited access to the actual performances of the girls at their new schools. Instead, I investigated how they talked about differences.

The very pragmatic changes that accompany the transition to secondary school have basic consequences for identity performance. The girls disposed of more time, more spaces and more practices for identity performance, with less adult supervision and control. At the new schools, there were more and previously unfamiliar people. To some

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girls this allowed a different performance than in primary school; to other girls it allowed new alignments and new friendships. Transition to secondary school also means entering the intelligence hierarchy. During this period in life, intellectual abilities need to be incorporated into the narrative of self. Furthermore, their place in the popularity hierarchy had become more important, which required more attention to appearance than a year before.

The transition to secondary school is a process best described as an evolution rather than a revolution. Girls are not lifted from one environment to be dropped into an isolated new setting. Instead, old friendships remain or evolve. Family relationships change, but again no demonstrable rupture occurs over the summer. More importantly, the ways girls talk about themselves and others change only slightly. These ways of speaking are known as repertoires. Although I discuss these extensively in chapter 10, I here point to one specific repertoire: that of authenticity. This repertoire limits the possibility of naming radical changes; most notably the repertoire of authenticity promotes continuity rather than change as a norm. The girls did not talk about how they had changed, because of the authenticity norm. Furthermore, as Giddens (1991: 186, 215) argues, individuals require a coherent narrative of the self. Faced with rapidly changing circumstances, the narrative of the self needs to be reflexively sustained. Authenticity is central to preserving an integral sense of self. The girls' use of the authenticity repertoire can therefore be seen as a way of dealing with changes. Coping with change implies an increased need for reflexivity, which shows, for instance, in the girls' continuous gossip.

The lack of articulation of difference brings forth some methodological problems. Although the girls had changed, the audience of their performance in these specific research settings had not. In the individual interviews they spoke to me as a researcher, just like the year before. In the focus groups, they talked amongst their old classmates. Had I been able to split myself up and conduct more participant observation, I might have observed how Consolacion became less "bitchy" amongst her new classmates (as Amisha assured me). I might have observed how Marisol blossomed into popularity (as I now assumed from her behaviour and self-assurance in the focus group). Then again, these changes did not constitute any radical break in identity performance. Furthermore, the need for authenticity caused the girls to stress continuance. 'Longitudinal' research strongly based on interviews should take this into account.



Part III

Mapping Performances





Chapter 7

Subject-Positions

7.1 Introduction

Part II sketched the contexts in which I investigate young girls' identity performances. The four chapters in part III map these performances. In this first chapter in part III, I describe who these girls 'were' by analysing the different subject-positions they took up. In chapter 3, I defined a subject-position as 'a discursively created location a person can take up, which implies directions for living'. Put differently, discourse offers certain subject-positions, and these subject-positions contain information about who someone is, and how that person is supposed to act. An individual can take up (perform) such a position, but this is always a temporary attachment. Theory about subject-positions is abstract. How discourse creates exactly which positions remains unclear. Furthermore, such theory argues that subject-positions are complex, contradictory, and coinciding, but fails to show what this looks like or how this functions in everyday practice.

This chapter aims to bridge the gap between abstract theory and concrete practices by investigating the ways in which subject-positions work on a micro level. I propose to visualise the idea of discourse and subject-positions as a web. Discourse 'spins' a web of possible subject-positions. An individual is like a spider, moving from one node on the web to another, taking up different positions on it. Different parts of the web refer to different identities. For instance, the upper-left corner consists of a variety of subject-positions related to class, and the bottom-right contains positions referring to ethnicity. A girl can take up the position of the preppy girl. This position is an attachment to a middle-

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class identity. However, such a girl is not always a preppy girl; it is not her essence. Instead, she might also take up a Hindoestaanse subject-position. At that moment, she attaches herself to an ethnicity. Navigating the web is not a matter of choice. Discourse impedes the spider from moving to certain parts of the web, and instead points the spider in certain directions. Each spider has its specific web, depending on its historical localisation. For instance, girls with Turkish parents are restricted in their ability to take up a Dutch subject-position. Although that part of the web is not accessible to them now, this does not mean it will be the same in fifty years.

The sub-question central to this chapter is ‘which subject-positions do girls take up?’ The conventional identity categories of gender, age, ethnicity, and class (Aapola, Gonick, & Harris, 2005; Howard, 2000; Stau-næs, 2003; Woodward, 1997; Wrong, 2000) directed my attention in observing and listening to the girls. Thus, I asked myself which subject-positions I could reconstruct in the realms of gender, age, ethnicity and class. I focus on girls’ *experience* of these positions, and I emphasise the connections between various subject-positions (known as intersectionality (Yuval-Davis, 2006)).

7.2 Gender

Prior to anything else, the girls in this study performed ‘the girl’. This implies identification with a certain age and a certain gender. The age dimension is discussed in section 7.3; here I focus on gender. To some girls, gender was clear-cut. They understood femininity as a given, a notion beyond questioning. Other girls had a more complex understanding of gender, and they distinguished a variety of possible attachments to femininity. This section starts with the girls’ understandings of femininity. I then examine two specific subject-positions in more detail: the tomboy and the girly-girl. To demonstrate the complexity further, I discuss two intersecting subject-positions: the good girl and the sexual subject.

Understandings of femininity

In this subsection, I analyse the narratives the girls produced in response to my questions about femininity and masculinity¹. To some girls, these questions were difficult to answer.

Subject-positions

Linda: Do you feel you look typically like a girl?

Gülen: Yes, I think so.

Linda: You think so? And why?

Gülen: Yes normal, I don't dress like a boy.

Linda: Yes, so what is typically like a boy?

Gülen: Yes normal. Clothes that are suitable for boys. [Interview Gülen, 9 June 2006]

Gülen's circular reasoning, and her use of the word "normal" demonstrate how deeply lived the notion of gender can be. From an early age, one learns to identify with and invest in one gender or the other. This identification becomes so self-evident that thinking beyond it becomes nearly impossible. Nonetheless, the answers from the girls show different conceptualisations of gender. To the girls, gender was a matter of behaviour, of clothes, and of the body².

Some girls described characteristic boy behaviour as generally more adventurous, daring, boisterous or tough [stoer]. Boys also engage in different sports to girls, like football or rugby. Other girls could not explain what exactly constituted male or female behaviour; they merely stated that boys and girls 'acted' differently.

Many girls described clothing as a way of recognising gender. Most obviously, they said boys and girls wore different items of clothing. The girlish items named were skirts, fancy dresses, tank tops, bikinis, high heels and boots. The girls typified boyish items as trousers, tracksuits, football jerseys, suits, hooded sweaters, swimming trunks and football trainers. It was not just different items of clothing; the girls also saw gendered ways of wearing clothes. Loose fitting and oversized clothes were seen as male, and tight fitting clothes as female. Low-hanging trousers were also mentioned as being typical of boys. Furthermore, they said that girls sometimes show skin by wearing, for instance, low-cut tops, whereas boys can get away with wearing no shirt at all. Expensive brand clothing was something the girls coded as masculine, especially in relation to trainers. Prints were a way of telling boys and girls apart as well: floral prints are feminine, cartoon prints masculine. The girls also understood colour as gendered. Several girls mentioned pink as typical for girls, followed by baby blue and lilac. Male colours were not bright, and instead some girls said that black and brown were masculine colours, with orange as a possible exception. Finally, the girls told gender by looking at jewellery and accessories. Earrings, bracelets, handbags and decorated belts are accessories for girls, whereas one girl volunteered "large necklaces with dollar and marihuana signs" for boys.

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Fewer girls connected gender to the body. As I explicitly wanted to avoid talking about genitalia³, I formulated my questions carefully to discourage the girls from going in that direction. Six girls described gender in terms of hair length: short hair is more for boys and long hair more for girls. However, they all realised this was a generalisation and not necessarily the best way to tell boys and girls apart. One girl volunteered a beard as typical for boys. Another girl answered smelly feet as typical for boys. In addition, some girls mentioned the ways one treats one's body as gendered. Manicures and frequent visits to the hairdresser were for girls, as well as using makeup. One girl mentioned bodily behaviour:

Consolacion: A girl that sits with her legs crossed, who doesn't sit sort of like this. I sit like this when I feel like it, but my mother says 'you just need to sit like this, with your legs together'. [Interview Consolacion, 8 June 2006]

Consolacion indicated that her own behaviour did not live up to the standard of being a girl and that her mother corrected this behaviour.

The girls' understanding of typical girl and boy behaviour and clothing shows a tension commonly acknowledged within feminism: there are clear norms of what constitutes masculinity and femininity. Yet at the same time, most girls indicated they did not fully achieve these norms, meaning that they sometimes dressed and behaved in ways they considered to be more 'boyish'. The girls understood different gender norms, whilst indicating space for diverging from them. One girl mentioned gym class as a transgressional space, where girls could wear shorts and be more loud and wild than was normally accepted. Several aspects the girls mentioned seemed out of place for a primary school context: suits and beards are not commonly found amongst twelve-year-old boys, nor did any of the girls wear high heels or fancy dresses. This shows the difficulties in describing such an embodied and deeply rooted concept as gender.

The tomboy

Linda: Do you feel you look typically like a girl?

Katia: Er, yes I think that I do... I don't think I'm really girlish-girl, completely girl, but that I'm sort of... You have girlish-boy or boyish-girl, but then I sort of have... [laughs] Really complicated.... Girlish-boy and then... No, girlish-girl and then half... And quarter boy, so three quarters of me is sort of boy, because I really like adventurous stuff and all, bungee jumping I want to do especially, and skydiving. [Interview Katia, 19 June 2006]

Subject-positions

Katia's answer shows her inability to think about gender outside a dichotomy. She says she likes adventurous stuff, and she can only represent this part of herself as 'sort of boy'. Such a 'boyish girl' is known as a tomboy.

A tomboy can be defined as someone who prefers less feminine clothes, games, and toys, and plays with boys on a regular basis (Burn, O'Neil, & Nederend, 1996: 421). Tomboys existed amongst the girls from both schools, but were not as visible and were fewer in number amongst the Gunning-girls. Several girls from the Kantlijn identified Mette and Esther as tomboys in the interviews, meaning that they termed them as 'boyish girls'.

Noa: Mette, she really does boy things sometimes. Then I know myself that she is a girl. But I don't think she looks like a boy, but that's because I know her really well. [Interview Noa, 20 June 2006]

On occasions, for instance by the school photographer, Mette and Sarah were mistaken for boys. Noa said Mette dressed like a boy, but since she knew Mette really well, she always knew Mette is a girl.

Sophie even used the English tomboy (not a common term in Dutch) to designate herself at a younger age. She also used it to label Mette and Esther. Both Mette and Esther indeed dressed in boyish clothes and preferred to be friends with boys. Both girls successfully played football in the junior leagues. They expressed an attachment to the tomboy position during the interviews, but did not understand themselves as boyish girls. Instead, when asked to describe their style, they both said "sporty":

Esther: Sporty, but not too boyish or something.

Linda: Okay, those were my next questions: Do you feel you look typically like a girl?

Esther: No.

Linda: Why not?

Esther: Because I always wear sports clothes and that's not really girlish.

Linda: What's typical girlish then?

Esther: Skirt or a dress or tight jeans or a tight T-shirt. And I don't wear that.

[Interview Esther, 12 June 2006]

Mette: Er, sporty.

Linda: Yes.

Mette: And yeah a bit large and loose fitting.

Linda: Large and loose fitting, yeah.

Mette: Yes and er, yes.

Linda: Okay. And do you feel you look typically like a girl?

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Mette: No.

Linda: No? What is that then, typical girlish?

Mette: Er, skirts and a bit tight things actually. [Interview Mette, 12 June 2006]

Esther specifically added she did not feel she looked like a boy. When asked to describe typical boy clothes, they answered:

Esther: Well, really like, skate trousers and then for instance with a sweater or a T-shirt with a lot of text. And gangster clothes.

Linda: What are gangster clothes?

Esther: Like, Daan has these trousers and this shirt and that's really baggy then. And Lars has that too and Niels has a New York Yankees suit, that's typically boyish. [Interview Esther, 12 June 2006]

Mette: These low-hanging trousers. I don't think that's normal. Actually, it depends on how low you put them. Also these big T-shirts and all, er, trainers. Yeah, that's it. [Interview Mette, 12 June 2006]

Thus, Mette and Esther made a distinction between themselves and boys. They were not girls who wanted to be boys, or girls performing masculinity. Instead they took up the position of the tomboy, which is (simply) a different attachment to gender (see also Burn et al., 1996; Carr, 1998; Reay, 2001).

In talking about Mette, one girl quickly added that Mette was changing and was becoming more girlish. When Mette had entered secondary school, she still dressed as a tomboy, but she also told me she was more attentive to appearances now. Sophie said in the interview she used to be a tomboy, but that had changed. She said:

Sophie: Well yes. Now I'm not really much of a tomboy. First I was. First, I had... Now I also have a couple of skirts, but in 6th formor something I have no skirts at all, was it really special when I bought a skirt. Now not so much anymore, but sometimes still.

Linda: Why do you think that is, that that's changed?

Sophie: Well I think that you grow older. I don't know really. At a certain moment you see people wearing a really nice skirt indeed and then you think: 'Yes, that's actually nice as well'. First it was also that I kind of didn't dare, then you think like: 'Hmm, that bare'. I don't know, the older you get, or something I think. I haven't a clue actually. [Interview Sophie, 27 June 2006]

The literature states that tomboyism usually fades when girls enter adolescence (Hyde, Rosenberg, & Behrman, 1977). This was visible for Mette, and Sophie confirmed this in the interview. However, she found it difficult to explain such a change. Again, as I concluded in the previous chap-

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ter, the girls stressed continuance over abrupt change. In 8th form, Sophie dressed quite femininely, but still often played football with the boys. Thus, she no longer took up the tomboy position, but she still performed a different attachment to femininity than most girls in her class.

The girly-girl

Tomboys thus identified with 'boyish' behaviour and clothes, but they did distinguish themselves from boys. There were also girls who had a very strong attachment to everything traditionally coded as feminine: they principally dressed in pink, had impeccable nails and hair, wore skirts and feminine shoes, giggled continuously, and exclusively discussed 'girl' topics like clothes and soap operas. Roos exemplarily took up this position of the girly-girl. Her movements were always elegant and feminine, and she often touched her face and shook her long hair. Likewise, Caruna and Vanessa also performed girly-girls and their classmates identified them as the 'girliest' girls in class. For instance, when I asked who looked most typically like a girl, Madelief and Jenna answered respectively:

Madelief: Vanessa does wear a lot of pink. I find that really like, really such a girl, really.... Really such a girl, but she also has a lot of handbags, she has like twenty or something... [Interview Madelief, 13 June 2006]

Jenna: I think that Vanessa looks girly. Regarding face and hairstyle I think she's a little tougher, but regarding clothes I think she is the most girly I believe. [Interview Jenna, 26 June 2006]

Vanessa also described herself as typically girly. She said:

Linda: Can you describe your style?

Vanessa: I don't know. Just normal. I like pink, a lot of pink. Pink yes [laughs].

Linda: Okay, and do you feel you look typically like a girl?

Vanessa: Yes, because some children look kind of boyish.

(...)

Linda: Okay, and you say you don't... that you look very different...

Vanessa: Yes, because they don't want makeup, I find that very girly. And yeah, just nail polish or a little bit girly clothes. They never wear pink or something.

Linda: And do you wear a lot of makeup?

Vanessa: Well in the weekend almost always and sometimes to school and other than that at parties or after school also sometimes. [Interview Vanessa, 3 July 2006]

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Vanessa thus cited femininity by appealing to colour and makeup. She opposed herself to girls who never wore makeup or pink clothes, making them less feminine and herself “just normal”.

The good girl/the virtuous subject

The girls not only had varying attachments to femininity, they also approached ‘doing gender’ in different ways. At certain times, certain girls performed the ‘good girl’. Earlier I mentioned how Consolacion’s mother instructed her about how a proper girl sits. By the good girl, I mean a girl that is virtuous, and follows the ‘conventional’ rules of gender.

One aspect of the good girl is paying attention to appearance. All the girls found it extremely important that they (and other girls) kept a clean, well-groomed appearance. Most of them believed it was an essential part of being a girl. Furthermore, they understood attention to appearance as an active and continuous act (something one must always do), in which the idea of a project resonates. Some girls argued attention to appearance was equally important to boys, but that, for instance, this was less visible in public. Most girls, however, stated it was more important to girls. First, simply because boys have less to perfect. The girls connected this to differences in hair length. If boys have any hair to begin with it, it needs less work. In addition, girls dispose of makeup and boys do not. Second, the girls’ answers show different goals for girls and boys. Several girls pointed out that girls feel they need to look pretty in order to meet boys, with the intention of getting a boyfriend. This does not mean that girls are solely responsible for the romantic process; it just implies that girls have different means in this project than boys:

Odecia: Maybe because [do] more with their eyes... Like seductively glancing up, you know? And boys more with their... with their doing and girls more with their appearance and all, you know? When girls want to make a pass at a boy they usually do that with the outside and the eyelashes and all, you know? When the boys want to make a pass at a girl they usually do it with tough and bla bla bla, so that has less to do with appearance than girls.
[Interview Odecia, 27 June 2006]

According to Odecia, girls depend on their appearance and boys depend on their behaviour. It is important to note that the girls held each other accountable for their appearance. Thus, they did not experience attention to appearance as something they did in order to meet boys; instead, they knew they were being scrutinised by other girls. The girls

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understood certain aspects of appearance as *makeable*: looks can be manipulated (see Duits & Van Romondt Vis, 2006 for an extensive discussion).

Maud: About the shapes in your face and all, you can't do anything about that. But if you just, like yeah, comb your hair and all, and that you not never wash it and all, yeah that you don't have stains on your clothes and all, yeah those kind of people I don't hang out with. But those are also often those types that think about the world 'I don't care' and all. I just don't like that.
[Focus group 2, 21 February 2007]

Maud distinguished between essential facial features, which are beyond one's control, and attention to appearance.

The sexual subject

As Butler asserts (1993: 4), dominant discourse comprises a heterosexual imperative. This is the governing criterion behind gender positions, but it also obviously implies a sexual positioning. The sexual subject is a subject performing sexuality, where sexuality is understood as sexual interest and sexual preference (Abercrombie, Hill, & Turner, 2000: 313). Contrary to societal concern about the sexualisation of society, none of the girls engaged in sexual acts at the time of research. Several girls at the Kantlijn had boyfriends. Odecia and Lars 'went out' for a long time. Odecia told me they had been on and off since the 6th form. I asked her what going out means:

Linda: What does that mean, going out?

Odecia: Well it is... I mean I really feel so comfortable and special with Lars. He really makes me, he can like... make me feel special, you know? And then... I just really like that. He's just really nice and pretty and handsome and very funny and I feel really good and all around him you know. [Interview Odecia, 27 June 2006]

Odecia shows a deep affection for her boyfriend Lars. In explaining going out, she started with love. When I pressed her about what that meant in terms of behaviour, she explained the physical part:

Linda: Okay, and then what are things that you like do together?

Odecia: Kissing of course, and holding hands...

Linda: Kissing-kissing...?

Odecia: Not kissing-kissing, because Lars and I are very affectionate of course, but we're also like... Yeah, I don't really want to kiss every five seconds. We're still just like a normal couple, like we kiss often but... Well now often, very often, and we hold each other's hand and I often sit on his lap.

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Linda: And does kissing mean French kissing or just like...

Odecia: Well we have done that a couple of times, but I really have something like: 'Okay, I still have my whole life ahead of me to do that, so maybe now I can just go and enjoy my youth'. You know? So I really had something like let's just do a long, long kiss instead of with tongue. [Interview Odecia, 27 June 2006]

Nothing in Odecia's answer warrants the worries described in chapter 1. Conversely, the girls from the Kantlijn gossiped heavily about Priscilla's behaviour. Priscilla had problems at home and stopped coming to school in the last months of the 8th form. Her classmates told me she had once said she was pregnant, and they speculated about sexual acts she had supposedly undertaken. Such gossip allowed the girls to define appropriate behaviour for themselves. In the 8th form, 'going out' [verkering] was usually not as serious as Odecia and Lars' relationship. At the Kantlijn, the girls often 'asked' boys out, sometimes together with a friend. Usually, they only went out with a boy for a short time, and the girls often switched boys.

In secondary school, going out with boys happened more often. Still, my questions about boys and dating in the focus groups always resulted in hysterical laughter. Dating (e.g. going to the movies with a boy) was seen as something American, and the girls told me that boys and girls usually went out in groups. Going out with boys was not something the Gunning-girls did, and they said fifteen was an appropriate age to start having boyfriends. Several girls from the Kantlijn had, by then, some experience of French kissing. When I probed one group about whether more than kissing happened, one girl responded "Come on, we're twelve!" suggesting that the idea itself was ridiculous. Instead, several groups turned the questions around and interrogated us⁴ about our experiences with boys during secondary school. The majority of girls argued that seventeen was the best age to start exploring sex. All girls identified with heterosexuality.

The sexual subject is a position that the girls not so much took up but rather rehearsed. An example of trying on the sexual subject is dancing to favourite artists. Although most girls had not developed breasts in the 8th form, they tried 'shaking' them in their dances. Furthermore, mainly in secondary school, the girls tried on the sexual subject during parties. These special occasions allowed more makeup and sexier clothes. In the focus groups, the girls stressed they did not dress sexily for boys, but to look 'nice' for themselves; or, as one girl stated, "because everybody else does that too. Everybody else looks nice". The girls connected

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looking nice to dressing sexily, although not explicitly. All the outfits described as more special (and thus more appropriate for a party) were sexier: short skirts, short dresses, makeup, tight blouses, and so on and so forth. Sexy dress is thus a norm for such parties, but to these girls, this had nothing to do with sex or boys. Comparably: for the (hypothetical) first date with a boy, the girls stated they would dress 'normally' to avoid putting ideas in the boy's head.

7.3 Age

Age is the second axis of 'girl'. The girls in this study were at an in-between age. At the Gunningschool it often struck me how their appearance differed from their behaviour. Some girls dressed quite maturely in hip clothes, but enjoyed handicrafts, drawing and other more 'childish' activities. I reconstructed three subject-positions involving age: the child, the mature subject and the knowing subject. These subject-positions appear to be more voluntary than those related to gender and ethnicity. The girls could decide whether and when they took up the child or the mature subject. At the same time, their factual age and their bodily development restrained them from performing any age. In other words, they could choose between child and teenager, but not between toddler and middle-aged.

The child

What constitutes a child is a discursive construction and, throughout the ages, children have been approached in different ways. Ariès (1962) argues that differentiation in age groups started with the emergence of schools. Primary school, then, is the domain of children and secondary school the domain of youth. In primary school, the girls still saw themselves as children and preferred 'child' over 'young person' or 'teenager' in designating themselves and others. They engaged in play, like skipping, playing tag and shooting marbles. When there was spare time or a celebration in class, they played board games or enjoyed handicrafts and drawing. In secondary school, all the girls stopped such behaviour. At the Gunningschool, halfway through the year, I noticed an almost sudden change amongst the girls. They played less harmoniously, interfered more with the boys and started to talk in the playground instead of skipping. They were clearly entering puberty.

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At the Kantlijn, Maud and Jenna were sentimental about leaving primary school. They wanted a last chance at being a kid: they wanted to do what the infants did and ride on infant bikes. On one of their last afternoons, the 8th formers played in the infant playground, riding around on the little bikes. All the pupils played along, they played nicely and acted childishly (i.e. whining and giggling). Luck had never encountered this before and the whole event was hilarious. Maud and Jenna showed great reflexivity about abandoning their childhood period and created one last performance of the child.

The mature subject

Since the 8th form is the final form, 8th formers are the oldest in their schools. At that time, they need not distinguish themselves from older youths at school, but they do want to mark themselves from the younger ones. The position of the mature subject is an opposition to that of the child. The mature subject is, therefore, not so much mature, as it is non-childish. The girls performed the mature subject by either distancing themselves from children, or by citing maturity.

The girls at times distanced themselves from younger children. In section 5.3, I described how the teacher, Luck, ‘punished’ the Kantlijn-girls with a silly hat when they violated the rules for toilet use. The girls’ responses to the toilet hat demonstrate how these girls were at an in-between age. The boys had made a long, conical hat out of pink cardboard. On the side were strings of toilet paper. On top was a cut out pink pig with the text “I am Miss Piggy”. The boys, further, added a brown turd and the text “I am a toilet princess”. When the boys were making the hat, the girls felt awful about the prospect of wearing it, saying they definitely did not want to be seen in it. However, when the hat was finished, Nursen volunteered to wear it and joked about it. She showed it to her seven-year-old sister and made fun of herself. She thus took away a sense of shame connected to the hat and reappropriated its meaning. After that, the girls made a complete show out of wearing the hat to the toilets. One girl waited especially until right before school ended, so that the parents and pupils in the hallways could have, in her words, “the time of their life”. Thus, initially the girls collectively feared looking childish, but later they were able to move beyond that, to stand above childishness and turn it around.

Other examples of distancing themselves from younger children appeared in the ways they discussed children’s media genres. For instance,

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one girl remarked about cartoon network Jetix that “it has become really childish”. Another girl stated that cartoon magazine *Donald Duck* “lately has become boring”. Effectively, such utterances create a distinction between what is considered to be childish and what is more mature. Note how the comments about Jetix and *Donald Duck* are not presented as personal opinions, but as facts. These girls did not perceive cartoons as something you outgrow: they had not changed; Jetix had. With such utterances, the notion of ‘the child’ is established yet, at the same time, abandoned. They also suggest that the girls were not aware of their transition into an older age group.

The girls also performed the mature subject by citing genres they associated with maturity. Coded as more mature, were shows on MTV, teenage dramas or anything with a 16+ rating. For instance, Mette once loudly announced, “I got a 16+ movie for my birthday”. She did not mention the title, only the 16+. Her remark intended to show how mature she was. The video game *GTA San Andreas* was also used to perform the mature subject, since all pupils – unlike most parents – were aware of the Pan-European Game Information (PEGI) age rating of eighteen.

Mickey and Ramin are discussing *GTA San Andreas*, for about fifteen minutes. They find the violence in the game funny. I ask Mickey how she feels about the sex: she says she hasn’t noticed it. Ramin says he doesn’t pay attention to that. [Field notes Kantlijn, March 6 2006]

The game’s PEGI-rating is due to its violent and sexually explicit content. Mickey and Ramin cite the violent content to perform the mature subject. In the game, the protagonist can ‘visit’ prostitutes. This kind of sex was not something they discussed or that produced maturity. As I argued above, the girls found themselves too young to engage in sexual activities. Nonetheless, some girls with boyfriends (only at the Kantlijn) cited maturity by displaying ‘mature’ books on their tables. Titles having to do with boys, sexual exploration, and other adolescent issues⁵ were ‘safe’ enough to perform a sexually exploring and therefore mature subject.

The headscarf was also a performance practice that cited maturity. Nazli started to wear the headscarf in the summer between primary and secondary school. When I visited her at her new school, I asked her how wearing it for the first time felt. She replied, “I felt a bit big and all. I felt like a woman”. Likewise, Amisha told me that at the Islamic school she attended before transferring to the Gunningschool, girls started wearing the headscarf in the 4th form. She was excited then, because it

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made her feel part of the older girls, (I return to this in chapter 10). These girls saw the headscarf as a practice that belonged to older girls, and wearing it thus cited maturity.

The knowing subject

Knowing more is one aspect of growing older, of disassociating with younger girls. The knowing subject occurred in three areas: educational knowledge, knowledge of popular culture, and social knowledge. First, the girls performed their difference from younger children by showing educational knowledge. At the Gunningschool, the group was divided into three levels of arithmetic. The lowest level used books they knew were aimed at lower years, and they tried to escape this level by performing the knowing subject. This meant keeping one's hand up so high the girl sometimes stood up to place her hand even higher in the air. It involved sighing, moaning and angry reactions when not allowed to give the answer. Here, the performance of the knowing subject demonstrates a tension between being positioned by the teacher and the girls' own positioning. The teacher assigned the girls to levels, and their performance of the knowing subject is a way of fighting this positioning: 'look, I know the answer; I do belong in the 8th form'.

Second, knowledge of popular culture in general and television in particular provides status within the peer group. Media use adds to cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984; Thornton, 1995). It relates to maturity, because the girls associated most popular culture with older teens. Knowing your facts about *Idols* or the World Cup was an important asset in the performance of the knowing subject. Being able to identify certain shows, or lecturing about the difference between music channels TMF and the Box, were performances of knowing what was happening. In one game the pupils at the Kantlijn played, knowledge of popular culture was the key to winning. The person designated as 'it' provided a letter of the alphabet, to which the other participants have to shout out a movie title starting with that letter before being allowed to cross.

Knowledge about street and hip-hop culture is a special form of knowledge of popular culture. Such knowledge points to being streetwise. Some girls were the first to introduce new slang words or music. This position was rarely performed and only by three girls: Consolacion and Naoul from the Gunningschool and Priscilla from the Kantlijn. It is tied in with social class, because the street has been seen as a lower-class domain (e.g. Cohen, 1972).

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Third and related to maturity, the knowing subject referred to social knowledge. This social side of the knowing subject relates to friendship and to the reflexive project. To the girls, it was important to know what was going on in class and with all classmates. In primary school, they looked around, gossiped and were very attentive. For instance, if two girls passed on notes, other girls wanted to know what was in them and who was passing what to whom. Since I took notes on everything happening in class, the girls often wanted to read what I wrote down, using me as asset. As mentioned, the focus groups at points turned into gossip sessions, where they would specifically want to know who had done what, with whom and why. It seemed the girls constantly needed each other, and that knowledge about what was happening supplied them with a sense of security and reassurance.

7.4 Ethnicity

Although the girls in this study came from different ethnic backgrounds, ethnicity was not a prevalent, performed identity. At the Gunningschool, most girls shared the same religion. Identity is marked by difference, by opposing us versus them. In a group where religion is shared, one marks other differences than religion. The faculty at the Gunningschool marked themselves from the pupils and positioned the pupils as religious and ethnic others. The girls thus shared their status as Other and focused on other differences (for instance cliques and popularity). At the Kantlijn, the dominant ethnic background was Dutch, although a few girls differed. Before I discuss ethnicity performances, I investigate the girls' ethnic backgrounds and the girls' ethnic self-perception.

Ethnic descent

Saharso (1992: 58) distinguishes an objective and a subjective component in ethnicity. Religion, history and descent are more or less objective determinants in the assessment of ethnic belonging. These characteristics thus need to be subjectively processed into an ethnic identity. Appendix II lists the descent of both mother and father, the ethnic experience of the girl and her experienced religion, based on self-report during the interviews. This table is problematic, because it reduces complex understandings to either/or. The following subsections provide the complex constructions behind the table. In appendix I, I explained the Dutch classification system for autochthonous and allochthonous inhabitants.

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I argued that descent is the major categorization criterion in the assessment of ethnicity in the Netherlands. Descent is also central in the objective component of Saharso's understanding of ethnicity. I therefore start my inquiry into ethnicity by looking at the girls' ethnic descent.

All the girls, except Katia, were born in the Netherlands. Katia had moved to the Netherlands from Russia when she was six months old. All the girls of Turkish and Moroccan parents had parents from the same native country (e.g. both were Turkish or both were Moroccan). All these girls were so-called *second-generation immigrants*, a term used to designate someone who was born in the Netherlands, but whose parents were born elsewhere. Most parents had come to the Netherlands in their twenties, but Beyhan and Laila's parents migrated during childhood. Many girls were unclear about their parents' pasts before they were born, and they did not know the exact age when or reasons why their parents migrated. This lack of knowledge suggests the story of their parents' migration was not part of the girls' identities (i.e. not incorporated in their narrative of the self). Hence, to term these girls second-generation *immigrants* does not resonate in their understandings of their positions.

To some girls, their descent required a complex answer.

Consolacion: My mother is Columbian and my father is Argentinean. My father then has a father who's Irish and my mother then has a mother who's... a father who's Indonesian, so I'm just... I can't describe my looks. I can't say where I'm from. I just say 'I'm Spanish... I'm Columbian', because in fact that's the same language, Argentinean and Columbian. That's actually all one thing. [Interview Consolacion, 8 June 2006]

Comparably:

Betty: My father is from Angola, but he grew up in Portugal. My mother is from Cape Verdean island, and she is... They met each other in the Netherlands and my... My grandma and grandpa they have [been] there together, my grandma she's now here in the Netherlands, in Rotterdam, but my... From my mother's side and my grandpa he's just there in Cape Verdean island. They're in contact, you know, that they talk to each other, but not that they live together.

Linda: And your other grandma and grandpa are in Portugal?

Betty: That's the same story, from my father's side.

Linda: And when someone asks 'where are you from', what do you say?

Betty: I just say Portugal, because if I explain the whole... I just don't like that, you know, to tell the whole story then, then I just say once 'I'm from Portugal', done. [Interview Betty, 9 June 2006]

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Consolacion and Betty did not enjoy explaining this complex story to others and therefore resorted to a simplified version of their descent. The girls whose parents migrated to the Netherlands as guest workers from Turkey or Morocco had a simple story that was more recognisable to each other. Maud, on the other hand, wished she had more to tell:

Maud: Er, well, you mean like where I'm from? Well, I think that even the great-great-great-great-grandfather of my father, and mother of my father, of me, they are Dutch. And also at my mother like that [laughs]. That's really bad. I'm completely Dutch and I think that's really very stupid.

Linda: Why is that stupid?

Maud: Well, I think it's more interesting if you're also for a little bit from another country. [Interview Maud, 12 June 2006]

Maud said her descent story would be interesting if she was "for a little bit" of mixed descent. She did not express a wish to be different; she merely wanted more to tell. Indeed some of her white classmates had mixed parents, like Esther whose mother was French, or Sophie, whose father was Russian. The girls with Dutch parents answered my question about descent by describing in which cities their parents had lived before coming to Amsterdam.

Experienced ethnicity

The girls' objective identity, determined by their parents' descent, did not always coincide with their experienced ethnicity. Not all girls identified with the country or culture from which their parents stemmed. Noa's father migrated to the Netherlands from the United States to marry her mother. She did not feel American:

Noa: Well, not really. I don't really get the feeling that I am that... Because I never speak American. I also don't really do things that belong with there. I just actually do more Dutch things. [Interview Noa, 20 June 2006]

Noa used the verb 'to do': she did not 'feel' she is American, because she did not 'do' anything coded as American. Her understanding of ethnicity was thus coherent with performance theory, where acts produce identity instead of reflecting intrinsic, inner feelings.

The other girls stressed language and location as determinants of their ethnic feelings. Several girls sometimes 'felt' Dutch and sometimes something else. When they spoke Dutch or Turkish, they felt Dutch or Turkish respectively. Katia did not identify with any country, because, as she explained, she spoke four languages. In the end, she identified

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most with the Netherlands, because she was most adept at Dutch. Likewise, Amisha did not identify with her parents' Surinamese descent, because she did not know any of the "words of Suriname". Her family is originally from India and since she did know Indian words, she identified more with India. To several girls with parents from Turkey, speaking Turkish was decisive in their sense of ethnicity.

Some girls experienced themselves as more Dutch when they were in the country of their parents' origin, so for instance when on holiday in Morocco.

For Chemaë it was the opposite:

Linda: When I ask, where are you from? What do you say?

Chemaë: Not from Morocco. Well, no, yes, no. I'm not from Morocco [laughs]. I live here, I was born here and yeah, I was born here and I didn't come here from Morocco.

Linda: But do you also feel Dutch?

Chemaë: A little.

(...)

Linda: Can you describe a moment when you feel Dutch?

Chemaë: Just here. Look, Morocco, I don't really go there often. Once every... Once every year, like in the summer holiday, just that. But here, I work... I work... [laughs] I live here, done. I live here, every day I'm here. That's why. [Interview Chemaë, 29 June 2006]

Chemaë mostly felt Moroccan, yet her location also made her feel Dutch. Her construction of Moroccanness was complex, because – as she stated – she was not 'from' Morocco. The girls often took questions very literally (see §4.5). Likewise, Jenna's parents were from England and Ghana. Since she had lived in the Netherlands all her life, she mostly felt Dutch.

Ethnicity, like gender, is not something one can choose. It is inscribed on the body and, next to language and location, attachment to an ethnicity also related to skin colour⁶. For instance, Amisha never felt Dutch because she felt people stared at her because of her darker skin colour. To both Aliye and Beyhan their lighter skins affected their experience of their Turkish heritage. Aliye answered she was from Turkey, but she was born in the Netherlands. She felt more Dutch than Turkish, because she was positioned as Dutch based on her looks:

Aliye: [I feel] [m]ore Dutch, and everybody says 'are you Dutch or are you Turkish? Let me guess, you're Dutch?' 'No, I'm Turkish.'

Linda: Yes.

Aliye: 'Oh, because you look like a Dutch person', you see?

Linda: And what does a Dutch person look like? Do you feel you look like a Dutch person?

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Aliye: No actually not.

Linda: Why not?

Aliye: Don't know.

Linda: What does a Turkish person looks like then?

Aliye: A Turkish girls often looks like, sometimes, just, or headscarf, that can be the case, or, you don't have blue eyes, because I have green-brown eyes, that's why. And that's why they immediately think: yeah, you're Dutch. That's why. [Interview Aliye, 8 June 2006]

Conversely, Beyhan wished she had a darker skin, so she could be more Turkish. Amisha was a Muslim part of the minority group of *Hindoestanen*⁷. Her skin had a colour common amongst Indian people, but her parents had come to the Netherlands from Suriname. This caused confusion:

Amisha: My descent. I'm from Suriname, but actually I have nothing to do with that, so I'm not Surinamese or something, but someone from me does live there, my uncle and my aunt. (...) My descent something... So actually then I'm from... My ancestors are from India, so actually I'm Indian. Sort of Hindoestaan, let's say Hindoestaan. But our descent is Suriname, so most of the time they immediately think 'oh you're Suriname, but you don't look like it'. But I am it. No actually it's not. No, actually I don't understand what I am either, because then I think I'm also a bit Indian, done. Indian, Surinamers, Dutch people, done. [Interview Amisha, 9 June 2006]

The majority of contemporary Surinamese people descend from African slaves and thus have a different appearance. One boy, Tony, was of such descent. Once, I witnessed this confusion in class. For a project, Laila needed to find things common to Suriname. She asked both Tony and Amisha, to which Tony replied that Amisha was not Surinamese. Amisha snarled back "am too!" Amisha was confused about her background, because she did not look 'Surinamese'. She thus ascribed more authenticity to Surinamese of African descent, even though, like the *Hindoestanen*, they were not 'originally' from there either.

One girl mixed religion into her sense of ethnic belonging. Radia replied "Islamic" to my question about descent. When I asked her if she was of Moroccan descent and what that meant, she said:

Radia: that you speak Arabic, Berber⁸. Er, that you're not allowed to do many things. That you... We believe in Allah. [Interview Radia, 8 June 2006]

To make things more complicated, Radia then argued she feels more Dutch than Moroccan. Although an inhabitant of Amsterdam, she did not feel she belonged to this group, because 'they' speak differently and "believe in Jesus".

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Performed ethnicity

In the previous subsection, I described the different ways the girls constructed their ethnicity in the interviews. I argued the girls constructed their sense of ethnicity based on language, location, skin colour and religion, next to the official understanding of ethnicity primarily based on descent. At the beginning of this section on ethnicity, I stated that ethnicity was hardly ever performed at the Gunningschool. The girls rarely discussed their different backgrounds or referred to Morocco or Turkey amongst themselves. Close friends Gülen and Dilara were an exception and they did perform Turkishness. When speaking to each other, they always spoke Turkish. Although this was, officially, not allowed at the Gunningschool, the teacher, Thomas, never corrected them, probably because Gülen and Dilara were quiet, obedient girls. Speaking Turkish set them apart from their non-Turkish friends in class, who often reacted with annoyance. As I argued before, the lack of ethnicity performances was related to the homogeneous religious background in class. When we went to Amsterdam's city centre for a museum visit, the population differences between the Gunningschool neighbourhood and Amsterdam's centre showed. Nazli could not stop staring at the ordinary commuters near Central Station. She poked me and remarked "what weird people". This further demonstrates the homogeneity of the Gunningschool's neighbourhood.

For the celebration of Sinterklaas⁹, each pupil had been assigned a letter of the alphabet and s/he needed to handcraft a representation of a country of choice starting with that letter. At Sinterklaas, presents are ingeniously wrapped in homemade boxes, which represent existing objects. These are called *surprises*. This provided the pupils with an opportunity to show off their knowledge of their homelands. Aliye, whose parents were from Turkey, had 'T', yet she had a hard time thinking up what to make. In the end, she decided to go with Turkish pizza. The example from the previous subsection, where Amisha snapped at Tony, is another example of ethnicity performance evoked by this project. Note that Sinterklaas is a typical Dutch festivity and thus a performance of Dutchness. A second occasion on which ethnicity mattered, was when the pupils had to paint self-portraits. They spent most of their time and effort on creating a colour that matched their skin colour. Here, the girls paid great attention to subtle differences in tone. Likewise, Radia was once – in passing – called "too white" for a Moroccan. Again, notice the importance of skin colour in ethnicity perception.

At the Kantlijn, most girls were of Dutch descent. Only Jenna often

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performed her Otherness. Jenna's father came from Ghana and Jenna had a brown skin colour. However, her Otherness had nothing to do with her partial African descent; instead, she performed Britishness. She often talked about shows she watched on the BBC and presented herself as an expert on everything British. She dressed in clothes bought in England and often pointed this out to the other girls. Odecia, who had a Surinamese (Hindoestaanse) father and a French mother, experienced her ethnicity as Dutch with some French. Her parents had divorced when she was one and she rarely saw her father. Odecia once performed a dance with many Indian influences, thus performing her Hindoestaanse background. Dutchness was never clearly marked, instead most girls identified, to some extent, with an Amsterdam identity.

The Amsterdammer

Recently, scholars on ethnicity have suggested the global city as a new, more inclusive basis for identity in the multicultural society (see Müller, 2008 for an overview). Amsterdam, as capital of the Netherlands, evokes a sense of pride in most of its inhabitants (as do other capitals like New York and Paris). The city also encourages this sense of belonging, for instance through school projects like the *Museumles* and *Kunstschooldag* (see §5.3). Most girls from the Kantlijn said in the interviews that they identified with Amsterdam, whereas the majority of the Gunning-girls, like Radia above, did not. They could not explain why they did not feel like an Amsterdammer, even though they defined an Amsterdammer as someone born in that city. Perhaps this was also to do with the lack of mobility of the Gunning-girls: they mostly stayed inside their neighbourhood and inside Amsterdam, thus lacking the essential Other to which to oppose their Amsterdammerness.

Several girls from the Kantlijn took up the position of the Amsterdammer. They opposed themselves to non-Amsterdammers, who they labelled 'provincials'. Mickey especially felt this tension, as in the future she was to say goodbye to Amsterdam when she had to move outside of the city. In the 8th form, she often talked about differences between children from Amsterdam and those from outside. Other girls remarked about such differences after visiting places outside Amsterdam. The Amsterdammer was also performed by fandom of Ajax, Amsterdam's football team. Although it was mostly boys who did this, girls like Mette and Esther often remarked that had attended games and they discussed the football league. The Amsterdammer was also cited through language. Although most girls from the Gunningschool

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did not identify with Amsterdam, they did speak with a distinct Amsterdam dialect, mixing Moroccan sounds with it.

The (non)-Muslim

During the celebration of Sinterklaas, the boys trashed *surprises* that they knew were made by girls. Amisha's *surprise* (a palm tree representing Yemen) was completely torn apart. Amisha had used dates (i.e. the fruits of the date palm) to make the palm tree look real. I was sitting next to Aliye and she explained to me that in Islam, one is not allowed to play with food. The pupils, apparently collectively, interpreted this rule as applying to *surprises* as well. Amisha was an outsider in class and the class attacked her so hard because she – in their eyes – failed to perform the good Muslim. The Muslim is connected to the good girl. To the Muslim girls, Islam implied a number of rules surrounding proper behaviour. They often connected these rules to gender. Radia explained her Islamic descent as follows:

Radia: I have Islamic descent.

Linda: An Islamic descent?

Radia: Yes. With Sacrifice Feast [Eid ul-Adha] we eat sheep.

Linda: Yes.

Radia: And with Sugar Feast [Eid ul-Fitr] we eat biscuits, then they make biscuits, then we eat biscuits. With sugar. And, you're not allowed to depilate your eyebrows.

Linda: You're not allowed to depilate your eyebrows?

Radia: No. And, you're not allowed with, like when you have a partner and a man walks next to you, then he's not to smell the perfume you're wearing.

[Interview Radia, 8 June 2006]

Radia described acts that bring the Muslim into being, notably two Islamic feasts. Furthermore, she described non-acts. Mullaney (2001) argues that researchers need to pay attention to the ways identities are brought about by not-doing things. The virgin, she maintains, is an identity constructed by the absence of certain acts. Radia's description of the Muslim likewise incorporates not-doing things. I found several other references to not-doing things. For instance, Nazli explained to me Muslims must have short nails (so the devil cannot get under them) and Beyhan informed me only non-smokers go to heaven. Such non-acts are difficult to observe and interpret as performative of an identity for an outsider. However, Amisha's example shows the repercussions of border crossing.

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Most girls at the Gunningschool identified with Islam. To Chemaë, this made her feel happy she was Muslim:

Linda: Are you Muslim?

Chemaë: Yes.

Linda: And is that important to you?

Chemaë: Yes, because if I wasn't Muslim, I was Christian. And then they'd say to me 'ooh you're not Muslim'. Like with Bianca, she is the only one with Betty. If I was her, I wouldn't like it either. She doesn't like it. [Interview Chemaë, 29 June 2006]

Chemaë got a sense of belonging, showing how dominant Islam was in this classroom. Christianity was the proverbial religion that is not one, and when religion was performed, it was thus the non-Muslim that sprang into view. However, only Consolacion could take up the non-Muslim position, as I show in chapter 8. Interestingly, Chemaë was good friends with Consolacion but did not mention her as being non-Muslim. Part of performing the Muslim was wearing 'closed clothing', an umbrella term the Muslim girls used for items that are the opposite of revealing clothing: high tops, long sleeves, long skirts et cetera. At the Gunningschool, all Muslim girls wore closed clothing and some commented on Christian Betty's revealing clothes. Finally, the Muslim was performed in the interviews. Talking to me as an outsider, the girls for instance argued how prayer structured their day outside school.

Amsterdam's secondary schools are more heterogeneous than the primary schools, and the Muslim girls there found themselves with a new instrument in their performance of religion: the headscarf, which had been forbidden at the Christian Gunningschool. Two girls decided to wear the scarf in secondary school, Nazli and Dilara (both of Turkish parents). Both named religion as the primary reason for wearing the scarf, but, as I mentioned in section 7.3 and further argue in chapter 10, other motivations were involved as well.

7.5 Class

The Netherlands is a more classless society than, for instance, the UK, and the elaborate welfare state ensures class relations are less outspoken. Notwithstanding a lack of class-consciousness, class does exist and class differences were visible. The girls from the Gunningschool all had low-income parents. At the Kantlijn, social-economic class was mixed, with parents who were judges, artists or plumbers. Class positions mattered

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to the extent that no one from either school wanted to be labelled poor, and girls displayed financial capital to avoid this. Thus, when it comes to performing class, the performed positions were mostly middle-class related. The discussion of the weekend at the Kantlijn provided an excellent opportunity to do so, as the girls with well-off parents told how they had gone out to dinner, or to an amusement park or a museum. This position, like most, must be balanced. For instance, the girls of the Gunning-school considered Aliye to be spoiled, because they felt she flaunted her parents' better-off financial situation. Two specific subject-positions are related to the middle-class: the preppy girl and the horse-crazy girl.

The preppy girl [kakker]

'Kakker' is a well-known Dutch style label, which translates best as posh or preppy. This group marks itself through conspicuous consumption: the acquirement of leisure and goods in order to better one's social status (Veblen, 1926 in Ilmonen, 2001). The conspicuous consumption that sets the preppies apart from the rest is usually expensive. Furthermore, this position can only be performed if one has access to the cultural codes of the middle class (see next chapter).

None of the girls took up this position in primary school, however, once in secondary school some girls clearly performed this position. These girls wore branded clothes, although the fashion was not showing the name of the brand conspicuously. In her 1989 ethnography, De Waal described multiple layers of polo shirts as one of the characteristics of this group (p. 162). Although other characteristics she mentioned (e.g. culottes, chequered knee socks) have gone out of fashion, the polo shirts were again fashionable amongst this group. A posh accent (in Dutch: *bekakt*) was another performance practice. Not all girls with posh accents were preppy, but all preppy girls had a posh accent. Some girls already spoke with a posh accent in primary school, and 'turned' preppy in secondary school. This suggests there was already an attachment to this position, but it was not fully taken up until secondary school, when the girls aligned themselves to new friends.

The horse-crazy girl [paardenmeisje]

Although quite common in the Netherlands and the rest of Europe, the girl subculture of the *paardenmeisjes* [horse-crazy girls] has been – to my knowledge – undocumented in academic research. Usually confined to pre-adolescence, horsey girls spend much of their free time at a rid-

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ing-school, grooming and riding horses. Holidays are spent at so-called pony-camps and bedrooms are decorated with posters of horses. Maud, Marisol, Mickey, and Thirza (Kantlijn) took up the horse-crazy position. They talked continuously about riding-school and horses. Their shared adoration for horses was a constitutive force in their friendship. Media also played a role in the performance of this identity. These girls all subscribed to the magazine *Penny*, and in the classroom they all read books like *Black beauty* and *De vergeten pony* [The forgotten pony].

The position of the horse-crazy girl requires financial capital. Subscriptions to magazines, membership of a riding school, and stays at pony-camps are expensive. At the Gunningschool, several girls obsessed over other animals, like cats, hamsters and parakeets. These featured prominently in several girls' photo narratives and websites, and these girls often talked about their pets. Love for such pets is not easily recognised as a subject-position, as the performance practices are less manifest. This suggests that the horse-crazy girl is reserved to the middle-class. This might explain the absence of this position amongst the Gunning-girls. Furthermore, I expect that the performance of the horse-crazy girl is also tied in with whiteness. However, these remain empirical questions, which require more elaborate research amongst horse-crazy girls¹⁰.

7.6 Conclusion

This chapter investigated which subject-positions the girls took up. My task was to bridge the gap between abstract theory and concrete identity practices. I proposed the metaphor of a spider's web and discussed a variety of different subject-positions. My discussion shows great diversity amongst the girls. Some girls easily switched between subject-positions, for instance performing the streetwise subject one moment, and the good girl the next. I also showed the girls had complex and diverse understandings of, for instance, femininity and ethnicity. Although post-modernism accounts for such complex understandings, daily language does not. For instance, the girls could only talk about gender positions in terms of a dichotomy: boyish girls and girly-girls. My discussion of ethnicity showed how the official designations of autochthonous and allochthonous always-already position girls of non-Dutch descent as Others. This dichotomy is further enforced by the idea of second-generation immigrants, even though this term is not reflected in the girls' own narratives. Membership of Dutch society is based on birthright (Fennema & Tillie, 1996) and it disallows membership based

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on *experience* of ethnicity. The Muslim girls reproduced the notion that Islam is irreconcilable with Dutchness. In chapter 5, I argued that their Dutch teachers positioned these girls as Others. In this chapter, I demonstrated that girls also position themselves as opposites. Despite the promises of some post-modern identity theorists, one is not free to take up just any position. Discourse (dis)avows one identification over the other, and limits the ways the girls could understand themselves. As a result, in terms of the metaphor, not all parts of the web were available to the girls.

In addition to discursive limits, navigating the web depends on the body, not only in gender performance, but also for ethnicity and age. Several girls with 'older' bodies performed the child, which substantiates that identity performance is neither unequivocal nor conscious. The importance of skin colour in the performance of ethnicity confirms Essed's (1986) claim that essentialist elements of race have been transferred onto the allegedly race-free Dutch understanding of ethnicity. Amongst the girls from both groups, this discourse is performed, and as such, reproduced.

In chapter 6, I argued that the girls did not articulate much difference in their transition from primary to secondary school. The conclusions of chapter 6 transfer to this chapter. Thus, the transition opened up possibilities for other subject-positions, and it is indeed possible to locate certain positions in the realm of primary school (e.g. the child), and others in the realm of secondary school (e.g. the preppy girl). Nonetheless, the girls and their identity performances did not change overnight. Although subject-positions are temporary, changing and flexible, the need for a coherent and authentic narrative of the self necessitates more or less stable performances.

To sum up, conventional identity categories like 'Turk' or 'child' do not suffice in describing the lived realities of girls in contemporary society. However, the flexibility suggested by post-modern identity theory does not suffice either. My contribution lies in showing the richness and complexity of experiences of identities. Simultaneously, my analysis showed how these experiences are grounded in discourse. In the following two chapters, I further investigate the workings and limitations of identity performance.

Chapter 8

Performance Practices

8.1 Introduction

The previous chapter showed the wide variety of subject-positions the girls performed. In this chapter, I investigate *how* the girls brought about these positions. This chapter describes the process of citation, filling the empirical gap in Butler's theory. I defined citation as appealing to norms or conventions associated with subject-positions. I thus focus on performance practices: acts involving style, which performatively constitute subject-positions. The chapter focuses on three practices central to style. Section 8.2 analyses the girls' appearances. Section 8.3 focuses on the girls' use of media in the classroom¹. Media use at home is transferred to other settings, such as school, through talk about media. Section 8.4 addresses media talk. As mentioned in chapter 7, the girls could not freely choose between subject-positions. Not all performance practices are equally available and accessible to the girls. In section 8.5, I discuss which limitations constrain girls' use of appearance and media.

8.2 Appearance

During my observations, I diligently kept track of each girl's appearance: what clothing, colours, jewellery, shoes et cetera was she wearing? How often did she change? Everybody came to school dressed, but not everybody dressed the same. Furthermore, not everybody regarded dress equally important. Some girls claimed not to care much about how they looked; others paid much attention to their appearance, and even sometimes changed clothes during lunch breaks. Aliye

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(Gunningschool) often changed her outfits during lunch. For instance, on November 8, I observed Aliye was wearing 'lilac tight trousers, pink woollen sweater with black and white stripes, low-heeled black leather boots, and loose hair'. In the afternoon, I noticed she had changed shoes into the then fashionable *mukluks*, a type of boot. A glance at my other observations showed that her classmate Betty had, for the first time, also worn *mukluks* that morning. Aliye usually changed her hairstyle during lunch break, so she would come to school in the morning with a ponytail, and in the afternoon with braided hair.

In the following five subsections, I first describe dress at the Gunning-school and the Kantlijn respectively. Rather than providing individual portraits, these sections provide a general idea of the girls' dress styles. I clustered the girls into similar styles, based on my observations of their appearances. They are my reduction of difference into roughly the same styles, meaning that the girls themselves did not cluster their classmates this way (as they did not distinguish any groups based on appearance in class, other than boys and girls). Because these style clusters are school-specific, I describe the schools separately². After dress, I devote a subsection to bodies at the two schools. The concluding paragraphs of these three subsections address changes, both during the 8th form, and between primary and secondary school. After these descriptions, I analyse the functions and consequences of this performance practice.

Ghetto fabulous and boy clothes: dress at the Gunningschool

At the Gunningschool, most girls did not have large wardrobes, yet nearly all the girls changed outfits each day. The general dress style was basic. Jeans were the most common piece of clothing amongst the girls, usually combined with a solid (non-patterned) sweater, a (zipper) cardigan, or T-shirt. Black, pink and light blue were the most common colours. Some girls (Aliye, Beyhan, Betty, Chemaë, Nazli and Radia) dressed in a more sophisticated manner, sometimes wearing skirts or coloured pants. They had different pairs of shoes and some of them wore *mukluks*. They experimented with different hairstyles, and with accessories like shawls and gold jewellery. Nazli, Radia and Betty sometimes dressed in tracksuits, appropriating the 'ghetto fabulous' style popularised by actress/singer Jennifer Lopez. These were also the girls who dressed in a style they coded as the most feminine. Although some of these girls wore skirts, only Betty wore skirts above the knee. Most girls wore loose-fitting clothes; only Aliye, Betty and Consolacion sometimes wore tight T-shirts.

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Another group (Amisha, Consolacion, Naoul and Romeysa) dressed in a more or less androgynous style, meaning dress that both girls and boys wore: a T-shirt, jeans and trainers (Nike, Puma or non-brand). However, only Amisha characterised her style as such, saying she sometimes wore “boy clothes”. To her, typical girl clothes were skirts, fancy shoes with heels, jewellery and makeup. The other three stated they dressed like girls (see also §7.2). The remainder of the girls also mainly wore jeans and plain shirts; however, they cited femininity more, through wearing, for instance, boots with heels (worn over their trousers) and gold jewellery.

Most girls wore the same clothes all year round, meaning that they did not dress differently in summer, even though the weather was particularly hot in June and July. In winter, a few girls occasionally came to school without a coat, claiming they could not find it. When I met with them during the first year of secondary school, all the girls had new outfits. Furthermore, some girls’ dress style had changed. For instance, Naoul and Gülen dressed more stylishly than the year before. Amisha had been the only girl with a headscarf in the 8th form. She stopped wearing her scarf half way through the year, and did not recommence the next year. Dilara and Nazli had started to wear a headscarf over the summer. Both had ‘practised’ with the scarf, for instance when visiting the mosque. Other girls had considered wearing the scarf, but decided to wait to see what their friends did. In chapter 10, I discuss the girls’ understandings of the headscarf.

Girlly-girls and preppies: dress at the Kantlijn

In comparison to the Gunning-girls, the girls at the Kantlijn had larger wardrobes. They invariably changed outfits each day, albeit sometimes a minor change (e.g. different sweater). Again, some girls changed outfits during lunch breaks. Noa was an exception, as she wore her denim skirt, black tights and black cardigan almost as a uniform. At the Kantlijn, jeans were also the most common piece of clothing. The girls combined jeans with zipper cardigans or hooded sweaters. Sweaters and T-shirts often had multiple colours and contained prints, like floral prints or text. Furthermore, these girls wore non-jeans, like coloured pants and short denim skirts, more often. Several girls dressed somewhat alike.

First, one group of girls dressed very girlishly. Vanessa, Roos and Caruna often wore dresses and skirts, and they almost exclusively wore pink. They carefully attended to their appearance. For instance, one day Vanessa was dressed in white pants, a white and pink zipper cardigan from Nike, white and pink Nike trainers. She wore pink socks, and had pink earrings and nails.

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Comparably, a second group of girls also dressed femininely, but not as abundantly as the other group. They sometimes wore short skirts, blouses and blazers. They too used many accessories, like wristbands, earrings and shawls. Their clothes had many colours, which they carefully coordinated.

A third cluster of girls wore a type of outfit I would classify as trendy. Although their clothes were not essentially different from the majority, and were thus predominantly casual, they had the 'right' kind of fitted jeans, the 'right' kind of shoes, the 'right' kind of hooded sweater or zipper cardigan. The girls singled Mickey out in the interviews as the trendiest, but classmates Madelief, Maud, Marisol, Odecia, Sophie and Thirza shared her sense of style. These were also the girls at the centre of the friendship cliques (see §5.5). Maud, Marisol, Sophie and Thirza most often wore designer clothes, such as Converse and O'Neill shoes and clothes from Only and Esprit.

Finally, Mette and Esther dressed as tomboys. They wore shell-suit trousers and shorts, and football jerseys from Ajax or the Dutch national team. They only wore trainers (Nike and Puma respectively). When not in football jerseys, they wore hooded cardigans and stayed within the sporty style. Priscilla dressed differently from all the girls. She wore revealing clothes, like low-cut tops and low-cut pants. As her body was more mature, her outfits also had something to reveal. Her classmates disapproved of her clothes, and they often asked her "cover up".

During the warm summer, clothes literally came off. In June and July, all the girls dressed in short dresses, skirts, and shorts. They wore tank tops and T-shirts, and shoes were exchanged for flip-flops. Some girls wore shirts and tops that revealed their bellies. In secondary school, like the Gunning-girls, all the Kantlijn-girls had new outfits. Again, the dress' style of some girls had changed slightly. The girls who wore designer clothes in the 8th form had evolved into proper 'preppies' [kakkers] (see §7.5). Mette's dress changed in secondary school from that of the less outspoken tomboy into more casual, although she still wore an Ajax scarf in the focus group.

Not quite there yet: bodies

These subsections offer a general description of appearance, and should therefore also include skin colour. Turkish or Moroccan descent does not imply one has dark(er) skin or dark hair. Figure 8.1 shows sample cheek skin colours, which I cut from photographs of the Gunning-girls.

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The first three come from photos of the lightest skinned girls, the last three of the darkest, showing (even in black and white) the great variety in colour.



Figure 8.1: Skin colours

Beyhan and Aliye had Turkish parents and brownish blond hair; Radia and Chemaë had Moroccan parents and golden blond and brownish blond hair respectively. All the other Gunning-girls had brown or black hair. It was the combination of fair skin and blond hair that made some girls conspicuous to their classmates (e.g. fair skin and dark hair was not considered problematic). Three girls at the Kantlijn had darker skin: Caruna (Surinamese-Dutch descent) had a light-brown skin with brown hair; Jenna (English-Ghanese descent) had a brown skin and frizzy black hair; and Odecia (Surinamese-French descent) had brown skin and black hair. Such descriptions are problematic. Priscilla, for instance, also had light-brown skin, but it remained unclear if this was the result of a sun-tan or racial origin.

At both schools, long hair was the prevailing standard. All the Gunning-girls had long hair, whereas at the Kantlijn this varied. At the Gunningschool, only Aliye, Consolacion and Bianca sometimes wore their hair loose. At the Kantlijn, the girls wore their hair in a variety of ways, often changing the style during school hours. Brunettes dominated both classes. In the 8th form at the Gunningschool, makeup was a rare sight. Some girls 'secretly' experimented with mascara. As the girls kept a close eye on each other and noticed the slightest changes, they loudly announced it when someone wore mascara. Such remarks embarrassed the girl in question. Makeup was more common at the Kantlijn. Several girls always wore mascara to school, and several girls experimented with other makeup such as eye shadow and lipstick. During special occasions, like the day the school photographer came or a birthday party, more girls than usual wore makeup. Amisha and Bianca from the Gunningschool both wore glasses; at the Kantlijn Maud often removed her glasses out of vanity. Four girls wore braces, which they all did not mind. Odecia (Kantlijn) used to have external braces but at the time of research, she no longer had to wear those to school.

During the year, several Gunning-girls developed breasts and curves, which they tried to hide, especially when changing for physical education. When they took off their trousers, their backs faced the wall. When

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changing tops, they turned around and faced the wall, or they put on their gym shirt on over their T-shirt and then removed the latter through the former. Several girls were a bit overweight, which they also tried to hide. A common view in class was a girl getting up out of her chair, pulling up her pants and pulling down her shirt. Only Priscilla had a curvaceous body in the 8th form at the Kantlijn, all the others had pre-pubescent bodies, with little or no breasts and hips. Priscilla was the biggest girl in this class, and except for some baby fat all the girls were slim. In secondary school, most girls had grown taller and curvier. Makeup had become acceptable and most girls wore it during the focus groups. Some girls seemed even more body-conscious; for instance, Laila was, all of a sudden, afraid to have her picture taken when I visited her at her new school. It was only after several shots that she agreed on the picture, and I was not to show it to anyone else.

Performativity of appearance

Now that I have provided a general idea of the different appearances at the two schools, we can turn to the meanings of these appearances in general. An item of clothing or a performance practice in itself has no meaning. For instance, wearing boots over or under trousers has no inherent meaning. To some this practice points to vulgarity, to others it is a mere matter of taste. The practice can only be meaningful when it is understood which norms are cited. Bourdieu's (1984) concepts of cultural capital, field and habitus are particularly helpful here. Recall Mette's knowledge about how to wear your backpack (§6.5). This knowledge is a form of capital that determines whether or not you can cite the right norms. In return, this citation determines your place in the popularity hierarchy.

In the girls' talk about appearance, both in the form of remarks observed in class and in dialogue with me in the interviews, they reflected upon appropriate appearances, and thus established meanings. The Muslim girls avoided sexy clothing, and some of them commented on the inappropriateness of Betty's clothes. For Consolacion, this norm amongst her Muslim friends was a reason to adjust her dress:

Consolacion: Yes, here you just need to adapt. Like with the world, you just need to adapt to the world. If you don't like it, you're out of luck. [Interview Consolacion, 8 June 2006]

Consolacion thus chooses not to cite sexiness. Comparably, several pupils at the Kantlijn commented on Priscilla's clothes, which they found too revealing and very vulgar. This is also connected to Priscilla's larger body:

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Sophie: There's a difference between Priscilla and Madelief. Well, first the size. Madelief for instance also wears really short crop tops very often and all, but those aren't crop tops, she just buys her clothes too small actually. In itself I don't find that very beautiful. Priscilla also has it often, but I think with... Yes, I don't know. I don't find it pretty with either of them. But yeah, 'course there's a difference, with Madelief at least you can see a bit of a tight tummy, and with Priscilla a bit of blub. [Interview Sophie, 27 June 2006]

Sophie comments on how both Priscilla and Madelief use crop tops in an unacceptable way: by wearing shirts that are too small, or by showing blubbery flesh. Sophie found crop tops vulgar, and judged people who wore them in the same way.

Different types and manners of appearance constitute different subject-positions. Clothing and appearance³ are mainly practices in identity performance, although they are also performative in friendship. In addition, the 'plain' or 'casual' preferences of these girls are indicative of their quest for normalcy (see chapter 10). However, appearance is not always performative. For instance, braces and glasses were not much remarked upon.

Gender is performed by either more or fewer feminine appearance practices. Wearing pink is a way of identifying with the girly-girl position. The dominance of long hair at the Gunningschool performatively constituted the notion that girls have long hair and boys have short hair, a notion the girls constantly reproduced in the interviews when talking about typical features of boys and girls. Mette and Esther, but also Amisha, Consolacion, Naoul and Romeysa, performed a tomboy position with their 'boy clothes'. Mette and Esther brought about the tomboy by dressing in football jerseys. Since these are usually associated with men, wearing such jerseys cites masculinity. The other girls constituted the tomboy by dressing in gender ambiguous clothes, which then, by definition, become non-feminine clothes.

The plain and decent dress of many Gunning-girls performed the virtuous subject, as did the practice of wearing one's hair tied in a ponytail instead of loose. The virtuous subject is connected to religion and ethnicity. Headscarves likewise constitute the Muslim girl. The use of porno-chic items at the Kantlijn was instrumental in the performance of the sexual subject and the mature subject, but only at some points and by few girls. A top that reveals the belly and shoulders is sometimes just a breezy top, especially when worn by a girl without curves. The combination with other performance practices thus counts.

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Class positions are also produced through appearance. For instance, the ghetto fabulous look cites American ghettos with their hip-hop and street culture. Gold jewellery functions similarly. The 'correctness' (or trendiness), and the amount of clothes, perform middle-class positions. Class positions and non-trendy positions are often performed involuntarily, as the access to the cited meanings depends on one's knowledge (or capital) of them (see §8.5).

These connections between appearance and subject-positions might appear to be common sense, yet I explicitly make these connections to show the performativity of apparently obvious and innocent everyday practices. I now turn to the second central performance practices: media.

8.3 Use or lose: Girls using media

Media provided ample opportunities for identity performance. In order to qualify as a performance practice in the classroom, a medium must meet three requirements. First, it actually needs to be used in class. Second, it needs to have some relevance to the girls in the classroom as well, and some media are more relevant to them than others. Some girls understood popular media mostly as a means of passing time, and not something that is highly meaningful all the time (see also Hermes, 1995). In appendix VIII, I investigate the relevance of popular media from different methodological perspectives. My assessment of relevance stems from this investigation. Third, the medium needs to be used as a form of distinction. Table 1 summarises these three requirements for the different popular media I observed in class, in order of relevance.

Medium	Usage in class	Relevance	Distinctive
Television and film	Talked about	High	Yes
Popular music	Talked about	High	Yes
	Used in class	High	Yes
Video games	Talked about	Medium	Yes
Books	Used in class	Medium	Yes
MSN	Talked about	Low	Depends
	Used in class	Low	No
Magazines	No	Low	Yes
Newspapers	No	Low	No

Table 8.1: Popular media usage by the girls in the study

This list is an exhaustive enumeration⁴ (cf. Bakker & Scholten, 2003). High relevance means that the medium was significant to the girls. 'Distinctive'

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refers to the medium's opportunities for distinction. Thus, the girls talked about television, television was a relevant medium to them and such talk allows distinction. Conversely, magazines were not used in class, and although magazine titles are distinctive, the girls ascribed low relevance to them. This section focuses on media use, the second section on media talk.

Media were often used in class. An eye-catching performance practice is dancing to music. The Kantlijn-girls often practiced a dance at home and then performed this for their classmates. At the Gunning-school, dancing to pop music only occurred on one occasion. Instead of the traditional musical, the pupils at the Gunningschool bade farewell to teachers and pupils by staging a practiced dance to the other forms. The girls chose *Buttons*, a song by the then popular girl group The Pussycat Dolls. Ten girls participated; only Amisha, Bianca, Dilara and Gülen did not become involved (Amisha and Bianca were not invited to join; Dilara and Gülen did not enjoy such attention). The girls practised in the small gymnasium without Thomas' supervision, but I observed most of their rehearsals.

Practice is a constant struggle over who is allowed to speak and who is allowed to show the moves, particularly between Consolacion [leader of the popular girls] and Aliye. Aliye seems to be the most experienced dancer, and she tells me she has taken some street dance lessons. The girls copy all the sensual and sexually provocative moves, from opening and crossing legs to running their hands over their breasts. The dancing is shy, awkward and unfinished. [Field notes Kantlijn, 6 July 2006]

After several rehearsals, the girls showed the dance to their classmates and later went round other classes.

As well as dancing to pop music, the Kantlijn-pupils often played their own CDs that they had usually mixed and compiled at home on the stereo or computer. The music ranged from the latest top-40 hits to pop classics (e.g. *California Love* by Tupac feat. Dr. Dre was a favourite at the Kantlijn). At the Gunningschool, listening to music in class was only allowed during special holidays, like after the Easter breakfast. In addition, at both schools, pupils carried MP3-players. Clearly, MP3-players are a direct continuation of personal media such as the Walkman. As Du Gay et al. (1997: 114) remark, the Walkman takes "private listening to the public domain". The school is a social domain, and although they sometimes listened by themselves, the pupils never aimed to isolate themselves. Instead, MP3-players were often turned into social devices by sharing earplugs with a friend. When actual music was absent

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or impossible, girls often sang popular tunes together. For instance, during lunchtime, we usually went to a playground close to the Kantlijn's temporary building. On the way over there, friends would often walk arm in arm, singing a pop song. On one occasion, while on the bus after visiting a museum, Jenna and Noa alternated between songs like *My humps*⁵ by the Black Eyed Peas, and a nursery rhyme from a clapping game that they had played earlier.

Books, as discussed in chapter 7, were an ever-present medium in class. Finally, MSN was often mentioned in both classes, for instance by asking who was online yesterday or by exchanging new email addresses. In addition, the Kantlijn's pupils re-appropriated Instant Messaging in class in a form of communication they called 'playing MSN'. Each group of tables posted a paper on the wall with their email addresses listed. On this paper, one notified others that s/he was 'online'. Actual messaging consisted of passing on a notebook after each 'posted' sentence. In secondary school, opportunities for using media had changed, but this had no radical effect on media use in class (see chapter 6).

Performativity of media use

Dancing and listening to popular music allowed the girls to experience different subject-positions, such as the sexual subject. Such practice is performative: through dancing like a sexual subject, one takes up this position and performatively brings it about (Baker, 2004). The girls' dance to *Buttons* shows how they 'rehearsed' sexuality. Although they paid attention to the decency of their clothes, the girls embraced practicing a flirtatious gaze. Sexuality was often shunned at the Muslim-dominated Gunningschool. However, sexuality is abundant in popular music, and the girls recognised it less in music than in, for instance, kissing on television. Such play is performative, because through practising and acting, the act produces itself, makes itself true.

Since everyone read books in class, the act of reading itself does not allow anyone to distinguish herself. However, different titles point to different subject-positions. Pupils kept their books in their drawers, but also often on top of their desks, as an ostentation of what they were reading – in other words as a performance. Books play a role in the performance of the horse-crazy girl and the mature subject. For instance, as mentioned in chapter 7, girls with 'boyfriends' had titles like *Vrijen* [Making out] on their desks, even though they had not yet engaged in such activities.

MSN also provides many opportunities for distinction. It allows one

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to choose an email address and a nickname. The email addresses often point towards an identity, for instance in using 'footballer girl' or 'moco' (Dutch street slang for Moroccan). The nicknames (which are displayed in the programme) were changed continuously and usually consisted of a number of emoticons with a message like 'the Kantlijn rules!!!' or 'Friday I'll go swimming'. These elements, however, did not play a role in class as such. The MSN game was not distinctive and hence I do not consider it a performance practice. Likewise, De Kloet et al. (2005) argue that distinction is possible through different MP3-players, with Apple's iPod in particular lending an air of authenticity to its owner. I did not observe such differentiation between brands in either of the schools.

8.4 Everybody's talkin' about it? Girls' media talk

As one part of the class is off to handicrafts, the other half has free time and can do a drawing. Maud, Mette, Thijs and Max are discussing the song *Stupid girls* by Pink. They are discussing different parts of the song: they dislike the rapping ('it's stupid'), but they enjoy the chorus ('I like that'). [Field notes Kantlijn, 11 April 2006]

This short observation of a group of pupils is indicative of media talk in the classroom. Between educational chores, they had 'free time'. Luck gave them a task, but the atmosphere was relaxed and talking was allowed. Whilst they were drawing, they engaged in casual conversation. Their topic of choice was close to their world: a new song by a popular female singer. As they moved through the conversation, they covered different aspects of the song and put a judgement on them. This talk allowed them to align themselves, regardless of the lyrical content.

Media talk involved television programmes, movies, television commercials, popular music, games, and, to a small extent, MSN. Television and movie talk included discussing the plot of a show, movie or commercial, or discussing the behaviour of characters in soaps, dramas and reality series. *Charmed* was an absolute favourite to discuss at the Gunningschool. In the autumn of 2005, the show aired daily at 7pm and was followed at 8pm by *Sex and the City*. I was surprised to learn that the Muslim girls watched this show, and discussed it in class.

Aliye, Radia and Laila are discussing last night's TV. Aliye says she doesn't like *Sex and the City*. It had sex scenes yesterday. Radia pulls a dirty face and says 'ieuwh!' Laila hadn't seen last night's episode, but added that there's a lot of kissing in the show, which she finds "dirty". Now Radia and Aliye simultaneously go 'ieuwh!' [Field notes Gunningschool, 8 November 2006]

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At the Kantlijn, the favourite show to discuss was the daily soap *Goede tijden, slechte tijden* [Good times, bad times]. I also observed some discussions of commercials. Again, the girls discussed the plot of the commercials, and it should be noted that the advertised products hardly ever entered the discussion. Talk about the behaviour of characters on television is comparable to normal gossip. Sophie watched the reality show *America's next top model* and constantly discussed the contestants' behaviour. In one episode, the contestants got makeovers. A beauty pageant queen was forced to cut her long hair into a Mia Farrow short cut. The girl cried hysterically and ended up leaving the programme. Sophie found the crying silly, and, in addition, could not understand how someone could put one's hair over one's career.

Music talk consisted of talking about all aspects of new songs and videos, and talking about the artists' behaviour or careers. In talking about celebrities, the girls appropriated certain aspects of the artist, while rejecting others. For instance, in discussing Christina Aguilera's *Dirrrty* video, Mette stated she liked the dance moves. Odecia interjected she found the video 'dirty'. Mette adjusted her opinion, but stated the moves are 'cool' nonetheless.

Game talk means going through lists of game titles ('do you know this game x?' – 'It is cool'), talking about their experiences in *The Sims* (2), and discussing tips and tricks. I only observed game talk at the Kantlijn and never at the Gunningschool. Finally, talking about MSN means talking about who was online. MSN talk is a performance practice, but since it does not concern mediated characters or personas, I do not consider it to be media talk.

Performativity of media talk

Media talk involves formulating norms and standards, both for the girls themselves and for others. As I have argued elsewhere in relation to girls' talk about celebrities (Duits & Van Romondt Vis, 2006), media talk is part of the reflexive project of self. In this (re)negotiation of identity, girls carefully judge the appearance and behaviour of others (including celebrities) to establish what is appropriate. This might include identification with the celebrity, but difference or non-liking incites a similar practice. It is not imitation, but rather it offers a legitimisation of (their own) behaviour. Likewise, Sophie did not identify with the crying top model, yet she talked about it in class and made a judgment that is both

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relevant and applicable to the girls' daily lives: crying over a haircut is silly, and a career is more important than long hair. Thus, through talking about *America's next top model* Sophie defined appropriate behaviour. Media talk facilitates the construction of norms (e.g. what constitutes male and female behaviour), and these norms can then be cited through performance practices.

Media talk is also a performance practice. In their conversation, Mette tentatively associated herself with Aguilera and cited her coolness. Odecia disassociated herself from Aguilera, therefore also from Mette. There is some reconciliation, but the conversation is distinctive for both Mette and Odecia. Likewise, discussing certain genres and titles is a form of citing the connotations of those genres and titles. Much media talk actively produced femininity: discussing soaps (traditionally coded as feminine), romantic comedies ('chick flicks') and *The Sims* (a girl game, Vosmeer, 2007). Some girls still watched the cartoon networks Jetix and Nickelodeon, yet shows from these networks were rarely discussed. Instead, more 'mature' American television dramas (e.g. *Lost*, *Desperate housewives*), MTV and soap operas were preferred conversation topics. Media talk about such titles allows these girls to cite maturity and thus perform the mature subject. Media talk, then, often functions as social talk (part of the reflexive project), but this type of talk is also constitutive in identity performance.

8.5 Conditions for the use of performance practices

Not all girls can enter these performance practices in similar ways. I have already mentioned Bourdieu's (1984) notion of cultural capital, which he links theoretically to financial capital. Financial attainability is the first condition for appearance and media practices. Second, appearance practices depend on a variety of availabilities connected to the body: gender, ethnicity and body shape. Likewise, access to popular media depends on availability at home, which is not just a matter of finances, but also of parental restriction. Third, certain skills are needed before one can have access to these performance practices. In this section, I discuss these three conditions. A fourth condition has to do with the context or setting in which identity performance takes place. At school, certain rules apply, and girls were not free to do what they pleased. The school context as a limit for identity performance has been discussed in section 5.7.

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Financial attainability

Access to appearance and popular media depends on the financial situation of parents. None of the girls received a clothing allowance [kleedgeld] in the 8th form, although this changed as the girls made the transition to secondary school. Parents paid for clothes and this endowed them with some control over what the girls wore, although the girls also borrowed each other's clothes. Similarly, access to popular media is largely related, albeit not restricted, to the home. At age twelve, the home situation dominates other spheres. However, girls can also access popular media at friends' houses, at school or at the library.

The girls of the Gunningschool read fewer magazines, played fewer computer games, and did not go to the movies as frequently as the girls from the Kantlijn. Instead of being due to ethnic differences, this was related to differences in financial backgrounds. Bianca, the only autochthonous Dutch girl at the Gunningschool often complained to me about her parents' financial status:

I sit down with Bianca during the lunch break. She talks to me about the magazine *W.I.T.C.H.*. She explains it is about five teenage girls who battle in a fantasy world. The fantasy world is mixed with a real world, which takes place at school. She says she is "completely addicted" to it. It is like a club as well. There is a television series too. Bianca wants to join the club and get all the "stuff" from it. There's a game too! There was a contest where you had to phone in to win this game. She nagged and nagged her mother, but her mother said calling was too expensive. She tells me her mother was afraid she would quickly tire of it, but Bianca assures me she would not. [Fieldnotes Gunningschool, 21 November 2005]

Bianca was the outsider at the Gunningschool and she was bullied most of the time. *W.I.T.C.H.* is a comic book series where a fantasy battle world substitutes the battles of secondary school: a perfect fantasy outlet for a bullied girl. To embody that fantasy position, Bianca aimed to submerge herself in the full range of merchandise surrounding this series, but her parents' financial background (mother unemployed, father working in construction) impeded her access. The phone contest provided a possibility to obtain the video game for the price of a phone call (or so it seemed to Bianca), yet her mother disallowed this too.

The average income of the parents at the Gunningschool was lower than at the Kantlijn. The schools did not provide official data about parental income, but macro data (cf. O+S, 2006) shows that average incomes in the Gunningschool neighbourhood were significantly lower than in that of the Kantlijn. Furthermore, in my observations I learned

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that two thirds of the pupils at the Gunningschool got financial compensation for their school contribution. Nonetheless, all the girls had at least one television and one computer in their homes. Not all pupils of the Gunningschool had an internet connection at home. Several girls announced they were to get a new computer with internet access next year. Amsterdam Social Services supplies lower income families with an internet-connected computer when children go to secondary school. Access to MSN is thus also limited by internet access, and hence was not available to all. The availability of a medium in a house does not guarantee vacancy of the medium, as the example of Naoul's large family in the next chapter will show.

Differences in parental financial circumstances have more effect on clothes than on media use. Televisions and computers are purchased less frequently than sweaters and trousers. It does not matter much for media talk in the classroom if a show was watched on a big flat screen TV. The differences in the financial circumstances between the Gunning-girls and the Kantlijn-girls showed more clearly in wardrobe size. The availability of certain items of clothing depends on parents' financial means and their willingness to spend their income on their daughters' clothing. Shopping with one's mother avows her with an influence, but sometimes mothers need the financial stick with which to assert this power. Esther took her mother along "only ... for the money":

Linda: And when you buy new clothes, who is important in the decision?

Esther: Me.

Linda: Yes. And your mother?

Esther: Well, I only take her along for the money.

Linda: Yes, she doesn't have a say in it? And does she agree with what you want?

Esther: Yes, sometimes, but sometimes really not.

Linda: Can you give an example?

Esther: With this jersey.

Linda: She didn't approve? How come not, what's wrong with it?

Esther: Too expensive or something, and then she thinks it's ugly and that it will get ugly real quickly.

Linda: This is an orange KNVB [Royal Netherlands Football Association] jersey. Is it Nike?

Esther: Yes, with the Dutch flag. And a football. But it's just a jersey. Yes, but she didn't like this.

Linda: It had 'the Netherlands' on the back and she found that...?

Esther: Stupid. Then she said I'd just as well buy a regular national team jersey and of course I wasn't about to do that. [Interview Esther, 12 June 2006]

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Esther had her heart set on an official football jersey from the Nike brand. Such official merchandise is often twice the price of a “regular national team jersey” and her mother clearly did not want to spend that much. Instead, she argued it was too expensive. She added, in a cunning manoeuvre used by many mothers, that ‘the jersey would wear out quickly’. This was to no avail. As Esther said, triumphantly wearing the coveted jersey, she was not about to give in to her mother’s pleas. Esther’s jersey functioned as a practice in the performance of a tomboy, but also in the performance of a middle-class subject. Esther and her mother were not the only ones who knew the price of an official Nike jersey, and her (in this case: male) classmates easily and eagerly read such conventions.

Esther won the battle, but other girls are not as persuasive, or their parents simply lack the means to lose such battles. Bianca, likewise, did not understand why her parents thwarted her clothing desires.

Linda: And when you go to buy new clothes, who is important then?

Bianca: My parents, because they have the money. Because I bought these trousers for 30 euros and my mother actually found that too expensive. But yeah, I thought, what can you do, because you can’t get them any cheaper I think. And then, yeah because, they have kind of nice trousers but they’re really 40, 30... Yes, said my mother, ‘ask for clothes for your birthday’. But I thought, yeah what good is that, I’d rather have something for my birthday I hardly ever get. Because clothes you can buy just like that you know, but something for your birthday, I want something special for my birthday, something you don’t get every day. Not food or something, those kinds of things. Nor clothes, nor shoes. [Interview Bianca, 29 June 2006]

Over and again, Bianca is frustrated and fails to sympathise with her parents. Bianca stands alone in such frustration, as the other girls were more understanding of their parents’ reluctance to buy ‘expensive’ clothes. Katia, for instance, described the clothes she liked:

Katia: Well, that it’s kind of loose, that it fits comfortably. Not too expensive, because then you’re really stiff like ‘don’t ruin it’. I always get white things dirty really quick. [Interview Katia, 19 June 2006]

Katia disciplined herself, and she used – almost defensively – being comfortable as an argument.

Expensive clothing can be seen as showing off. The girls avoided any semblance of being poor, yet decadence or bragging was to be shunned at all times. On one occasion in class, Marisol and Maud discussed whether they followed fashion.

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Marisol says “no, only when I like it”. Maud says: “we invent our own fashion”. I ask them if designer brands matter, they answer no, although sometimes the others make fun of Zeeman [a textile discount chain]. Maud thinks Zeeman is nothing to be ashamed of, she says it’s perfectly normal to buy towels or underwear there. But you should not buy your entire wardrobe there. She usually buys shoes and coats at brand stores, but according to her, those last longer. She’s referring not so much to better quality, but to a longer period in which you wear them. [Fieldnotes Kantlijn, 25 April 2006]

Such a discussion is part of the reflexive project. Marisol and Maud legitimatised an investment in brand clothing, because they used such items over a longer period. Shoes and coats last longer, but are also amongst the most visible items. The girls had one coat for summer and one for winter, thus a coat was worn every day. In their reflexive discourse, they performatively made Zeeman a lower ranked store, fine for buying underwear and towels, but not to buy *observable* pieces of clothing. Although they scorned the idea of making fun of Zeeman, they still placed Zeeman outside normalcy.

Body limitations

Bodies put limitations on the positions we can perform, and performance theory explicitly acknowledges how bodies are always-already inscribed. Sex dictates a specific gender identification, and any divergence from this is scrutinised by society. However, the position of tomboy was widely accepted at the Kantlijn. Although Mette and Esther were sometimes mistaken for boys, they mentioned they never experienced problems with their tomboy identities. In chapter 7, I argued that tomboys should be understood as a different attachment to a female gender, not as an attachment to a male gender. At the Gunningschool, gender relations were more rigidly enforced.

During recess, I talk with Betty and Bianca. Betty tells a story about school football, where there was a girl that looked like a boy. They (their team) went up to the referee to have him check. Betty thinks it’s stupid to want to look like a boy: “you have to be happy with what you are”. [Field notes Gunningschool, 13 July 2006]

As stated, only Amisha designated her tomboy style as boy-clothes, and the other girls objected to this notion.

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Like gender on sex, ethnicity is inscribed on bodies through racial elements embedded in the ethnicity discourse (Essed, 1986). As I discussed in chapter 5, at the Gunningschool, pupils were encouraged to identify with their ethnic backgrounds, because teachers continuously reminded the pupils they were 'Turkish' or 'Moroccan'. The pupils understood ethnicity as something you *are*, not something you feel (see §7.3). Not all the girls performed ethnicity, and for some of them ethnic identification with one's body was easier than for others. For instance, Beyhan did not like her white skin and light hair. She wanted to appear less Dutch and more Turkish, and she thought that if she were darker – browner – she would be more Turkish.

A third way in which bodily features en/disable certain identifications is through bodily size. The size and shapes of one's body cause certain positions to be more obvious than others (cf. Young, 1992). The girly-girls of the Kantlijn were also the smallest girls in class. Conversely, Priscilla was the biggest girl at the Kantlijn, both in terms of body weight and body development. She had B-cup breasts and large hips, whereas the other girls had small or no breasts and hips. Priscilla performed the sexual subject and showed off her body. In addition, due to her unstable home situation and her frequent absences from school, she performed a delinquent position, upon which her classmates both marvelled and frowned. To her, the position of tomboy or girly girl would have been more difficult to embody. Comparably, Dilara was the biggest girl at the Gunningschool in terms of height and weight. As she had had to repeat a year, she was also a year older than her classmates were. Dilara was always visibly uncomfortable with her size and avoided drawing attention to herself in every way. She only wore loose-fitting, black clothes, small earrings, and her hair in a ponytail. She spoke softly, and usually held her arms in front of her torso, hiding her stomach and chest. She constantly adjusted her clothing, pulling her cardigan over her buttocks. This movement was so automated – incorporated in her every move – she was never conscious of it. However, the act of hiding her buttocks invariably drew my attention to them. To her, the sexual subject-position was not available, and faced with no alternatives, she tried to make herself and her body disappear.

Gender and ethnicity cannot be chosen, and discourse avows identification with the 'appropriate' gender or ethnicity. As such, there is no element of choice. The girls believed one did have (and rather should have) control over body weight. They made themselves and others re-

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sponsible for fat bodies. Dilara and Priscilla were both criticised for their bodies, albeit not always openly.

Parental restrictions

As well as financial limitations, parents also regulate their offspring's use of popular media⁶. Access to movies and television was limited in several ways. First, bedtime obstructs access to certain content. The typical bedtime for the girls in primary school was 21.30hrs, although some did not go to bed until eleven o'clock. Only five girls indicated they were permitted to watch anything they wanted. For the Muslim girls, restrictions mostly involved sexually explicit television content. Other parents followed the age recommendations, or they forbade frightening content (e.g. horror movies). Parents did not necessarily need to forbid such content, because some girls disciplined themselves. They did not watch scary movies anyway, precisely because there were too scary. Unlike television, parents did not regulate music listening behaviour. Furthermore, despite alarming news reports about MSN bullying and child molesters operating through the medium (see De Haan, Van 't Hof, & Van Elst, 2006), parents did not regulate MSN behaviour. When I asked the girls in the interviews if their parents had ever discussed webcam or MSN use with them, only two girls said yes. Other girls replied with answers like "no, my mother doesn't interfere with it" [Nazli] or "no, they're okay with it" [Chemaë]. Furthermore, according to the girls, parents hardly ever regulated gaming behaviour, and the only parents that restricted gaming were the parents of white girls. Several girls indicated their parents prohibited games with sexual or violent content. Although Muslim parents regulated sexual television content, they did not restrict sexually explicit game content.

I never heard of any clothing restrictions. As most girls shopped with (one of) their parents, control probably took place before purchase. Furthermore, most girls did not express a need for controversial clothing. Maybe struggles about appearance between children and parents occur at a later age in puberty.

Skills

In order to employ these performance practices, girls need skills. Understanding popular culture requires cognitive, language and cultural skills that not all girls equally possess. To elucidate, one morning Nazli

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came to school with a new belt. It was a white belt with big black letters written all around that spelled 'SEXX GIRL NEW YOK', probably a misspelling of the English 'sexy girl New York'. Laila joked about it, calling Nazli 'sexy girl' all morning. Nazli was clearly not amused, which suggests she had been unaware of the literal meaning of these words. A semiotic observer might interpret the text on the belt (the sign) as a performance of a porno-chic identity (the signified). However, as I argued in chapter 3, clothing codes cannot be read without some indication of the intentionality of message. After this day, Nazli never wore the belt again. She clearly did not mean to perform a 'sexy girl'; she (and her parents) merely had limited access to "the symbolic wares of ... society" (Davis, 1992: 9); in this case: the language skills to decode 'SEXX GIRL NEW YOK'. Likewise, the girls favoured American popular music and although they had a basic understanding of English, not all girls understood everything. For instance, Odecia remarked *Changes* by rapper Tupac Shakur is her favourite song and she listened to it every night. According to her, the message of the song is not to give up. She explained that 'change' refers to the need to persevere. If we take Wikipedia as indicative of the preferred meaning, the most obvious themes of the song are racism, police brutality, and drugs and gang violence (Wikipedia, 2007). It seemed to me Odecia did not misread the lyrics, but simply lacked the necessary language skills to understand this English song.

To understand the content of popular media, cognitive skills are needed. As we also sometimes watched a movie in class, I noticed that not all pupils could do the 'cognitive work' required (Johnson, 2005). Those with lower standardised test scores could not comprehend all the plot lines and easily tired of the movie, even though *The Incredibles* or *Loenatik de Moevie* are aimed at the younger children's market. For them, this lack of skills limited their ability to talk about and use popular media.

Worries about the digital divide (i.e. differences between the information haves and the information have-nots) often involve women, lower-income classes and ethnic minorities. Despite such worries, all the girls possessed the necessary skills to use MSN and the internet. Van Dijk (2003: 15) distinguishes three types of computer skills. Operational skills refer to the ability to use computer programmes; informational skills refer to the ability to search, select and process information; and strategic skills refer to the ability to use ICT to better one's position. The girls in this study possessed all three types of skills, and even girls with low CITO scores were internet-savvy. However, this mostly means they used MSN, and it is unlikely they will re-programme this software.

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Finally, access to performance practices is privileged for those with high cultural capital. Knowing the fashionable styles, brands and manners of dress provide status and enables the citation of trendiness in order to perform the trendy girl. The girls valued those with much knowledge about popular culture (see the discussion of the knowing subject, §7.5). Having an older brother or sister, or a subscription to a magazine, might provide easier access to this privileged knowledge. Furthermore, such knowledge comes about through endless reflection (what is cool, what is in), both amongst peers and in media content (e.g. magazines, MTV). Conversely, failing to know these conventions guarantees ridicule from your classmates. For instance, Nazli once combined her tracksuit with cowboy boots, and was teased all day about the inappropriateness of this combination. What counts as cultural capital, depends on the field. In these school settings, popular culture is privileged over high culture. A similar ethnographic study amongst PhD students would show a different, privileged knowledge.

8.6 Conclusion

I investigated how girls use the performance practices of clothing, the body and media in their performance of subject-positions. I argued that appearance and media themselves are not performative, but that the girls did use these practices to cite conventions (for instance about gender and class) and to perform different subject-positions. I provided a detailed description of appearance, media use and media talk, and discussed the consequences in terms of performativity. By dressing in a certain way, the girls cited known conventions and distinguished themselves from others. Through media talk, the girls reflected on, but also cited different subject-positions, making these their own. Furthermore, through media use the girls cited artists or conventions attached to genres. In such performances, the girls were able to identify with subject-positions, whilst at the same time these positions were performatively produced. For instance, dancing sexily is a rehearsal of the sexual subject, but the rehearsal at the same time produces this position and makes it real. Talking about a show on MTV cited maturity, and performatively installed the idea of MTV as a teenage medium. The girls performed up to those positions set in the reflexive project, and their performances too were under the constant scrutiny of reflexivity.

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I also argued that the use of popular media depends on financial attainability, bodily availability, media availability at home, and various skills. Identity performance is not a voluntary project wherein one can be whom one chooses. Furthermore, it is the amalgamation of practices that makes the identity performance effective. Certain aspects of identity are amenable, whilst others are set. Yet, even the more amenable aspects involve the citation of norms, and changing these norms is beyond the scope of the individual. Identity performance occurs in exchange and negotiation with others, like family and friends, and it does not occur in isolation from society. In the next chapter, I discuss the influence of others on identity performance.

Chapter 9

Influence Spheres

9.1 Introduction

Chapter 7 provided an analysis of the different identities and subject-positions the girls embody, and in chapter 8, I discussed how appearance and media are used in the performance of these identities and positions. In this chapter, I investigate under which influences these positions arise. Through performing, a subject cites cultural norms and as such, performatively produces them. A subject thus lives up to certain norms through performance. These norms are constantly dissipated through discourse, and are negotiated with others. Through constant and daily reflection, they are continuously defined and reified. For the girls in this study, three sets of actors were of importance. I call these *influence spheres*. They set and shape identity performance in the classroom, as represented in figure 9.1 (p.185). To elucidate this model, I discuss Nazli's negotiation about boys.

Nazli and boys

Nazli (Gunningschool) had a developing, tall body. She often acted childishly, making silly jokes and not understanding what was happening with the more mature girls. She was uncomfortable with her curves, and it seemed to me that her body was ahead of her mental development. Nazli, like most girls at the Gunningschool, avoided contact with the boys in class. On several occasions, she told me she was afraid of boys. On other occasions, she claimed boys did not interest her ["boeien me niet"]. Nonetheless, Nazli paid much attention to her appearance,

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and often wore new clothes that ‘touched upon’ the latest fashions (as they were also often wide of the mark). To Nazli it was particularly important to look well-groomed [verzorgd]. She made sure her hair was in good shape, her nails were dirt-free and cut, and her clothes were clean and faultless. She struggled with the dilemma of looking good and not attracting boys’ attention. In this excerpt from my in-depth interview with her, Nazli’s dilemma becomes apparent.

Nazli: Look Betty, for instance, wears a short skirt up to here.

Linda: Halfway up your upper leg?

Nazli: Yes, upper leg, and my mother doesn’t approve of that. My mother says: ‘Yes, boys will look at you and all’. That’s true. Boys do look at Bette that way.

Linda: Would you like to wear that, those clothes?

Nazli: I’m afraid to.

Linda: You’re afraid to?

Nazli: When I was little – know nothing about it – I was afraid to walk outside like that, blouse like that. Then I was really afraid.

(...)

Linda: You said formerly you wore short tops or something. But you can’t remember when you’ve stopped doing that?

Nazli: In 6th form [age 9-10, LD].

Linda: In 6th form? Okay. How do you feel about girls who wear such short sweaters so you can see their belly buttons?

Nazli: Well, I don’t think that’s right at all. I feel they’re doing that for boys. That’s what I think. Some wear really short skirts. Without pantyhose, without nothing, without pants. And I feel they’re doing that for boys. That’s what I think.

Linda: And you’d never do that yourself?

Nazli: Would you?

Linda: I would wear that, yes.

Nazli: Yes?

Linda: Yes.

Nazli: Do you think that’s pretty?

Linda: I think that’s pretty.

Nazli: I think it’s pretty too, but I don’t know [shy all at once], I’m afraid to wear it. [Silence] But you already have a boyfriend? [Interview Nazli, 8 June 2006]

Nazli listened to her mother, who warned her about the male gaze. She saw her mother proven right, because her classmate Betty wore short skirts and received the gaze (although I did not observe this class). Concurrently, Nazli said she was afraid to wear such clothes. She did not say she avoided such dress out of conviction, instead she claimed fear. It remained unclear to me what she feared (boys’ reactions, her mother’s disapproval?), although her statement about the prettiness of such

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clothes again indicated she had no issues with the clothing itself. By way of comparison: several girls rejected revealing clothes because they deemed them vulgar or improper. At the end of the excerpt, Nazli turned the question around: would I wear short skirts or short sweaters? Her final remark is striking and returned to the male gaze: why would I want to dress like that if I already had a boyfriend?



Figure 9.1: Performance influence spheres

In the interview, Nazli negotiated her attitude by reflecting on her mother, her peer Betty, and society in the form of an understanding of the male gaze. Nazli thus mentioned the three influence spheres from figure 9.1: family, peers, and society. Her negotiation was situated in an interview context and it was in 'dialogue' with me. Nazli's speech was thus a performance towards me. I had always felt Nazli liked me, as she often sought out my company. When I said I found such clothes pretty, any repudiation on her part might have jeopardised our relationship in Nazli's eyes. This specific negotiation must be understood in the interview context. Different methods of data gathering produce different types of information and provide different types of insight into identity performance, as will become clear as this chapter progresses. The division of these influence spheres into different levels is analytical rather than practical, as they do not exist as separate entities. In this chapter, I focus on these three levels, using examples from both appearance and media articulations. Starting with family, I move to peers and then onto discourses dominant within society at large.

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9.2 Family

Media use primarily takes place at home. Appearance functions differently, since girls might get dressed at home, but they dress *for* school (or another setting). In the previous chapter, I argued that girls' use of appearance and media is dependent on their parents' ability and willingness to buy magazines, computers, clothes, accessories et cetera for their daughters. Furthermore, parents restrict access to media for protective reasons. In this section, I discuss family influence on girls' identity performance. Parents and siblings – but also routines and mores in the household – influence girls' use of appearance and media.

For example, Thirza enjoyed 'being different', and she enjoyed calling attention to this. At various points in her interview, during informal conversations I had with her in class, and in the focus groups, she pointed out that she was 'just herself'. When we came to talk about her media use in the interview, she indicated that these questions were not applicable to her. She said she rarely watched television at home: "like only about five minutes a week". She explained:

Thirza: No, but it is, well, many children always watch television, but... television is not for me. So..

Linda: Why do you think other children do that and you don't?

Thirza: Because, you know, I have this square behind [my house] where I go to play a lot. And other children don't. And I, I just entertain myself with other things and also, I was never taught to watch tv. (...) I was taught I could only watch the news or *Klokhuis* and *Sesamestreet*. [Interview Thirza, 19 June 2006]

Her divergent television viewing behaviour is one example of her performance of 'difference'. In the quote, Thirza referred to the common sense notion that playing outside is better than watching television. Thirza instead mentioned she knows 'how to entertain herself', and she opposed peer pressure. Here, Thirza cited an authoritative and dominant notion to enforce her claims about her identity (i.e. her narrative of self). The quote also shows Thirza did not get these ideas out of the blue. Her parents "taught" her not to watch television, save for the 'more acceptable' news and educationally orientated *Klokhuis* and *Sesamestreet*. Thirza's father designed board games in his spare time, and joint family fun was stressed in her family. Thus, Thirza's performance of difference and authenticity was shaped by her upbringing, where television viewing was not favoured.

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Family as an influence sphere works in two ways. First, the size and rules of the household determine media and appearance use. Second, parents and siblings impart norms and knowledge. To elucidate these two forms of family influence on identity performance, I elaborate on them in the following two subsections, in which I provide several examples from the fieldwork, again focusing on media and appearance. Whilst I did not visit any of the girls at home, I did obtain insight into their home situations. I knew where they lived and they talked about their parents and practices at home. In addition, I met several parents at school.

Household matters

The girls in this study had divergent backgrounds, not only in terms of ethnicity and social-economic class. In this subsection, I describe the home situations of two girls: Mickey and Naoul. Mickey comes from a non-religious, broken family, whereas Naoul comes from a large Muslim family. Their examples are by no means representative of the girls in this study, nor do they exemplify a specific type of girl. Instead, the examples illustrate the diverse range of possible home situations in Dutch multicultural society, and they demonstrate how such diversity has different consequences for the girls' use of, and access to popular media and appearance.

Mickey (Kantlijn) was born in the Netherlands. Her father is Dutch, and her mother is of mixed descent, with Austrian and Chinese/Surinamese roots. Her mother and father divorced when she was about two years old. Mickey had lived alone with her mother since then and had a strong relationship with her. In the summer of 2006, Mickey moved from a flat in Amsterdam to a terrace house in a small Noord-Holland city, because her mother moved in with a new boyfriend. Mickey still spent every other weekend at her father's place and she thus had two rooms: one at her mother's and one at her father's. Mickey's access to popular media needs to be understood between the two houses. In her room at her father's house, she had a stereo to listen to music on, but at her mother's house she did not. At her mother's flat, the computer was located in the living room, allowing her mother some control over her chat behaviour, but in the new house, Mickey got a computer in her new bedroom. Her mother's place had a television and magazines; at her father's she had access to *The Sims* video game she enjoyed playing. Although her social economic status is best described as lower middle class (her father

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worked in renovation, her mother in ticket sales and her stepfather in demolition), Mickey had access to a range of titles and media. Commuting between two houses diversified her access to popular media.

Naoul (Gunningschool) was also born in the Netherlands. Her father migrated to the Netherlands from Morocco when he was twenty-two, and her mother came when she married her father. Both her parents were unemployed. Her father spoke reasonable Dutch, but her mother did not speak it well. Naoul comes from a family of eight, with six sisters (aged 1, 13, 16, 18, 20 and 24 at the time) and one brother (aged 21). They lived together in a small, impoverished upstairs flat, where Naoul shared a room with her 13 and 16-year old sisters. The television set was located in the living room, facilitating parental or sisterly control. Naoul, like most Muslim girls, was not allowed to see 'dirty things', like kissing or nudity. The common solution within the Muslim community is to turn the television to teletext¹ when such scenes are on. Naoul said she applied this rule²:

Linda: You said you watch TME, do you ever see such [dirty] videos?

Naoul: No. Yes. Sometimes. But then I do teletext. [laughs] [Interview Naoul, 30 June 2006]

Naoul's parents only regulated television content. Naoul often played video games like *GTA San Andreas* on one of the households' two computers – one located in her brother's room and one in her father's room. In *GTA San Andreas* the protagonist can pick up prostitutes from the street. The game shows no explicit sexual images, only suggestive moaning and up-and-down movement of the car. When I asked Naoul about the sex in this game, she resolutely said "no", negating this feature of the game. With many brothers and sisters around, computer time was not easily available, which also meant that Naoul could not spend as much time on MSN as girls with fewer brothers and sisters. Conversely, a large family means a large input of popular culture. Naoul read several of the magazines her sisters subscribed to. She was always one of the first to know about a new slang expression, a new song or clothing trend. Her use of and access to popular culture was, in sum, influenced by the size and religion of her family.

Family beliefs

The example of Thirza showed how family mores about television reflected on her, and how this influenced her identity performance. Parents obviously pass on morals, norms, attitudes and values, and hence

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the girls learn what their family considers appropriate media use and appearance. Several girls talked about the vulgarity of porno-chic clothes, always using the word 'ordinair' [vulgar] but only in the context of sexually revealing clothes or overtly sexual behaviour. Caruna told me where she learned this word:

Caruna: There was a girl on the beach that just walked around in a string...

And she was younger than me as well.

Linda: Okay, and what do you think about that?

Caruna: Ieuhh!! To say it in one word!

Linda: Ieuhh?

Caruna: I thought it was a bit... Like... My mother always says 'vulgar', so yeah, that word. [Interview Caruna, 3 July 2006]

In sections 8.2 and 8.5, I discussed cultural capital. In general, middle-class girls 'inherit' class notions about vulgarity, and reproduce them in their own repertoires. Next to transferring cultural capital, family members influence girls' identity performance through identification and imitation practices.

Most girls shopped with their mothers, although some mentioned fathers, nieces, or sisters. Identification with the person they are shopping with is important. Most girls favoured mothers over fathers, because mothers 'are girls too':

Linda: Who are important in deciding what kind of clothes you buy?

Gülen: Usually my mother. Because I always shop with my mother for clothes and all. My mother also has a taste, because she is a girl too. So she knows how, what girls and all wear. And with my father I can't do it, because he really likes closed clothing. That's why.

Linda: Yes, that it's all really closed?

Gülen: Yeah, not really very closed. But my father doesn't really have the taste of a girl.

Linda: Yes [laughter], and your mother does have a nice taste?

Gülen: Yes, she does.

Linda: You think your mother also wears nice clothes?

Gülen: Yes. [Interview Gülen, 9 June 2007]

'Closed clothing' was discussed in section 7.3. It signifies the opposite of revealing clothing. Gülen's father preferred to see his daughter covered up, but according to Gülen, his taste is that of a man. She favoured her mother's opinion, as she could identify with her more because of their shared gender. Shared gender is not necessarily enough. Another girl repudiated her mother's taste, because – as she said – it was the taste of a woman, not a girl.

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When the girls approved of their mothers' tastes, they appreciated her input and copied her style. Conversely, when the girls did not like their mothers' taste, this caused problems, or the girls decided to go shopping with someone else. At the Kantlijn, several girls had trendy mothers. Girls with hip mothers wore hip(per) clothes as well. Mickey's mother always dressed according to latest trends, and so did Mickey. Sophie's mother worked as a stylist and bag designer, and Sophie had a similar sense of style and creativity. In a conversation about creativity, Sophie remarked she had brightened up her second-hand, old-fashioned bicycle [omafiets] with colourful strings. Because of her mother's job, people sometimes thought it was her mother who had decorated the bike and not her. Sophie considered herself a creative person and she did not like it when this creativity was ascribed to her mother [Field notes Kantlijn, 21 March 2007]. The need for authenticity (chapter 10) made Sophie claim her creativity for herself, although her mother of course had much to do with it. In sum, family influences the girls' ideas about nice and appropriated media and clothing through transferring cultural capital and by offering models to copy or resist.

9.3 Peers

Peers form the second set of actors that influence the ways identity positions are produced. Like with family, ideas about what constitutes nice or good media and appearance are constructed through reflection with peers. Furthermore, as most of their daily interactions happen with classmates, these peers constitute the prime audience for identity performance. Identity performances are *negotiations* that are constantly in *process*. The following example of *Charmed* highlights both these elements.

On a rainy November morning, the pupils at the Gunningschool were allowed to come inside before the bell rang. As the pupils entered one by one, they stood by their friends' desks to chat. When Laila entered, she sought out Consolacion, the most popular girl. The girls in Consolacion's clique often fought for her attention, and Laila knew how to get it. 'Consa' – as the girls affectionately shortened her name – 'Consa, did you watch *Charmed* last night?' Consolacion answered affirmatively in slang, 'vet kapot man' [± really wicked man]. Laila and Consolacion entered into a discussion about the episode's plot, whilst some other girls lurked about them. The daily broadcasts of this American teen drama at 7pm were repeats, and had aired before during Friday nights' prime time. Consolacion had already seen all the episodes and knew

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the bigger plot lines. In the episode that Laila and Consolacion discussed, a new character had been introduced. Consolacion subsequently spoiled a major plot line: the newly introduced character, Chris, is from the future and he is actually the son of Piper (one of the main characters). Laila said she did not know this, but after Consolacion repeated it, she had a sudden lapse of memory and said she did know this. Conversations about *Charmed* usually started the day at the Gunningschool. The friendship between Laila and Consolacion evolved into a very close one, with their shared *Charmed*-fandom as the main constitutive force. After school, Laila and Consolacion would head to the library to search for information about the show and to copy pictures. Consolacion's semi-privileged knowledge of popular culture further substantiated her top position in class. By June, most girls in the class listed *Charmed* as their favourite show, and most websites featured at least one picture of the three leading characters.

Talk about *Charmed* is a negotiation between Laila and Consolacion, but also between Consolacion and the rest of the girls. Wanting to be friends with the most popular girl in class, *Charmed* offered an opportunity for the Gunning-girls to be closer to Consolacion. The talk is performative, since talking about *Charmed* is what effectively made the friendship between Laila and Consolacion 'real'. Still, the friend is an identity that needs to be performed continuously. As such, the repetitious acts make up the friendship, not merely a singular act. Furthermore, the example again shows how knowledge of popular culture is an asset. As with family, peers play a major role in disseminating such knowledge. Engaging in peer interaction and observing other's interactions provide access to these codes. To further elucidate the workings of peer interaction, and to underscore process and negotiation as the key to peer influences, I draw from my field notes to describe two (series of) events: the process of placing pictures on the webpages at the Gunningschool, and music lessons at the Kantlijn. Again, these examples provide detailed thick descriptions, rather than functioning as representative cases.

Pictures on the webpages

At the Gunningschool, I made personal webpages with all the pupils. I sat behind the computer with sets of two or three pupils and helped them with the software. Making a webpage was a fun project for all the pupils, and putting pictures on their page was the most fun. The photo

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project took place before the website project, so pupils had the chance to add personal photos. I also photographed each pupil, so s/he had a portrait and could add a further personal touch. Taking portrait photographs was an interesting ordeal. The girls ran back and forth to the mirrors in the toilets, ensuring each hair was in place, and extensively discussing each other's appearance in a positive, validating way. I used a digital camera and the girls (and boys) wanted several shots and a say in which picture would be the chosen one. Again, the girls looked at my shots together, validating how good they looked.

Radia worried about the picture, because her mother had hinted she would not be allowed to have her picture on the website. When it was finally her turn, she checked again with her mother and got turned down. The teacher, Thomas, had already informed me that insecurity and fear existed about possible cyber fraud within the Muslim community. Rumours spread of virtuous girls whose online photos had been photo-manipulated into compromising poses. Influenced by Radia's stress, the rumours and fear quickly proliferated. This fear of cyber manipulation was firmly tied to virtue. The girls worried evil outside manipulators could impair their virtuousness, an anxiety that the Muslim boys in class did not hold. When the websites were ready to have the photos added, all the girls except Consolacion refused to add their portrait, or indeed any other personal photos they had taken in the photo project. Chema had gone to some trouble to get a photo of herself with her best friends. Initially, she had put this on her profile page, but the other girls forced her to remove it.

Because the pupils, as an alternative, made extensive use of pictures that were freely available online, the webpages were visual nonetheless. Everyone knew how to search for images, and everyone used the Google image search function. When one enters 'charmed' in Google and clicks on the first three results, exactly the same pictures appear. Since most girls liked the same artists and the same television show, they thus added similar or identical pictures to their webpages. The pages developed over a few weeks and the girls often came to see what progress their friends were making. When they saw a friend or classmate had the same or similar pictures, they inferred their friend had stolen the idea or even 'their' pictures. This often led to accusations: 'you're copying me'. This accusation shows that originality is important and imitation is unacceptable.

In this process of placing pictures on the webpages, a number of identities were performed on different occasions. First, in their quest

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for a beautiful picture, the girls performed 'femininity' and 'attention to appearance'. Like Nazli, whom I discussed at the beginning of the chapter, the girls valued attention to appearance. It is attention to appearance rather than mediated beauty standards that governed the girls' judgement of appearance (see §7.2 and chapter 10). Second, the girls performed 'the good girl', who attends to and guards her virtuousness. Consolacion performed the non-Muslim. The final webpages are performances of friendship (i.e. liking the same things). These performances are produced through complex peer negotiation on different levels, which supersedes peer pressure. The girls wanted to look their best, and what is 'your best' is a decision made in 'cooperation' with friends. The fear of losing your virtue is a pressure on a different level. It is related to discourses of Islam, gender, and sexuality. In this class, where eleven out of 14 girls were Muslim, such a fear discourse proved effective beyond the borders of religion. The rumours of virtuous girls whose pictures had been manipulated served as a cautionary tale or urban legend (e.g. Brunvand, 1981). Their fear materialised when Radia's mother forbade Radia to put her picture online, causing the girls to self-discipline. Bianca, a non-Muslim outsider, did not fear losing her virtue, but did fear that her photograph might be used in another form of cyber bullying. Betty, whose position in class was fragile at best, did not want to be the only girl with a portrait on the site. Consolacion, at the top of the class hierarchy and non-Muslim, did not fear loss of virtue, and held the steadiest position, which allowed her to go against the mainstream. The similarity of the pictures on the pages reveals another aspect of peer negotiation. The girls strived for authenticity, which needed to be weighed against fitting in and liking the right artists or television shows. The similarity in pictures stems not only from liking the same show (e.g. *Charmed*), but also from using the same search machine and heuristic. Liking the same show is not necessarily subject to the accusation of imitation, but using the same pictures (or: lack of creativity in searching) apparently is.

Musical charades

The Kantlijn participated in the Muziekluisterlessen [Music listening lessons], a project set up by Amsterdam city council. In the build-up to a visit to the Concertgebouw [Amsterdam Concert Hall], an external music teacher (E.) taught music lessons for ten weeks. In practice, the music teacher alternated between popular music and classical music.

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Music lessons always started with a show dance by a group of girls. For instance, Marisol and Odecia once performed a dance to *Las Ketchup Song*³, which the music teacher had offered two weeks earlier.

Marisol and Odecia copy all the hand and leg movements from the original dance. Odecia is very self-assured, but Marisol can't help but laugh at times. Marisol is not moving as well as she usually does. Jenna and Maud stand on the side and join in for the chorus. When they're done, the class applauds enthusiastically. As they sit down, Marisol asks Mickey: "that went bad, eh?". Mickey replies: "a little". [Field notes Kantlijn, 6 March 2006]

After the dance, the class needed to sing one or two pop songs. Dutch *Schlager* singer, Corry Konings, had made a Dutch version of the song, and the teacher taught it to the class.

E. plays the song on the class' ghetto blaster. As the music starts, the pupils start to sing along. There is intense eye contact amongst the pupils. I see smiling faces all around (not laughing but friendly, open faces). After the first verse, Odecia starts to sing the original in English-Spanish phonetically. Within seconds (or so it seems), all pupils switched from Dutch to English-Spanish. Soon, most of the pupils (including some boys) are making the hand movements that go with this dance. Everybody is enjoying themselves and teacher E. starts to dance along as well. [Field notes Kantlijn, 20 February 2006]

The teacher would then move to more classical music and started the actual lesson, which again involved singing and dancing. For instance, after a lesson about life at the royal courts in composer Berlioz' nineteenth century France, the pupils had to invent a dance that consisted of greetings.

First, they think up many greetings collectively: taking a bow, high-fiving, making a 'boks' [Dutch slang: pressing fists together]. Then they have to practice in pairs of two. Boys and girls mix, although some sets are homogeneous. The pupils negotiate mostly about the order of the greetings. I marvel at the constant eye contact. One person constantly looks at the other person. Faces are open, friendly; smiling but not laughing. Big eyes. When something goes wrong, the pupils laugh nervously. I notice how they are not copying other duos. After some minutes of practice, each duo has to perform in front of the class. Now, there's even more giggling from the performers. Eye contact remains. After the greetings dance, the pupils need to practice the dance with the self-made ceremonial fans they had practiced before. [Field notes Kantlijn, 20 March 2006]

Music lessons ended with the pupils practising the song that all the participating schools would perform at the final concert. This song was

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about classical music, and it had difficult tone changes and the pupils needed to sing it a-cappella. On one occasion, I counted only seven pupils who actually sang the song, all the others lip-synced.

Music lessons turned out to be musical charades⁴. In just a few minutes, the girls sent round much information through mere looks. The classroom operated simultaneously as a safe haven and a stage. The girls were constantly afraid to lose face or make a fool of themselves. In Marisol and Odecia's dance, Marisol was the more shameful and insecure. She safeguarded herself by laughing, as if to show she was not that serious about the dance anyway. The intense eye contact amongst the girls during singing, functions in a similar way. The girls searched each other for clues: is it acceptable to sing, is it acceptable to dance? Only the more popular pupils, for instance Odecia, could take up the mantle of pioneer. Her example caused others to follow. The third excerpt (practicing the greetings dance) again shows this pattern. Through attentive observation of the other, a girl knew if she could proceed. Through eye contact, the girls mimicked each other and established their accordance. Laughter, again, is a safeguard, but joint laughter also means the mistake made is acceptable and/or forgiven. De Waal (1989: 192) notes how girls' constant laughter about clumsy behaviour or blunders serves to emphasise they are cast in the same mould. For friends, these non-verbal codes are especially important. After her dance, Marisol turned to Mickey, not a close friend, to check if her performance was acceptable. Mickey neither lied nor told the truth, instead answering with the diplomatic 'a little', withholding the release or excuse Marisol was looking for.

The website project at the Gunningschool, and music lessons at the Kantlijn are two very different events, but both show similar patterns of peer influence. Ideas about appropriate behaviour came about through the constant observation of peers and constant reflection with peers. The girls had a sharp eye for observing each other and in reading small changes in behaviour and body language. In chapter 8, I analysed the functions of appearance and media talk. This section showed how such reflective talk is a constant process of negotiation. To stress once more, peer influence supersedes the notion of peer pressure. Peer pressure has been defined as "when young people your own age encourage or urge you to *do* something or to *keep* from doing something else, no matter if you personally want to or not" (Brown, Clasen, & Eicher, 1986: 523, original italics). Peer pressure thus implies that peers compel an

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individual to *adopt* a certain behaviour or attitude in order to be *accepted*. It suggests involuntary action and has been associated with a number of potential problems, and is therefore sometimes termed “the price of group membership” (Clasen & Brown, 1985: 452). I argue that peer influence, however, is a subtler, reflexive process that also allows for non-compliance. In the process of placing pictures on the websites, the girls had to avoid the suspicion of copying behaviour. Imitation or following happened, but this was limited by the girls’ need for authenticity. From a Butlerian perspective, all individuals in society are urged to adopt behaviour and attitudes towards gender, which compel us to act in a certain way. These processes are not always as evident as, for instance, in peer pressure to start smoking, yet they are present nonetheless. The notion of influence rather than pressure allows for an active subject, yet this active subject is not free from discourse (cf. Butler, 1993). Furthermore, the more popular girls (e.g. Consolacion, Odecia) are amongst the few that can pioneer new or deviant behaviours and still be accepted and coveted within the group.

9.4 Society

Society is the third actor identified in figure 9.1. Society, of course, is not a one actor; instead society is made up of different actors. Nonetheless, I use this term to refer to the influence of societal debates, fuelled by opinion leaders, on the girls’ identity performances. Dominant societal opinions are disseminated by different media and the girls clearly took notice of these debates and other representations in the media. However, this study does not address the effects of representations, or the workings of media influence on young girls. Instead, in this section I show the ways society reverberates in the girls’ identity performances. Thirza’s statements about television viewing (§9.2) already showed how Thirza listened to the dominant perspective of television as dissipation, and how she performed this perspective in her own identity.

To understand how society influences girls’ opinions and behaviours in relation to appearance and popular media, I suggested two societal issues in the interviews: sexually explicit music videos and violent video game content. Furthermore, as one of the aims of this dissertation was to let girls speak, I wanted to hear their opinions about these debates. An interview makes an excellent opportunity to endow someone with a speaking position, and in the Netherlands at least (as explained in §4.5), the word interview has connotations of being special and worthy.

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The girls' opinions about these two issues show they were aware of these discussions. At the end of this section, I discuss the implications for identity performance.

"Deal with it": Sexually explicit music videos

In chapter 1, I discussed how the Dutch media blamed hip-hop music videos for sexualising society. All the girls (except Gülen) indicated they watched the music channels MTV, TMF and The Box. I asked the girls how they felt about "sex and other dirty things" in music videos. Their responses show they were not only familiar with the issue, but they also knew that the 'proper' response is to reject such videos. The girls used words such as 'weird', 'stupid' and, often, 'bad'. They said you should not watch such videos or should put the television on teletext. However, their opinions varied strongly, as the three examples below show. For instance, Sophie was articulate in her rejection of sexually explicit music videos:

Sophie: (...) you hardly ever see naked men you know, just only women and yeah, I think.. I mean, I don't get sexually aroused from that, but I can imagine men do. No, I personally don't think it's okay. I mean most [artists] just do it for the money or to show 'look how good I am'. You can prove yourself with something different too. I'm not against dancing or dancing in a music video. But so sexist and all, I don't like that.

(...)

Linda: Okay, because some people say it's better to show such videos later. At a later hour?

Sophie: That's nonsense too, I think... er, because it's not just for children, but for older people too. It's never good to see that, even when you're forty. No, I feel they should make it [these videos] less sexist. [Interview Sophie, 27 June 2006]

Sophie, twelve at the time, expressed an opinion held by many a feminist scholar. She rejected these music videos based on inequalities in the portrayal of men and women, and she even used the word 'sexist'. She understood the commercialised nature of the music industry and the idea that 'sex sells'. In contrast, in her response Amisha was obedient to the system of age ratings:

Amisha: Only older people above 18 are allowed to see that, right?

Linda: Yes.

Amisha: Well okay, then it must be bad [Interview Amisha, 9 June 2006]

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Comparably, Bianca followed the media. If the media report such videos are bad, one cannot argue with that:

Linda: Do you ever see such videos?

Bianca: No. No, yes, sometimes I see [inaudible] and then he does something with his hand and then you see something, you know... That you can't see what he does with his hand. Yeah, that. But not really dirty...

(...)

Linda: And how do you feel about young people watching these videos?

Bianca: Yeah, because eh, my mum reads the *Ditjes & Datjes*⁵. (...) They lay in the bathroom all the time. And then when I'm on the toilet, I read. And then they said like, those music videos, when you watch them, they are just like a porno movie. Not that's it's just a video, but really a movie, a piece of a movie. And then I thought, yeah, they're actually kind of right, because such music videos exist.

Linda: But you just said you never see such videos?

Bianca: Yes, but they do exist, because that's what it said, otherwise they wouldn't say such things. [Interview Bianca, 29 June 2006]

Bianca continued to state that pornographic videos should no longer be allowed on air. Although their responses differed, all the girls reproduced the dominant societal rejection of sexually explicit music videos. However, the girls were disinclined to say they themselves should be prohibited from viewing such videos. To avoid prohibition, they used several counter strategies.

One strategy is to claim that such videos indeed have a bad influence, but not on them. *Younger* children should be protected, and they lower the age bar to as young as five years old. This is known as the third person effect (Davison, 1983), Odecia put it well:

Odecia: When I look at myself and at those people on TV not really. Really never! I mean, I would never dress as vulgar as those chickies on TV. I really thought... when my mother brought it up, 'what are you talking about'. I wouldn't think of it, with my tiny brain, to wear such short things. I mean.. I'm not so vulgar. I might be vulgar in other ways, but not that vulgar.

Linda: Okay, so this is about yourself?

Odecia: Maybe those street children, you know, those boys... When they see those gangsters they might think like 'oh maybe I can walk around like that, maybe that's really tough and all'. You know? So maybe they do it, but I for one don't. [Interview Odecia, 27 June 2006]

The third person effect usually applies to others deemed more vulnerable or impressionable, like younger children or the less educated. Odecia stated that "street children" might be more impressionable. Furthermore,

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she feared *boys* might copy the behaviour of artists in sexually explicit videos. This is remarkable, because the societal debate has focused on the negative impact of such videos on girls, exempting boys from the debate. Odecia referred to her mother who feared she might copy sexy female artists. Three girls stated that their mothers say these videos are bad, but immediately added they did not agree with their mothers.

A second way of countering is to say such videos are actually not that bad. This strategy intrigued me, since many of the artists they adored were exactly those artists scrutinised for sexual content (e.g. 50 Cent, The Pussycat Dolls).

Linda: How do you feel about artists that make such videos?

Romeysa: Gross! [laughs]

Linda: Gross. But for instance, do you like The Pussycat Dolls?

Romeysa: Yes.

Linda: Because they dress sexily and make sexy movements.

Romeysa: Yeah, but they don't really make those dirty movies.

Linda: So what are dirty movies then?

Romeysa: Just with a lot of sex. [Interview Romeysa, 7 Juli 2006]

To Romeysa, 'dirty movies' involved sex or sex-related acts. Scantly dressed women or sensual movements did not comprise sexually explicit content to her. Other girls reacted similarly: there is never real sex involved, and at the beach people also walk around in bikinis, so why not in music videos?

A third way to counter the negative effects frame is by using a repertoire of choice, both for the viewers and for the artists. This repertoire is discussed in chapter 10, but here I highlight some key phrases from this repertoire in this context:

"If you don't want to see it, flip the channel. Done. You have a choice to watch it or not" [Consolacion].

"If people want to watch it, they should watch it" [Esther].

"It's his or her video, so you can decide yourself what you put in it" [Noa].

"If they want to do that [walk around in bikinis], let them" [Mette].

"It's their life" [Naoul].

"They should see for themselves what they put in their videos" [Jenna].

"If they think it's nice to do that, they should" [Maud].

"If they feel it suits their music, then they're allowed to do that" [Nursen].

With the repertoire of choice comes a matter-of-fact attitude. Noa said regulation is futile. If such videos are shown at a later hour, children will stay up to watch them anyway. Consolacion added that the world

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is tough and sex is all around us. When you walk through Amsterdam's city centre, you see the prostitutes in the windows. The best thing is just to learn to deal with that.

"We already know everything": Violent video game content

All but one girl indicated they played video games. Although the favourite title, without a doubt, was *The Sims (2)*, the girls also played online puzzles and platform games, or racing games on Playstation. Three girls indicated they played the controversial *GTA San Andreas*, which has a PEGI age rating of eighteen. The girls were divided about any alleged negative influence of games on underage children. Some feared it might have a bad influence on those younger than themselves (again, a third person effect). Others said it depends on the kind of violence:

Mette: It depends on what you call violence you know. (...) In *GTA* for instance, I do think that's violence, but that in *Age of empires*, I don't think that's violence.

Linda: No? Even though you have to wage war sometimes?

Mette: Yes, you just have to wage war, but you don't see the blood. Yeah, er, I think violence is beating someone up. But violence is also er, yeah, shooting, but I think that's less.

Linda: You feel beating someone up is worse than shooting? Why?

Mette: Because you, if you're being beat up, then after that you're still alive, or you'd have to beat really hard, and , er yeah, you feel more pain I think.

And also, you hear more often that people have been beat up than shot down.

[Interview Mette, 12 June 2006]

Age of Empires is one of Mette's favourite games. In this strategy game, the player builds an empire by improving its cities and waging war on other cities. In *GTA San Andreas*, the protagonist engages in hand-to-hand combat and gunfights. Mette's understanding of violence points to a complex understanding, wherein its consequences should be taken into account.

Other girls argued video games have no negative influence at all:

Chemae: Well, for little ones it is kinda good [to restrict games], because they learn these real violent things. But for bigger children, they already know it so... It's no use.

Linda: And who do you mean then, by bigger children, which age?

Chemae: Me. They already know what happens with violence. I get you, kill you. So it's no use when you are not allowed to play that. We already know everything. [Interview Chemae, 29 June 2006]

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The girls' opinions about the games' possible negative impact were different to their ideas about sexually explicit music videos. With games they performed less social desirability, perhaps because there is no consensus about the negative influence of gaming in the way that there is about sexually explicit music videos. Mette made this clear in the interview. She questioned why her parents actually banned *GTA San Andreas*.

Mette: Well there kinda are rules... Well, they never told it, but if I would bring home *GTA* [San Andreas], I don't think I would be allowed to. But I do know it, I played it quite often, but yeah, I won't buy it.

(...)

Linda: Why do you think you won't be allowed [to play it]?

Mette: Well, because you have to shoot and kill all these people and all. Yes, I think, I think it's because they heard all these crazy stories about people who spend all day behind the computer and get weird ideas. But I know perfectly well that that's bad and all. But... Actually I don't know why.

Linda: What do you mean, you don't know why?

Mette: Yeah, they feel I should go outside more often and all, but I already spend so much time outside. [Interview Mette, 12 June 2006]

Mette wondered if her parents were worried about the violent content, or about a lack of physical exercise. Nikken and Jansz (2006: 190, 199) demonstrate how parents also see many positive effects of gaming, and that their beliefs about the effects of television are more developed than their beliefs about the effects of video games.

Societal ideas about appearance and media influence the girls' understandings of appearance and media. The girls knew about the debates, and they could reflect on them in an interview setting, which did not mean that they felt addressed by these discussions. They were aware of the alleged harmful nature of sexually explicit music videos. However, they did not perceive this potential harm as something that applied to them. In their eyes, this discussion could not be about them. Indeed sex, let alone the sexual behaviour depicted in or feared from such videos, was not at all part of their world. Violent video games, on the other hand, were not necessarily seen as harmful. Still, the girls rejected the idea that playing such games would cause them to behave in unacceptable ways. In addition, the idea of copying behaviour from television seemed silly to them. No-one likes to admit to impressionability. Ideas about unconscious influences or false consciousness are difficult to tackle in an interview, especially if the researcher aims to take his/her respondents answers seriously. In their responses to sexually

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explicit music videos, some girls drew from a feminist discourse and others from an Islamic discourse, depending on their own subject-positions. Both lead to the same conclusions, that such videos are improper and both confirm a union between feminism and Islam.

9.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I addressed the penultimate sub-question: under which influences do the performed subject-positions occur? I analysed the influences that set and shape identity performances. I stressed that identity performances are always negotiations and always in process. These negotiations are influenced by three groups of actors: family, peers, and society. The size of the family and routines at home, as well as family rules and knowledge, influenced the ways in which the girls could use media and appearance. Peers were a primary site for observation and reflection. Finally, dominant societal opinions resonated in the girls' understandings of appropriate behaviour although most of them did not feel addressed personally.

Identity performances do not occur in a vacuum and the school is not a closed setting. The girls drew from different influence spheres when they cited cultural norms. Differences in family and peers, as well as different access to the dominant societal norms, lead to differences in citation. Furthermore, one's place in the intelligence and popularity hierarchies affects opportunities for performance. For instance, only the more popular girls could pioneer new behaviours, like Odecia who could initiate dancing during music lessons. The data used in this chapter mostly come from the observations and interviews conducted when the girls were still in primary school. Once in secondary school, shifts do occur. For instance, Thirza mentioned she no longer went shopping with her mother but instead went with friends. In secondary school, most parents allowed a computer in the girls' bedrooms, thus facilitating access to the net. Parents granted most girls more freedom, and secondary school implied less influence from parents and more influence from peers. As I argued in chapter 6, in secondary school the need for reflection increases as the changes need to be incorporated in the reflexive project of the self. The new school means new friends and new positions in the hierarchies. These are all thoroughly reflected on, thus further increasing the influence of peers.

Chapter 10

Interpretative Repertoires

10.1 Introduction

In chapter 9, I argued that a performance is a way of acting up to certain norms. These might be greater discursive norms, like those governing gender and ethnicity performances. From the way the girls talked about their and other's appearances and media use, additional standards came up as well. In this final results chapter, I address the final sub-question: what are the criteria governing girls' performance?

The girls spoke in different ways about their choices and behaviours, but these ways of speaking were relatively coherent. In discourse analysis, such ways of speaking have been conceptualised as interpretative repertoires. The concept was first used in a study by sociologists Gilbert and Mulkey (1984) and further developed by social psychologists, Potter and Wetherell (1987). The latter define interpretative repertoires as "recurrently used systems of terms used for characterizing and evaluating actions, events and other phenomena" (1987: 203). Individuals draw from available interpretative repertoires, as these provide a basis for shared understanding. In his explanation of the concept, Edley uses the helpful metaphor of dance steps: "interpretative repertoires are like the pre-figured steps that can be flexibly and creatively strung together in a dance" (2001: 198). Edley (2001; see also Hermes, 1995) explains the difference between discourse and repertoire as conceptual and methodological. Discourse is concerned with power and the ways discourse subjects people. Repertoires are "smaller and more fragmented" and "place more emphasis upon human agency within the flexible deployment of language" (Edley, 2001: 202). I follow this distinction.

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In the interviews and the focus groups, I placed media and appearance under investigation. In their discussions, the girls used various repertoires in which they constructed their sense of these phenomena. Repertoires need not be used consistently, and the girls used the different repertoires at different times. In section 6.5, I discussed how different contexts in the focus group interviews solicited different, almost conflicting understandings of the importance of appearance. In addition, a discrepancy sometimes existed between observation and the participants' repertoires. For instance, although bullying was common at both schools (albeit to a lesser extent at the Kantlijn), all girls repudiated bullying in talk with me. Gilbert and Mulkey acknowledge this apparent incompatibility:

Actors continually reinterpret given actions as their biography unfolds and as changing circumstances lead them to fit these actions into new social configurations. ... Consequently, participants' observable accomplishments of actions at a specific point in time cannot be neatly distinguished from, or separated from, the kind of retrospective storytelling which is generated in interviews and other indirect methods of data collection (Gilbert & Mulkey, 1984: 9).

The challenge for the researcher is to allow for variability in repertoires, and for inconsistency between actions and repertoires, and to understand these in relation to the contexts in which they have been produced. These repertoires show the ways the girls thought about media, appearance, and other identity issues. They thus provided an understanding of the norms the girls held and the ways they understood the world around them. Going through field notes and transcripts, I inductively reconstructed four repertoires: the repertoires of choice, authenticity and normalcy, and the politically correct repertoire. I start with the latter, then turning to each repertoire separately.

10.2 The politically correct repertoire

The politically correct repertoire¹ designates a way of speaking in which the girls avoided language that would offend people or groups. Unlike the other three repertoires, it is one of *morality*, of good or proper behaviour. Much attention has been paid to anti-bullying in the Netherlands. Schools organise a variety of anti-bullying measures and projects, like the Gunningschool's golden rules described in chapter 5. Organisations like the Stichting tegen zinloos geweld [Foundation against random violence] and SIRE (Stichting Ideële Reclame [Foundation public service announcements]) had anti-bullying campaigns in the mass media

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in 2006. Popular culture also spreads an anti-bullying message, for instance in the song *STOP!* by singers Roel Felijs and Glenn Eilbracht, and in the popular soap opera *Goede tijden, slechte tijden*. The girls have grown up with this ubiquitous message, which most parents further impart on their offspring. Related to bullying is discrimination, another notion which all the girls knew was wrong. The girls used the politically correct repertoire mostly when talking about these two practices: bullying and other forms of social exclusion, and the multicultural society.

Social exclusion

Consolacion: If you're bullied that can have like serious consequences after, but also after school time. So that's bad. In movies you also see that these children might be committing suicide, so that's bad. If you only because of that... because you're fat, that makes you feel inferior to others, then that's no reason to commit suicide. [Interview Consolacion, 8 June 2006]

Consolacion's opinion about bullying is exemplary for the political correct repertoire. She had seen movies about bullied children committing suicide. Bullying is clearly wrong because it can lead to suicide – a horrible effect, especially if it happens 'only' because "you're fat". All the girls agreed bullying was bad and they all agreed bullying was to be shunned. One should be nice and respectful to others; social exclusion must be avoided or remedied. These are undisputed standards amongst the girls, and they reproduced this repertoire to me with great ease. Nonetheless, in my observations I noted many instances of bullying. How to account for these differences between what girls do and what girls say? The girls' anti-bullying rhetoric does not mean that they consider all bullying bad. They negotiated situations in which bullying was appropriate or even deserved, and whilst doing this they employed a repertoire of choice (see section below).

The opposite of being bullied is being popular, and popularity was also approached with a politically correct repertoire. Again 'being nice' is the ultimate standard and from that perspective other elements should not matter:

Odecia: I can just be friends with anybody. It doesn't matter what you look like or what faith you have or something. It's just about being nice and trusting each other. So I don't really think it's due to appearance to have someone as a friend. I mean I can also just have a gorgeous beautiful girl as a friend or an ugly duckling as a friend too. [Interview Odecia, 27 June 2006]

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Thus, appearance or ethnicity should not have any significance in judging people. Other girls also used this repertoire whilst discussing popularity. They indicated that being nice and friendly was more important, whilst at the same time they did not want to be bullied. At some points, I felt the girls had difficulty in continuing with this repertoire. For instance, when I asked if girls with flabby bellies could also wear crop tops, the girls responded with laughter and reverted to a repertoire of choice.

Multiculturalism

The girls also employed a politically correct repertoire in talking about multicultural matters. Unlike bullying, multiculturalism was a focus of my research and I thus solicited talk about multicultural matters. The girls all understood the multicultural society to be a good thing, an asset to Dutch society. Laila rejected uni-cultural societies, like Morocco.

Laila: I think it's a boring country, with Morocco live all Moroccans and with Suriname all Surinamers and all. That seems boring to me. You also want to meet other people of their religion and all. I think, that seems fun to me.
[Interview Laila, 7 July 2007]

Difference is a plus; the world would be a boring place if everyone looked the same. The girls' use of 'boring' in this repertoire was remarkable.

Esther: I think that is good, because then you get to know each other. Like in villages or something, then it's out of the question that diverse people come. It's really all just Dutch people. And then at some [football] clubs black people are not allowed to come, or they can come, but cannot play for that club. And it's actually good if people from different descents play, because then it's a bit more fun. And it's fun to play with other people, otherwise it's so boring. [Interview Esther, 12 June 2006]

Diverse types of people, in Esther's words, increase the fun. Playing together is a good thing, difference is celebrated. One might argue that these utterances should not be taken at face value and should be cast aside as they are clearly socially desirable answers, produced because of the interview context. Another way of approaching this would be to note that these girls were aware of *what* the socially desirable answer is. Thus, amongst the girls existed a norm of multiculturalism, wherein diversity should not only be respected, but is also considered to be better than homogeneity.

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The multicultural repertoire was also used in the focus groups, whilst discussing cliques at secondary school. The girls of non-Dutch origin all described the cliques at their schools in terms of ethnicity, whereas none of the Dutch girls did so. To check if notions of political correctness prevented them from 'seeing' ethnicity, I asked directly about ethnicity in a group of mixed descent. This group rejected cliques based on ethnicity, because they felt it was important that everyone socialised with everyone. However, Dilara later remarked in this group that all her friends were Turkish, and Gülen only had Turkish and Moroccan friends.

I asked the girls about their attitudes towards headscarves. Amongst the non-Muslim girls, this question was sometimes met with a multicultural repertoire. These girls said that because the headscarf is part of religion, this practice is beyond questioning. For instance:

Noa: You mean Moroccan and such? That's just for their religion. I think they can do that. Because if you believe... that you then something. I don't know what they believe then, but if you it for your faith then I think it's allowed. [Interview Noa, 20 June 2006]

Noa felt no need to understand the practice: the realm of religion is unassailable. Similarly:

Marisol: But... that's because of their faith... Good, well if that's the rule than you should just put that on. I do think it's stupid that at some schools they said that you couldn't wear headscarves anymore because you also don't have any caps anymore. That I think is nonsense, that's just for their religion, that they have to do that. And then they just should go and wear that. [Interview Marisol, 3 July 2006]

Marisol refers to schools that argued that all headgear was to be banned, including caps. She thus showed even more politically correct awareness and added to the debate about the headscarf. This did not mean that all non-Muslim girls agreed with the headscarf because of politically correct notions. Several argued they found the practice "stupid", or they used a repertoire of choice to negotiate its meaning. Conversely, Beyhan and Dilara respected girls who wore crop tops "because they have a different faith". Beyhan said:

Linda: And what do you think of girls who do wear that [crop tops and tank tops]?

Beyhan: Depends also on their faith. If they're Christian then I don't mind. [Interview Beyhan, 7 July 2006]

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It is again interesting to see how the girls dichotomise religion: non-Muslim implies Christian. Dilara and Beyhan both argued their own religion prohibited wearing these items. They expressed the same respect for other religions as non-Muslim girls did for the headscarf.

10.3 The repertoire of choice

Freedom in/of choice is important to most girls in this study. The girls understood (aspects of) the world as being full of opportunities, options, and alternatives one can choose to utilize or not. One's individual freedom was as equally unassailable as religion in the multicultural discourse. In section 9.4, I introduced the repertoire of choice as a strategy through which the girls counter alleged the negative effects of sexually explicit music videos. From those quotes, choice resonates as something sacred: "if that's her choice, than that's okay". Maud's statement about the headscarf also clearly reflects this notion:

Maud: I find that very sad for those children if they do that for their parents because they have to. But if they want it themselves, yeah then I think it also has something beautiful. That they really want to be loyal to that faith, so in that way I find it okay. [Interview Maud, 12 June 2006]

Maud stated it is "sad" when children are forced to do something, whereas if they themselves decide to do the same thing, it becomes "beautiful". Each girl, at one point or another, used this repertoire. In my discussion of this repertoire I focus on Islam in/and dress choice. I also discuss the negative side of this repertoire and end with a reflection about it.

The Muslim girls used a repertoire of choice when they spoke about Islam. Islam literally means submission, thus it presupposes an acting subject. The Muslim girls informed me that the choice of wearing a headscarf should always be made by the girl or woman who wears it. If a father pushes a daughter to wear a headscarf, the decision is no longer hers and the act is void or false in the eyes of Allah. Nazli and Dilara were the only girls to start wearing the scarf in secondary school. Nazli's classmates had asked her why she had started with the headscarf. Nazli's response, as she told me, was "it's my choice" ["is mijn keuze"]. Likewise, most of the other girls used this repertoire in talking about the headscarf. They argued it should be the girls' choice, and if it is her choice, it is a good thing. Conversely, when asked about their own ideas about the headscarf in primary school, they answered they chose not to. Similarly, the non-Muslim girls also used the repertoire of choice to

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judge someone's decision to wear the scarf, like Maud in the example above. Nine Muslim girls indicated they were "not ready yet". Some of these wanted to wait and see what their new classmates would do (see subsection below), others found it difficult to talk about this:

Linda: Some girls from this class are going to wear a headscarf next year. How do you feel about that?
Romeysa: I think that is actually a good thing.
Linda: Yeah?
Romeysa: But I'm not going wear it right away.
Linda: No? Why not?
Romeysa: I have to be ready first.
Linda: How will you know when you're ready?
Romeysa: I'll just feel it within myself.
Linda: Yes. And who do you think... That's hard to say of course, but when do you think that is?
Romeysa: Don't know. Maybe seventeen or something.
Linda: Yes. And is it important to you, to wear a headscarf later in life?
Romeysa: Yes.
Linda: Can you tell me a bit more about that?
Romeysa: No. [Interview Romeysa, 7 July 2006]

To me, Romeysa's considerations about 'when you're ready' sounded much like considerations about the proper age to lose one's virginity (you know you're ready when you feel ready), namely these are considerations that are difficult to put into words.

The repertoire of choice was prevalent in discussing other dress choices as well. Several girls who would never wear porno-chic items themselves, 'allowed' other girls to do so:

Aliye: Actually I never wore those [items like crop tops or tank tops], but just when I'm at home, then yes, but my parents allow me to wear it. But I don't know, you know, I don't feel good in them.
Linda: No? And how do you feel about others wearing those clothes?
Aliye: It's their choice, I can't say anything about it, you know. But if I don't like it I'm not going to go up to them and I'm not going to say 'I don't like it, take it off', you know. It's their own choice. [Interview Aliye, 8 June 2006]

In Aliye's answer we again see the sacredness of choice. By referring to something as 'choice', any decision is placed in a higher realm, which is beyond questioning and taken at face value. This was also apparent in the girls' discussions about sexually explicit music videos. "It's their life" and "if it's their choice" pre-emptively takes away the possibility of critique.

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The repertoire of choice is a very optimistic one, yet it has a negative mirror. In the above section I discussed Consolacion's understanding of bullying. After she stated the opinion quoted above, I asked her if she had ever bullied anyone. Here, Consolacion switched to a repertoire of choice. She said she did, but never because someone was fat or – as Bianca herself thought – because someone had a different ethnic background. Instead, she bullied Bianca because Bianca snitched:

Consolacion: Then I said like 'come here', you know. Then I welcomed her with open arms into our group really, but then she betrayed me with the teacher for something you know, while it was just a joke. Then I didn't like her anymore, because such people... I really hate that.

Linda: Yeah, betrayal is really bad?

Consolacion: Yes, I don't like that at all, then she ruined it completely.

(...)

Linda: Then you don't find it sad anymore?

Consolacion: She betrayed me, why would I find it sad now? Like I feel sorry for her now, maybe she betrays me another time. [Interview Consolacion, 8 June 2006]

Choice resonates in this statement, because Bianca's behaviour was a matter of choice: she had chosen to betray Consolacion and could have also chosen not to. Consolacion thus held Bianca accountable for her actions: she deserved to be bullied because of her unacceptable behaviour. Likewise, in the focus groups, the girls at times constructed situations wherein bullying was allowed. For instance, group 1 described a boy who was "dirty" and "put things in his nose". They found it logical and acceptable he was bullied for this.

In chapter 2, I discussed the neo-liberal subject. Several scholars (e.g. Gill & Arthurs, 2006; Gonick, 2006) understand contemporary girls as neo-liberal subjects. The repertoire of choice substantiates these claims about the neo-liberal subject. The repertoire is indeed a celebration of individualism, and the sacredness of choice fits well with neo-liberalism. However, to understand the repertoire of choice one must look further than neo-liberalism's dominance in contemporary society. Girls find themselves in a disenfranchised position, because of their gender, but also because of their age. They live in a world where adults still make most of their decisions. They have to follow teachers' and parents' rules, and parental restrictions shape their use of performance practices (§8.5). Girls thus have limited control over many aspects of their lives. They do have some control over their behaviour and their appearance, and this control is treasured: 'it is my choice, I am responsible for this, I own

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my life'. Thus, the repertoire of choice can also be seen as a way of taking control over, and resisting, their disenfranchised position. In other words, their insistence on their agency is a way of legitimatising their own voice and therefore themselves as subjects.

10.4 The repertoire of authenticity

To the girls, 'choice' implied a value judgment. Authenticity is another value judgment by which the girls judged their own and other behaviours, and which guided their thoughts and opinions. Authenticity as a term traces back to Ancient Greece. Historically the word was applied to texts and not to people (Montgomery, 2001: 398-399). Indeed, as Dyer points out, its application to people did not start until the rise of modernity. What is so "peculiar", according to Dyer, is that authenticity has become so central to judging people:

The peculiarity of this use of these words is their application to individual persons as the criteria for the truth or validity of social affairs. (...) [T]he criteria governing performance have shifted from whether the performance is well done to whether it is truthful, that is, true to the 'true' personality of the performer. (I mean performer here in both its theatrical and sociological usages.) Even truth is a peculiar criterion – we no longer ask if someone performs well or according to certain moral precepts but whether what they perform is truthful, with the referent of truthfulness not being falsifiable statements but the person's 'person' (Dyer, 1991: 133).

The peculiarity thus lies with judging behaviour as 'true', instead of "right, or expedient, or formally correct, or kind" (p. 134). Dyer argues that in the modernist, intellectual revolutions² the individual has lost "her/his place as the guarantor of discourse" (p. 134) and the individual has thus become subject to criteria of *validity*. Although Dyer's account introduces an analysis of actress Judy Garland's authenticity, he specifically includes the "sociological" usage of performer as well. Post-modernism's emphasis on the constructed nature of identity has made achieving authenticity central to the identity project, because people experience multiple identities in differing contexts, and struggle to balance their self-values with the expectations of others (Howard, 2000). Giddens argues that in the reflexive project of the self, coherence must be given to past and mediated experiences and future projects. A person can only achieve this, if s/he is able to develop "an inner authenticity – a framework of basic trust by means of which the lifespan can be understood as a unity against the backdrop of shifting social events" (1991: 215).

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Authenticity thus involves validity judgments of identity performance, and – as Giddens highlights – an aim to achieve a coherent narrative through time. I found both usages amongst the girls. They used a repertoire of authenticity when discussing people, behaviours and their styles. In addition, continuity (coherence) was essential to them as well, as already discussed in chapter 6. Throughout this dissertation, I have indicated instances in which the girls used this repertoire. Authenticity was also an issue in the assessment of ethnicity based on skin colour. As I showed in section 7.4, Amisha did not feel Surinamese because “real” Surinamese stem from African descent. In section 9.3, I demonstrated how the girls understood copying (images for the website) to be the opposite of authenticity. In this section, I focus on the use of the authenticity repertoire in reflexive talk, thus mainly addressing the authenticity of self. I first discuss “being yourself”, before concentrating on the need for continuity of self.

“Being yourself”

For Thirza (Kantlijn), authenticity was central. In everyday conversations I had with her class, she often pointed out that she was different and “just herself”. For instance, we once talked about drinks and she remarked how she drank less than half a litre of fluids a day. She added this was different. She also often drew attention to the fact that she was left-handed and dyslectic. She enjoyed saying others had told her she had her own, unique style. In the interview, she announced she would “stay herself” in secondary school, in order to “show who I really am”. When I met up with her at her new secondary school, she stressed that popularity was now more important to her classmates, but not to her: “I don’t care about that. I’m just myself”. In the focus groups, she constantly made similar statements, like “I’m just myself and I don’t care what other people think about that”. The focusing exercise of conjuring up outfits for certain settings was pointless to her. She remarked:

Thirza: Yes but it also depends mostly on how you are yourself, how you dress, because if you like [dress] according to this scheme we’re making up right now...
If you wear that, you do need to be like that. [Focus group 2, 21 February 2007]

Thirza thus stressed authenticity not only for herself, but also for others.

Thirza was exemplary in her use of this repertoire, but it was also common for all the other girls. This showed most clearly in their responses to my questions about their own style, looking good and about popularity. The girls mostly described their own style as “normal” (see

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next section) and “just myself”. Looking good was important, but not for the benefit of others: for themselves. Or, as Romeysa stated:

Linda: Is it important for you to look good?

Romeysa: No.

Linda: And why is that then, that it's not important to you?

Romeysa: I just wear for myself. [Interview Romeysa, 7 July 2006]

Several girls used the authenticity repertoire in response to my question of popularity. They answered it was more important to “stay themselves”, “be who they are”, “do their own thing”.

Being yourself, and thus being authentic, is important because the opposite implies imitation or giving in to peer pressure. As I argued in the previous chapter, the girls did not want to admit to such a thing at all. These are the norms the girls have grown up with, norms propagated by schools, parents and society. Amongst themselves, the girls replicated these norms constantly. They not only applied them in judging others, but they also disciplined their own opinions and statements to this norm.

Continuity

In chapter 6's conclusion, I argued that the girls' need for authenticity and continuity in their identities (i.e. their narratives of self) impeded them from talking about radical changes between primary and secondary school. I pointed out various instances in their talk about these differences, in which this repertoire was present. In the focus groups, the girls also used this repertoire when discussing outfits for the first day at the new school. In this section, I briefly examine their understandings so as to further elucidate this repertoire.

The first day of school is important, as all the girls subscribed to the idea that you only get one chance to make a first impression. Impression management (see §3.3) is essential and all the girls paid special attention to their appearance on the first day. In the focus group interviews, this repertoire informed their discussions about inventing an ideal outfit for the first day of school. Several girls made it clear that possibilities are limited because continuity is the key. Jenna explains:

Linda: The first situation is 'the first day of school'.

Jenna: I already know it. I would [give] her, like, not all too special like. Well, if she does have many nice clothes it could, but if she only has a few...

Linda: Just think that it's you, sort of. How you would [dress] yourself.

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Jenna: I would very much myself. I'd really... I wouldn't [do] something really special with all pretty, large necklaces that are really... Even if they're really in. If I hardly ever wore them, then I wouldn't...

Linda: And why wouldn't you do that for the first day of school?

Jenna: Yes, because then if I'd... If I'd dress like that on the first day of school, then I, for instance, don't have anything special like that, maybe then they'll think like 'Yeah, you have something nice one time and for the rest eh...'

[Focus group 1, 6 February 2007]

Thus, Jenna argues that dressing especially nicely raises expectations, and if you cannot live up to those expectations, your classmates will question your credibility. In general, the girls argued that you can wear your nicest outfit on the first day, but it needs to be representative of your other clothes.

Continuity was also stressed in relation to the headscarf. The girls in focus group 1 discussed a Muslim classmate who wore a headscarf on the first day:

Noa: But now she's completely different.

Roos: Yes, but she wasn't really sure if she already wanted to, and all... So then... But she already wore it the first day of school and afterwards, then she didn't wear it anymore, but then I thought like 'Yes, where did that one girl go?', because you saw...

Linda: And did you find it stupid that she first wore the one thing and then did the other?

Roos: No, it wasn't that bad... Because at first we already thought... I... At least I thought first 'yes', but it is kind of weird to wear it the first day of school and not the second. [Focus group 1, 6 February 2007]

Likewise, Nazli remarked that it was really important to her that Muslim girls stuck to their choice: you either wear the scarf or you do not, but you cannot make this decision day by day. Nazli said she found it "mean" when girls take off their headscarf, because "Allah doesn't like that" [Secondary school visit Nazli, 29 November 2006]. Continuity, then, limits the freedom the girls had in choosing outfits and performing their identities.

10.5 The repertoire of normalcy

More than anything else, these girls strived to be normal. Of course, the 'normal' is a highly problematic category. 'Normaal' [normal] and 'gewoon' [as an adjective ± ordinary, as an adverb ± just] seemed to be the girls' favourite words³, and they were often used in combination. Many girls described their style in the interviews in this way:

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Linda: How would you describe your style?

Marisol: Er... [silence] I don't know. Just normal...

Linda: Just normal, yes...

Marisol: I don't find it very cool or very sexy or something, just normal.

[Interview Marisol, 3 July 2006]

It did not matter which identities the girls performed in terms of gender, age, ethnicity or class: all the girls at some point referred to themselves as 'just normal'. When each girl describes herself as normal, normal becomes an empty category. Marisol's answer showed some first entry points into discovering what 'just normal' means exactly: not very cool and not very sexy. Comparably, Laila stated: "I just sit with the normal children. I'm not popular and not a nerd either". I therefore start my analysis of normalcy by examining how the girls discussed the non-normal – in their words: the nerd.

Nerds

In section 6.5, I provided a list of the terms the girls used to designate cliques at their secondary schools. These labels show a construction of normalcy. Thus, most girls described themselves as 'normal' or 'regular'. At the same time, most of the other labels were negatively loaded: bitches, sluts, boring people. The only group that all the girls distinguished similarly were 'nerds', a label used only for boys. Kendall indeed (1999) argues that 'nerd' has been primarily a liminal masculine identity. Perhaps this association of the nerd with boys is the reason for the unanimity amongst the girls: it was thus a safe category to depreciate in an all-girl focus group. In her study on nerds, Bucholtz argues that the designation of 'nerd' is often a way to distinguish "nerds from non-nerds, and especially from cool teenagers" (Bucholtz, 1999: 212). I have already argued that popularity, let alone 'coolness', was not something the girls admittedly aspired. Instead, the term was used to describe deviant, undesired – not normal – behaviour. When I asked the girls to elaborate about nerds, they described either actual people in their classes, or hypothetical nerds. Hypothetical descriptions often stayed vague:

Mickey: Well, they act really, they act really childish all the time and all. And they look a bit stupid. [Laughter]

Linda: Yes, can you explain that?

Mickey: Well...

Pauline⁴: What's stupid?

Vanessa: Different clothes than normal.

Mickey: Yes, but that's not so bad in itself, but I mean, it's just wrong. [laughs]

And their hair, it looks vague too. [Focus group 4, 2 March 2007]

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A nerd acts childishly, looks stupid (meaning not normal), and has vague hair. Likewise:

Pauline: How do you recognise a nerd?

Noa: By his clothes.

Roos: By the way he looks and the way he behaves.

Noa: He just has three quarters trousers [Capri trousers].

Roos: And sandals with socks and all, then a bit like this weird hair, then he has his bag all the way up in his neck. [Focus group 1, 6 February 2007]

These answers show insight into 'proper' clothing codes. Again, we see that the way in which one wears a backpack is important. Furthermore, nerds seem to be unable to get their haircuts right. When I asked them to elaborate, the girls provided extensive descriptions of specific boys and their deviant behaviour. Mickey continued about hair:

Linda: Yes. Vague. Okay, then I still don't know much...

Mickey: Well look, for instance a guy in my class is named [name], well that already explains a lot. But, and he has his hair, he just takes gel and he just puts it on and then he's done. That really looks horrible. [Focus group 4, 2 March 2007]

Of course there was nothing about the boy's name that was unusual, nor does Mickey's description provide any information about what was wrong with his hair. Instead, these descriptions, albeit awfully vague, are a way for the girls to construct acceptable behaviour. The same pattern returned in Amisha's description of a boy in her class:

Amisha: So then, but then he doesn't put a belt on. That er, okay. So er, he acts really girlish. So if we have PE, then he runs like a girl. Really so funny! And er, and he's also a kind of know-it-all. Yeah, something like that. And then his hair, ieuw! Really no, is no good! In the front it's really no good, and in the back it's really-really no good. And he always carries his books with him. And he... yeah, really such a nerd. [Focus group 4, 2 March 2007]

Mickey and Amisha were in the same focus group, but came from different schools. Amisha's background also differed strongly from the other girls, but she commented on similar 'abnormal' features: acting childishly and bad hair. Here, we see the collective construction of meaning in a focus group setting at play. Describing nerds in a similar fashion allowed Mickey and Amisha to find common ground. Furthermore, it shows how such constructions only come about by negotiation.

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Constructing the normal

The girls showed great ease in describing nerds, and their descriptions in these focus groups are likely to occur in similar ways in the school classroom or cafeteria. Talking about these boys, then, offers a safe way to gossip about inappropriate behaviour, without running the risk of insulting a friend or a friend's friend. In their talk, the girls gave various descriptions of things they considered not normal. A few examples: a boy with a very large mouth, dirty hands, picking one's nose and eating the pickings, torn clothes. When the girls talked about other girls, they were more careful in their formulations than when discussing boys. For instance, one group mentioned clashing colours were not done.

Jenna: In any case not something that really clashes. You shouldn't do that.
[laughter]

Linda: And what do you mean with 'clashing'? Pink and red together, or...?

Jenna: No, purple and orange, or something.

Marisol: That has [name] always by the way; that girl [inaudible]. Then she has [laughs]... er what was it again? Well, really vague in any case. She had light-green jogging bottoms – a bit apple green – and then like a pink T-shirt on top and then a bright-red bag.

(...)

Linda: And do you normally say something about that?

Marisol: If someone doesn't... If we think that something clashes, or something, then I will say like 'that really clashes', or something. Or 'that looks bad', or...

Noa: I think that's pitiful.

Jenna: I won't say it to the person, because I think that's painful. I'm not gonna go 'ieuwh, that clashes'. When they like ask me what I think, I myself will say 'yeah, I won't wear it myself, but in itself I like it'. [Focus group 1, 6 february 2007]

Again the excerpt shows how normalcy is collectively constructed. Jenna and Marisol worked together to formulate what constituted clashing colours. Marisol stated she would tell the girl. Note how she said "if we think" – it is hence something she would discuss with her friends first. When Noa interjected that she believes it is pitiful, Jenna constructed another way of handling this. She stated she would not tell the girl, but would come up with the more diplomatic "I won't wear it myself". My interest here lies not with the truthfulness of such practices in the actual school. What is at stake is that the girls were constructing proper behaviour together.

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Normal appearance

I asked the girls in the focus groups to describe appropriate outfits for different occasions. I identified the first day of the school as the most important day to look 'normal'. The girls used the word 'normal' most often in describing the outfit for the first day. Furthermore, the first day of school was the 'basis' from which the girls worked. Any 'extras', the girls argued, should be saved for other occasions.

Group 1: Jeans, T-shirt, trainers (Converse All Stars). Hair can be either loose or in a ponytail.

Group 2: Jeans, a top with a cardigan, trainers or boots (depending on the cut of the jeans). Modest jewellery. Hair in a high ponytail (after long debate about how a low ponytail looks prissy).

Group 3: Skinny jeans⁵, T-shirt, trainers (Nike). Modest makeup.

Group 4: Skinny jeans, blouse or cardigan, brand trainers. Modest or no makeup. Modest jewellery.

Group 5: Jeans, T-shirt, trainers.

The girls' answers were thus incredibly uniform. When I asked them what message they wanted to convey with their outfits, however, their answers differed more. Some wanted to look a little "cool", others wanted to look "decent". However, they all agreed they did not want to stand out much. Again, the words "normal" and "just/ordinary" were often used here.

The desire to look 'normal' is a desire to belong and fit in with the other girls. This appeared clearly in Amisha's desire to take off her headscarf in the 8th form. As stated previously, the Gunningschool banned headscarves. Amisha had previously attended an Islamic primary school and transferred to the Gunningschool in the 7th form. The headmaster made an exception for Amisha, and she was allowed to continue to wear her scarf. As a result, Amisha was the only girl in school with a headscarf. In March 2006, she took it off. I asked her to tell me a bit more about this decision⁶.

Amisha looks very happy as she tells me she had wanted to take the scarf off for quite some time. She no longer wanted the headscarf because the other children also do not wear a scarf. She was so nervous when she asked her father. She first thought about what she wanted to say and she practised in front of the mirror a couple of times. She then put the matter before her father and she explained she did not want the scarf because of the other children. He father agreed. Her father then said he was okay with her taking the scarf off, but she had to work extra hard and pray well every day. She never liked it, because it was really tight around her head. Amisha wore the headscarf since 4th form. She was really excited then, because it felt like she

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belonged with the older girls. At that school there were two playgrounds, one for younger and one for the 4th form and up. To her, the headscarf then meant she finally belonged to the older girls. [Extra interview Amisha, 9 March 2006]

Amisha's account showed how normalcy means not looking any different to the other girls. Amisha's headscarf made her stand out amongst the other girls, even though they were predominantly Muslim. This standing out was enough reason for her to confront her father. Second, the meaning of the headscarf changed for Amisha. At the Islamic school, the headscarf symbolised being older, in the same way playing on the 'other' playground did. At the Gunningschool, the headscarf no longer symbolised that, instead it became an unwanted sign of difference. When I interviewed her in March, she said:

Linda: Do you like it, because you've not worn it for a while now. What is it like to have it off?

Amisha: Very different, because when I came here they started to call me names, like 'oh look, she with the headscarf' and I was very lonely most of the time, because they thought oh I'm different with that headscarf and yeah...

Now I have my headscarf off, everybody treats me nice. [Interview Amisha, 9 June 2006]

Likewise, other Muslim girls like Naoul and Gülen told me in 8th form they considered wearing the headscarf in secondary school, but they wanted to wait and see what their friends did first.

Naoul: Maybe, really maybe in the 2nd form.

Linda: Yes, how come?

Naoul: Don't know.

Linda: Yes. Is that something you want, wearing a headscarf?

Naoul: Yes.

Linda: But maybe not next year?

Naoul: No.

Linda: And what does that depend on if you want it next year, or in the 2nd or 3rd form?

Naoul: [Silence] Just because first I get to know children and all, and maybe if they wear headscarf too and all. Yes, I think so, really maybe. [Interview Naoul, 30 June 2006]

The headscarf can be a sign of both belonging and non-belonging, and this can only be assessed in context. The example of Amisha's headscarf emphasises that normalcy thus refers to the dominant way of dress at a school, regardless of other issues like religion.

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10.6 Conclusion

In this final results chapter, I investigated the criteria that govern girls' identity performances. I discussed the four repertoires the girls used to talk about media, appearance, and identity. The girls used these repertoires at different times, thus switching repertoires per researched setting, and alternating repertoires whilst discussing the same topic. The repertoires reveal the norms that are most important to the girls in identity – for both their own identities and for the identities of others. The girls' use of the politically correct repertoire showed that they considered bullying and discrimination to be morally wrong. Choice and authenticity were high values for these girls, and these repertoires served to legitimatise actions. Normalcy, finally, is the highest value, because in the end, all the girls aspired to be included and accepted by their peers. These repertoires are at odds. Choice can be at odds with the morality of the politically correct repertoire. Likewise, the freedom implied by the repertoire of choice is limited by authenticity. Authenticity in turn, is at odds with the desire to be normal and like the others. Normalcy is perhaps the trickiest repertoire, because it remained unclear what exactly constituted the normal. Observation and reflection – of family, of peers, of society – are the methods the girls used to disentangle ideas about normalcy. Furthermore, 'the normal' is collectively and tentatively constructed and performed.

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Conclusions & Discussion

11.1 Introduction

After investigating girl culture for four years, I conclude that the world of girls is a very (in girls' own words) 'normal' and everyday culture. Girl culture is not as spectacular as the media and certain scholars claim it to be. 'Breezer-sex' and 'headscarf discipline' were phenomena the girls in this study had heard about through the media but not experienced themselves, nor did they know anyone with such experiences. Their identities could also not easily be typified by theorists' favourite post-modern terms, like nomadic, fragmented or mobile. These girls appeared utterly mundane, but nevertheless their everyday worries are complex, as they constantly needed to negotiate and navigate appropriate behaviour in order to belong.

This final chapter presents the conclusions of the study. Section 11.2 answers the main research question and the eight sub-questions. Section 11.3 explicates why contemporary girl culture is not as spectacular as anticipated. Section 11.4 presents the implications of this study for theory about identity and agency, as well as the implications for girls' studies. After methodological reflection in section 11.5, I make some final personal reflections in 11.6. Section 11.7, lastly, wraps up the study.

Design of the study

Fuelled by societal debates in which girls were scrutinised but not heard, this study aimed to investigate and theorise how girls position themselves in the multicultural society. After reviewing earlier studies on

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girls and their identities in chapter 2, I argued that an investigation of girls' identity and agency should focus on girls' own understandings, but that such an investigation is not at odds with a critical perspective that acknowledges structural and discursive constraints in their lives. In chapter 3, I introduced the theoretical framework of the study, to which the concepts of identity and agency are central. I argued that 'doing identity' can be studied by investigating the narratives girls maintain and produce about themselves, and by analysing the identifications with discourse that occur in everyday life. I operationalised these particular theoretical angles into an analytic tool I called performance practice: a distinctive act, which performatively constitutes a subject-position. I specifically focused on the practice of style (i.e. appearance and media use/talk). The societal antecedents and the conceptual tools combined, led to the formulation of eight sub-questions. In order to answer these, I conducted ethnographic fieldwork with a group of girls aged 11-13 whom I followed for a year and a half in their transition from primary to secondary school. The fieldwork started with prolonged participant observation in the 8th form at two schools in Amsterdam, the 'black' Gunningschool and the 'white' Kantlijn. I further employed in-depth interviews, alternative methods (photo project, website/profile project, and first day of school essay), school visits, and focus groups with the girls from these two forms.

11.2 Empirical results

The central research question of this study was: *How do girls position themselves in the multicultural society?* Girls position themselves in the multicultural society by using a variety of performance practices, upon which they constantly reflect. This process is influenced by family, peers, and society. The girls perform different subject-positions at different times, yet their performance is not a matter of choice. First, because not all girls have equal access to all performance practices, and second, because discourse enables certain identifications and disables others.

The answer to the research question was contingent on the context of investigation. I would have found different processes if I had observed, for instance, girls on their holidays or at their sports clubs. Because girls spend most of their day at school, it was the most obvious setting in which to investigate everyday girl culture. In addition, as I argued in chapter 1, the school is a quintessential intersection of the public and private, and therefore a prime location in which to study the

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articulation of individual identity performance with structural and discursive constraints. School is not an unequivocal setting, and differences exist between primary schools and between primary and secondary school. Therefore, the first three sub-questions addressed the specific context that school provides for identity performance.

Contexts of performances

Chapter 5 investigated the sub-questions (1) *Which spaces exist at primary school for identity performance?* and (2) *How do schools position girls?* The two schools came out very differently. I found the Gunningschool to be a closed, strict regime of conventional learning and discipline, which was 'owned' by its faculty. Consequently, the girls had to search for spaces for performance (note passing, acting up to create time to talk) or wait for break or lunch time. Moreover, the teachers and staff tended to reinforce an us-versus-them mentality based on religious and ethnic differences, and they attributed many differences to the fact that the girls had an 'other' cultural background. As a result, the Gunning girls were mostly summoned, so to speak, to ethnic identifications. The Kantlijn, conversely, was an open, convivial community school, cohabited by pupils, faculty, and parents. It focused on experience and on learning in the world at large. Ample space existed for identity performance, as the teacher not only often left the class, but also encouraged self-reflection through the assignment of particular tasks and projects.

Chapter 6 addressed (3) *What are the differences between primary and secondary school?* The practical differences between the two resulted in less adult supervision and more opportunities for identity performance. It also meant facing the intelligence hierarchy and an increased importance of the popularity hierarchy. Contrary to my expectations, but also to those of the girls, the transition to secondary school was not experienced as a drastic change. In the focus groups and interviews, the girls said that their material surroundings were different, but that they themselves had not changed. I interpreted this outcome as indicative of a repertoire of authenticity, and concluded that this repertoire reflects a need for a coherent narrative of self. It allowed the girls to cope with external changes, and framed their talk about personal change. The girls' continuous gossip often focused on the perceived authenticity of others. Such conversations occurred in primary school but were augmented in secondary school, showing an increased need for reflexivity with which to cope with the transition.

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Mapping performances

Chapter 7 examined (4) *Which subject-positions do the girls take up?* Using the metaphor of a spider on a web, I argued that discourse ‘spins’ a web of possible subject-positions. Different identities (gender, age, ethnicity and class) refer to different corners of the web, and the girls took up different positions at different times. For instance, a girl could alternate the streetwise subject (related to age), the good girl (related to gender), and Moroccanness (related to ethnicity). I showed that the girls had diverse understandings of gender and ethnicity, but these understandings were limited to dichotomous categories intrinsic to dominant gender and ethnicity discourses: boy-girl and autochthonous-allochthonous. Gender discourse limited the possibility for ‘my’ girls to for instance, understand the enjoyment of “adventurous stuff” as girl-behaviour. Similarly, the Muslim girls reproduced the notion that Islam is irreconcilable with Dutchness. They also tied ethnicity to skin colour, making it difficult to identify with Turkishness if one has light skin. Subject-positions related to age appeared to be less tied to discourse, as the girls easily switched between performing the child and the mature subject. Performed class positions related mostly to middle-class positions. I distinguished preppy girls and horse-crazy girls. As well as discourse, the girls’ need for a coherent and authentic narrative of the self also brought about more or less stable performances.

Chapter 8 investigated (5) *How do girls use appearance and media to perform these positions?* This chapter showed in much empirical detail how specific performance practices (e.g. wearing football jerseys, talking about *Lost*) cited certain conventions of discourse (e.g. masculinity, maturity), and how these practices performatively produced certain subject-positions (e.g. the tomboy, the mature subject). A performance practice was only meaningful when performer and audience understood which conventions were cited. Reflexivity through incessant talk about appearance and media turned out to be crucial in establishing these conventions. The girls’ practices were shown to depend on financial attainability, bodily limitations, and media availability at home. Differences in language, cognitive, and cultural skills also influenced the availability and accessibility of these practices. These latter two findings answered question (6) *Which restraints do girls face in their performance practices?*

Chapter 9 addressed (7) *Under which influences do the various subject-positions arise?* The data demonstrated that identity takes place in con-

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tinuous negotiation with, and between, three influence spheres – family, peers, and society. First, the size and rules of the household influenced the ways the girls could use media and appearance, but family members also passed on knowledge and norms to them. Second, the girls developed their ideas about appropriate behaviour through constant observation of, and reflexive talk with peers. Third, the girls actively appropriated societal opinions in their understandings of appearance and media. The girls were aware of the alleged harmful nature of sexually explicit music videos, but did not agree with the alleged harmful nature of violent video games. Furthermore, the girls did not feel personally addressed by either discussion. I found the negotiation with these spheres to have changed after the transition to secondary school, with peers slowly replacing the influence of the family.

Chapter 10 examined (8) *What are the norms governing girls' performances?* To answer this question, I analysed the ways the girls spoke about identity issues. These ways of speaking (interpretative repertoires) revealed the norms most important to the girls. I reconstructed four repertoires that the girls used at different times: the politically correct repertoire, the repertoire of choice, the repertoire of authenticity, and the repertoire of normalcy. These repertoires enabled diverse ways of thinking and speaking about themselves and others, for instance in discussing social exclusion or the headscarf. The girls effortlessly combined and shifted repertoires, making their reflections on specific norms outwardly inconsistent, but utterly coherent to themselves, as their reflections on, for example, the discrepancy between talk and actual bullying behaviour demonstrated. The repertoires thus continuously needed to be balanced, as the repertoire of choice can be at odds with the morality of the politically correct repertoire, and the need for authenticity limits the repertoires of normalcy and choice.

11.3 Contemporary multi-girl-culture

The picture of girl culture that emerged from the eight research questions was, as stated, an everyday culture, and not one as spectacular as reported in the media and suggested by scholarly writing. This result emerged from the advantages of ethnography and the 'thick description' it aims to provide, which ideally produces an understanding of a culture as a whole. With respect to such media and scholarly writing, it has yielded three unanticipated observations.

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First, the alleged sexualisation of society discussed in chapter 1 is not visible in this girl culture. Only some girls showed an interest in boys. This interest translated into 'going out with each other', which implied holding hands and the occasional kiss. In secondary school, some girls told me they had engaged in French-kissing. Not only did the girls themselves argue they were far too young to engage in sexual activity, they also rejected sexualised notions of society. They did not share the concern about music videos, nor did they subscribe to sexualised dress codes. Some girls rejected these as 'vulgar'; others rejected these informed by their religion. Although most girls did want to dress 'sexily' for such occasions as a party, this is a situated practice that does not correspond with notions of wall-to-wall sexualisation.

Second, this generation has been called the 'internet generation', as this is the first generation to grow up with the internet (Livingstone & Bober, 2005: 5). Despite this, life at school is remarkably low-tech. 'Traditional' games dominate free time at school, as the girls skipped, played board games, and invented their own clapping games. New media do not find their way into the classroom in the way that old media do. Although some girls talked about video games, this occurred less often than talk about television, film, and popular music. The internet does not invite much talk. Although one might expect talk about different internet movies going around, this did not occur. Schools banned mobile phones, and when asked, the girls ascribed low importance to these. These results might appear counter-intuitive, especially to media researchers. One might argue that new media absorb this generation's life outside school. The girls did engage in instant messaging, they carried mobile phones, and downloading music was common to all. However, simply in terms of time spent, school and its activities take precedence, and when asked about phones, the girls ascribed low relevance to them.

Third, a strong focus on subcultures still characterises youth culture research (e.g. Bohnsack, 2003; MacRae, 2004; Schilt, 2003; Ter Bogt & Hibbel, 2000). However, the girls in this study denied the existence of such groups and classified cliques in terms of cheeky, regular, normal, boring et cetera. This absence might be explained in different ways. Subcultures might simply not exist this early in adolescence (Ter Bogt, 1997). Another explanation could be a postmodern blurring of style (Muggleton, 2000), but the girls' quest for normalcy makes the former explanation more likely than the latter. Yet another possible explanation might be that youth research, like girls' studies, (still) favours spectacular, extraordinary or transgressive groups. In all cases, more empirical research with ordinary youth cultures is needed.

11.4 Theoretical implications

This study aimed not only to investigate, but also to theorise girls' positioning in the multicultural society. Underlying the debates about headscarves and porno-chic was the neglect of girls' agency. Girls were claimed to be submitted to neo-liberalism, Islam, or other forms of discourse. On a theoretical level, these debates concern tensions between identity and agency, which served as a leitmotiv throughout the study. In this section, I discuss the contributions of this study to theory about identity and agency, and to the re-emerging field of girls' studies.

Identity

One of the main contributions of this study is showing how 'doing identity' works in an everyday social setting. Using the works of Goffman (1958), Butler (1990; 1993), and Hall (1996), I employed a performance perspective with identification and citation as central conceptual tools. Butler (1993: 227) introduced the idea of citation to explain that a performance draws its power from discourse, by repeating a prior authority. I introduced the concept of performance practice to investigate how this citation works empirically.

Theoretically, the outcomes of the study foreground the connection between the self as a reflexive project with the interaction with others. I suggest, on the basis of this study, that this interaction is built on norms that are present in particular interpretative repertoires. Giddens (1991: 244) defines the reflexive self as "the process whereby self-identity is constituted by the reflexive ordering of self-narratives". I showed how this process is articulated through interpretative repertoires in which normalcy, choice, and authenticity were the three value judgments. Reflexivity is essential to building a shared understanding of these norms. Among the girls, reflexivity was often exercised through gossip, when the girls talked about others (classmates, celebrities) to come to an understanding of normal and abnormal, authentic and fake, or self-chosen or influenced. Without these shared norms, the process of citation becomes meaningless for identity performance, because it is not acknowledged as one's own 'choice', 'normal' or 'authentic'. In revealing this relationship, I thus propose to incorporate an element of interaction and normativity into Giddens notion of self-reflexivity, because it is not only self-reflection that matters, but also the reflection of others on the performed self as normal, free and authentic. For instance, Giddens discusses normalcy only in relation to what he calls ontological security, "a

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sense of continuity and order in events" (1991: 243). To him, normalcy refers to a "protective cocoon", that makes one feel safe in one's body in order to engage in (continue with) everyday interaction (1991: 58). This study showed, however, that this safety is also largely contingent on the reflection of others, and not something that emerges out of self-reflexivity only.

Agency

In chapter 1, I argued that girls are deprived from the power to define their own actions because opinion leaders construe their actions as the result of Islam or capitalism. In recent girls' studies, girls are similarly deprived of agency, as certain feminists argue they are neo-liberal subjects. From these argumentations, girls cannot be expected to make rational contributions to the debates about them. Countering this line of argumentation, I contended that listening to girls is not incompatible with a critical approach. I therefore worked from girls' own understandings to explore the how girls' choices are set within structural and discursive constraints.

Instead of abstract forces such as Islam or capitalism, my investigation showed more concrete and direct forces disciplining girls, most notably gender and ethnicity discourses, the body, the three influence spheres, and the norms of the interpretative repertoires. The girls' identity performance was articulated in gender and ethnicity discourses, which turned out to be framed in the dichotomies of boys and girls, and autochthonous and allochthonous respectively. The data also showed how the body (dis)avows certain identifications over others. Furthermore, interactions with family, peers, and society enclosed girls' identity performance. In this study, the family situation enabled diverse or limited performance practices, because of the family's class situation. This situation was related to the neighbourhood they lived in and the school their parents could choose for them. As was strikingly evident in this study, the school (and primary school in particular) is a decisive factor in identity performance. Finally, I found clear normative limits on girls' identity performance. They had to be politically correct, actively choosing, authentic and normal.

While this list of disciplinary mechanisms clearly demonstrates that girls are not the autonomous, freely choosing agents they feel they are, this does not mean that they had no agency. Giddens' (1984) theory of structuration had already maintained that agency is located at the in-

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tersection between social structure and individual behaviour. A similar understanding of such interplay is found in Bevir's reading of Foucault. He argues that individuals are creative in exercising their reason, adopting their beliefs, and performing their actions; "it is just that their creativity occurs in a given social context that influences it" (1999: 67). Agency is also possible in Foucaultian theory, and most notably in the ability of individuals to question and critique the "inheritance" (the norms, the standpoints) of the societal influences that work on us (Foucault, 1984). Following this reading of Foucault, my results suggest that empirical manifestations of agency occur at those moments when individuals critique the structures that shape and subject them. From this reasoning, girls' agency is located in those moments when they reflected on the structures that shaped and subjected them, which they did continuously, although it varied per theme, per setting, and per girl.

Implications for girls' studies

In chapter 2, I reviewed girls' studies since the mid 1970s, arguing that they either focus on the transgressive parts of girl culture, or critique girl culture without talking to girls. However, we cannot understand and situate transgressive girls, or deviant cultures, without knowing what they deviate from: the ordinary. Ethnographic studies with ordinary girls are rare. In addition, the studies with transgressive girls produce a collection of spectacular cases that hardly ever yields cumulative knowledge of girls and their culture. As a result, the field of girls' studies has been surprisingly repetitive, producing limited insight into the workings of girl culture. This study fills this gap, and can be seen as an example of how to critically listen to and theorise ordinary girls.

The girls in this study strived to be 'normal', but this does not mean that they were not critical about their own culture. The girls were well-aware of what was expected from them, and their culture was filled with reflection about appropriate behaviour. They were also critical of media influences and could reflect on these as well. They did not copy everything that was offered to them, and theorising girls as neo-liberal victims of capitalism or the media is too simplistic a reduction of the problems and opportunities that girls face in the multicultural society. Yet, the outcome of all these critical reflections may disappoint many a feminist scholar, as they did not imply a fundamental critique that leads to the emancipation (instead of reflection) of the self, or to political activism.

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The task for girls' studies is to investigate and theorise how girls navigate all these tensions. This task requires a critical listening approach that combines multiple methods to account for their understandings of the influences around them, their negotiation of these influences, and their moments of transgression, however small and inconsequential they may seem.

11.5 Methodological considerations

Looking back on the variety of qualitative methods employed in this study, the participant observation in the 8th form proved to be particularly useful. It allowed me to approach girl culture as a whole. Although I focused specifically on appearance and media, the ethnographic approach yielded observations I would not have obtained with in-depth interviews or focus groups. Such artificial research settings only provide a partial picture of individuals' daily routine, and offer little insight into the practices of existing collectives. The combination of observations with interviews and focus groups allowed me to provide a thick(er) description of girl culture.

Although I had intended to continue with participant observation in secondary school, this turned out to be physically impossible. The girls proliferated across many schools, making it impossible to spend substantial time with each. Participant observation in secondary school might have yielded more data about actual changes in performance. This would have allowed for a better comparison of what the girls did and how they talked about that. Furthermore, Amsterdam secondary schools are less segregated than primary schools, and continued participant observation might have yielded more insight into the (lack of) interaction between girls from different ethnic backgrounds.

The data gathered in the in-depth interviews and focus groups reflect the interpretative repertoires that the girls used to talk about their choices and behaviours. The reconstruction of these repertoires has proved useful for the analysis conducted, yet at the same, these repertoires present methodological challenges for research based only on such methods. For instance, had I not also conducted observations, I might have concluded that bullying did not exist amongst the girls in this research. As I argued in section 4.11, I did not use a multi-method approach (triangulation) to uncover a 'truth'. Instead, the observations and the repertoires are both 'true'. The combination demonstrates the complexities of girls' everyday lives.

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The photo project, the website/profile project, and the first day of school essay were three 'alternative' methods, in which I let the girls create narratives about themselves. The photo project knew some practical problems (not using flash; cameras lost at the photo shop), and was time-consuming. The website project also took much time, but since this was part of the participant observation, the time spent with the pupils proved effective in other ways. The data gathered by these two methods was difficult to analyse, because analysis of visual data require different analysis strategies than text-based data. Both forms, however, were particularly relevant for assessing the relevance of media in girls' lives. The girls downplayed this importance in the interviews, but analysis of the self-produced data showed media were central in their narrative of the self. The first day of school essays were also useful in understanding how girls experienced this special day.

11.6 Personal reflections

Finally, I return to the original public debates that incited this study. The headscarf affairs and the discussions about breezer-sex pointed to a hysteria surrounding girls. However, my study shows no support for such societal concern. The question arises: where is the problem and whose problem is it? I do not imply that the problems discussed in chapter 1 do not exist; however, I do question the ubiquity thereof. A recent (December 2007) government report states that breezer-sex (i.e. sex in exchange for money or another reward) only occurs among "a very small minority within the total population of youth" (De Graaf, Höing, Zaagsma, & Vanwesenbeeck, 2007: 11). Perhaps not unsurprisingly, this report generated far less media attention. The concern about breezer-sex can be seen as media-hype, in which the concern generated bears no resemblance to the actual frequency of the reported incidents (Vasterman, 2005: 510). Policy makers should be precise in their problem definitions before going along with media-hype. As I cannot substantiate these worries, and there was nothing wrong with the girls in my study, I do not see why and how this study could lead to practical or policy recommendations that involve interventions in contemporary girl culture.

More striking to me, in terms of policy needs, were the differences I found between the Gunningschool and the Kantlijn. The relationship between teachers and parents at the Gunningschool was problematic. The teachers complained about a lack of parental involvement, but this

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is a two-way street. Most teachers were unaware of the customs and rituals of Islam. This further contributed to a gap between teachers and pupils. Teachers at Muslim-dominated schools should have some knowledge of and interest in this religion. Instead, teachers at the Gunning-school showed an inability to deal with multicultural issues. For instance, the teacher, Thomas, rigidly separated boys and girls. He informed me he did not want to interfere with the ways in which he thought Islam approached gender. In that sense, he reproduced a gender discourse of a religion of which he had little knowledge¹. Compulsory 'reverse integration' courses for teachers might improve multicultural 'skills'. In addition, I often wondered what the effects would be of switching the teachers, thus Luck teaching at the Gunningschool and Thomas teaching at the Kantlijn. The pupils of the two schools were very curious about 'my' other school. Although an exchange was not feasible during my research, exchange projects between white and black schools do exist in Amsterdam. These provide powerful opportunities for countering ethnic segregation in schools.

11.7 Concluding remarks

This study has reported on multi-girl-culture in the Netherlands. It showed that girls take up a variety of subject-positions, which means that they are more than 'just a girl' or 'just a Moroccan'. It showed that they were also, at times, incredibly media savvy, and, at times, hopelessly naïve. Multi-girl-culture is not as spectacular or alarming as some adult commentators claim; instead, it is an ordinary, everyday culture. Furthermore, girls from differing ethnic descents make girl culture in similar ways. This study has provided a thick description of girl culture, and it has delivered valuable insights for identity theory. Spending time in the field with these girls was a privilege, as I got to share in their play, their stories and their laughter. Spending time in the field was also mind-numbing at times. There is not always much to observe when an 8th form is quietly doing arithmetic. In that sense, I also got to share in the girls' boredom. Nonetheless, girl culture is predominantly a *fun* culture. 'My' girls were navigating adolescence, and most of them were making the best of it.

Appendices

Appendix I: Allochthonous and Autochthonous

In the Netherlands, a categorisation is made between native and non-native, or autochthonous and allochthonous. These definitions come from the Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek [CBS, Statistics Netherlands], but are widely used in the media and everyday language. Allochthonous inhabitants are further categorized into non-Western and Western allochthonous. In everyday use, allochthonous usually refers to non-Western allochthonous.

Autochthonous: A person whose parents were both born in the Netherlands.

Allochthonous: A person of whom at least one parent was born abroad.

Non-Western allochthonous: A person of whom at least one born parent was born on the continent of Africa, Latin-America or Asia (excluding Indonesia and Japan), or Turkey (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2006).

Descent is thus the major categorization criterion in the assessment of ethnicity in the Netherlands.

Figure 1 represents the percentages of autochthonous, non-Western allochthonous and Western allochthonous for the population of girls aged between eleven and thirteen years in 2005.

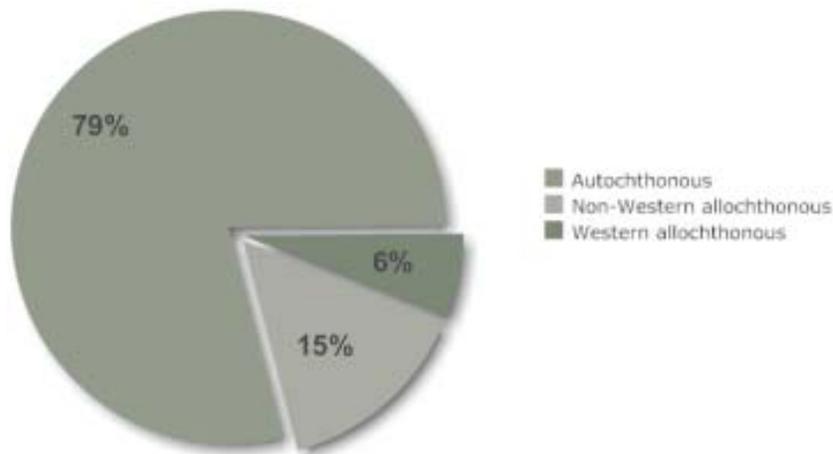


Figure 1: Autochthonous and allochthonous girls (11-13) (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2005).

Within these groups much diversity existed. The most common non-Western countries of origin for this age group were Turkey (3.6%), Morocco (3.1%), Suriname (2.6%), and the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba (1.2%). The fourth position was however taken up by Indonesia (1.2%), and other large Western contributors were Germany (1.1%), Belgium (0.6%), the United Kingdom (0.5%) and the former Yugoslavia (0.5%).

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The CBS definitions are problematic for three reasons. First, the distinction between non-Western and Western is made by looking at the social-economic and social-cultural positions of the country of origin. Indonesia (because of its many migrants after Indonesia's independence from the Netherlands) and Japan are therefore seen as 'Western' countries. 'Western' thus includes the United States and Canada, but conveniently excludes Mexico, by classifying Latin-America as a continent (which, of course, it is not).

Second, the Kingdom of the Netherlands is comprised of the Netherlands, Aruba and the Netherlands Antilles. Although people born there are thus all inhabitants of the Kingdom, migrants from Aruba and the Netherlands Antilles are classified as non-Western allochthonous.

Third, in addition to the definitions provided above, the definition of allochthonous is stretched per generation. Initial migrants are labelled first-generation allochthonous. A second-generation allochthonous is born in the Netherlands, but at least one parent was born abroad. To designate descendants from that generation, the CBS now works on definitions of third-generation allochthonous. According to the CBS, there exists a growing "need for information about the non-Western third generation, such as the extent to which allochthonous and their children integrate and the effectiveness of the (integration) policy" (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2003: 31, my translation). It then claims only non-Westerners, not Westerners, can be estimated.

The CBS's task is to produce statistics, and policy makers need such statistics to evaluate policy. However, the definitions are not neutral, and have been adopted by the press, and subsequently, in everyday language. In reality, the opposition of allochthonous versus autochthonous creates a dichotomy between 'foreigners' and 'Dutch'. The stretching of the definition to second and third generations makes this dichotomy permanent: in other words, it becomes a discursive impossibility for descendants of Turkish and Moroccans to ever become Dutch. I use the terms allochthonous and autochthonous as a reference to Dutch daily language, even though these terms are less familiar to non-Dutch readers. Nonetheless, chapter 7 discusses in-depth how the girls' own understanding of their ethnicity further complicates this dichotomy.

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Appendix II: Ethnic Descent, Experienced Ethnicity and Religion

Name	School	Descent mother	Descent father	Experienced	Religion
Aliye	Gunning	Turkish	Turkish	Dutch	Muslim
Amisha	Gunning	Surinamese	Surinamese	Hindustani	Muslim
Betty	Gunning	Cape Verde	Portugese	Portugese	Christian
Beyhan	Gunning	Turkish	Turkish	Turkish	Muslim
Bianca	Gunning	Dutch	Dutch	Dutch	Catholic
Caruna	Kantlijn	Surinamese	Dutch	Dutch	Hindustani
Chemaë	Gunning	Moroccan	Moroccan	Moroccan	Muslim
Consolacion	Gunning	Colombia	Argentina	Sp.Columbian	Catholic
Dilara	Gunning	Turkish	Turkish	Turkish	Muslim
Esther	Kantlijn	French	Dutch	Dutch	None
Gülen	Gunning	Turkish	Turkish	Turkish	Muslim
Jenna	Kantlijn	England	Ghana	Dutch	None
Katia	Kantlijn	Russian	Polish	Half-Russian	Alternative
Laila	Gunning	Moroccan	Moroccan	Moroccan	Muslim
Madelief	Kantlijn	Dutch	Dutch	Dutch	None
Marisol	Kantlijn	Dutch	Dutch	Dutch	None
Maud	Kantlijn	Dutch	Dutch	Dutch	None
Mette	Kantlijn	Dutch	Dutch	Dutch	None
Mickey	Kantlijn	Dutch	Dutch	Dutch	None
Naoul	Gunning	Moroccan	Moroccan	Moroccan	Muslim
Nazli	Gunning	Turkish	Turkish	Turkish	Muslim
Noa	Kantlijn	Dutch	American	Dutch	None
Nursen	Kantlijn	Turkish	Turkish	Half-Turkish	Muslim
Odecia	Kantlijn	French	Surinamese	Dutch	None
Priscilla	Kantlijn	-	-	Dutch	-
Radia	Gunning	Moroccan	Moroccan	Dutch	Muslim
Romeysa	Gunning	Moroccan	Moroccan	Moroccan	Muslim
Roos	Kantlijn	Dutch	Dutch	Dutch	None
Sophie	Kantlijn	Dutch	Russian	Dutch	None
Thirza	Kantlijn	Dutch	Dutch	Dutch	None
Vanessa	Kantlijn	Dutch	Dutch	Dutch	None

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Appendix III: Topic List In-depth Interviews

Family

- How many brothers and/or sisters have you got?
- How old are they and what do they do (work/school)?
- Are your parents still together?
- What is your dad's profession?
- What is your mum's profession?

Friends and leisure

- Are there many cliques in class? Which ones? (Can you describe them?)
- Who do you think is most popular in class?
- Do you feel popularity is important? Do you think it will be (even) more important next year in high school?
- Who are your best friends in class?
- Do you have many close friends outside school? (Roles and locations)
- What do you usually do after school? And at the weekend? (Locations and with whom)
- What time do you usually go to bed?
- What do you like to talk about the most with friends (boy/girl)? Which topics? (Continue to ask about talking about media)

Media

- Do you read magazines? Which ones?
- Do you have internet at home? (How many + in own bedroom)
- Do you have a stereo in your room?
- Do you have a TV in your room?
- Do your parents allow you to watch everything on TV?
- Do you play computer games? Which ones? Are you allowed to play all games?
- Some people say that computer games contain a lot of violence and they say this is bad for young people. How do you feel about that?
- Lately, the media have paid much attention to sex and other dirty things in music videos. They say this is bad for young people. How do you feel about that?

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Appearance

- How do you describe your style?
- Do you feel you look typically like a girl/boy?
- Can you describe what's typically girl-like? An example in class?
- Can you describe what's typically boy-like? An example in class?
- (If previous questions fail:) Imagine I am from outer space and I do not know what boys and girls are. I come to your class, so you are all fully clothed. Can you explain to me how I distinguish boys from girls?
- Is it important for you to look good? What does that mean to you, looking good?
- Is looking good also important for boys? (Continue to ask about specific boys/girls in class). Is looking good more important for boys or for girls? Why do you think that is?
- How do you decide what to wear in the morning? (If all your clothes are clean, and you're standing in front of your closet, what influences your choice?)
- Who is important in deciding what kind of clothes you wear? (Continue to ask about friends, media (magazines), parents)
- Do you ever wear skimpy clothing [blote kleding] like tank tops or crop tops?
YES: Why? NO: How do you feel about others who do?
- Do you think you'll dress differently next year in secondary school?
- Some girls (from this class/the other school) are going to wear a headscarf next year. How do you feel about that?

Ethnicity

- Can you describe your descent? In case of non-Dutch descent: Do you feel ...
- Do you ever feel Dutch? Why (not)? When? Can you explain to me what that is, a Dutchman?
- Do you ever feel like an Amsterdammer? Can you explain to me what that is, an Amsterdammer?
- Are you religious? (Or when sure: You are Muslim.) Is that important to you?
- Have you ever heard about "the multicultural society"?
NO: A multicultural society is a society with people with lots of different cultures and descents and they all live together in one country.
YES: What do you think it means?
BOTH: Does this mean anything to you personally?
- Is there anything else you'd like to tell me?

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Appendix IV: Topic List Visits Secondary Schools

About school

- Can you tell me something about this school?
- What is the difference between this school and your previous school?
- What kinds of people attend this school?
- [If school in different neighbourhood:] How does this neighbourhood differ from your own neighbourhood?

About friends

- What is your class like?
- Do you still see your friends from primary school? Who? How often? What about the boys?
- Did you make new friends? How? When?
- What kind of friends are these?

Peer pressure

- Do you feel it is more important now to be popular? In what way (not)?
- Do you think this is also/more important for the others in your class?

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Appendix V: Topic List Focus Groups

Introduction

Introduce Pauline. Round of names, explain audio taped.

Group interview 1: New school (10 min)

What are the differences in the new school?

Did you make many new friends?

Has popularity become more important?

Are there any other differences you want to talk about?

Focus exercise 1: Clothing (5 min per situation)

I'm going to present different situations to you. I would like you to think up the ideal outfit for those situations.

Attention points:

- Clothing: what – how long/short – colour etc.
 - Hair
 - Head
 - Shoes
 - Accessories?
1. The first day of school
 2. A school party
 3. Job interview for part time job
 4. Your first date with a boy

Focus exercise 2: Media (10 min)

You can throw a party at your house. Who do you invite? What will you be doing? Movie: what kind? Music: which kind?

Group interview 2: Media in school

Do you/many people have an MP3-player? PlayStation Portable?

How important is the ringtone on your mobile phone?

What do people talk about in school: television, pop music, games? How does that work?

Are there any groups that distinguish themselves through music, like skaters or Goths?

Are there any other groups? How do you recognise those? Differences between juniors/seniors?

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Appendix VI: Composition of the Focus Groups

Group 1: Same secondary school

Jenna	Kantlijn
Marisol	Kantlijn
Noa	Kantlijn
Roos	Kantlijn

Group 2: Same primary school A

Madelief	Kantlijn
Maud	Kantlijn
Sophie	Kantlijn
Thirza	Kantlijn

Group 3: Same primary school B

Aliye	Gunningschool
Consolacion	Gunningschool
Laila	Gunningschool
Naoul	Gunningschool
Nazli	Gunningschool

Group 4: Mixed group 1

Amisha	Gunningschool
Bianca	Gunningschool
Mickey	Kantlijn
Vanessa	Kantlijn

Group 5: Mixed group 2

Caruna	Kantlijn
Bianca	Gunningschool
Gülen	Gunningschool
Mette	Kantlijn

Non-participants

		<i>Reasons</i>
Betty	Gunningschool	abroad
Beyhan	Gunningschool	unreachable
Chemae	Gunningschool	abroad
Esther	Kantlijn	declined
Katia	Kantlijn	forgot
Nursen	Kantlijn	unreachable
Odecia	Kantlijn	sick + on holiday
Priscilla	Kantlijn	abroad
Radia	Gunningschool	unreachable
Romeysa	Gunningschool	unreachable

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Appendix VII: Original Interview and Focus Group Quotes

All interviews were conducted and transcribed in Dutch. I translated relevant quotes into English only in the final phase of writing down. I tried to keep as closely as possible to the originals, including pauses, mistakes and expressions. This appendix provides the original Dutch texts, ordered per section for easy reference.

5.4 The teacher, the parent, and the pupil

Bianca: Maar de meester zei dus tegen mij. Nee, wacht. Ik zal het anders zeggen. Je weet wel dat ik me een beetje teruggetrokken voel? En toen zei de meester van je mag gewoon schoppen als iemand jou schopt en Nazli schopte mij onder de tafel, dus ik schopte terug. Toen zegt Nazli dat tegen de meester, 'meester ze schopt me'. Toen zei ik 'nee, jij schopte mij ook'. Toen zei de meester 'soms is het ook goed om terug te schoppen' en toen zei iemand, volgens mij Said, zei van 'omdat ze tata is', weet je. Maar toen zei de meester 'ja er mag niet geschopt worden'. Terwijl zij eerst begon.

5.5 Friends, cliques, and hierarchies

Linda: Zijn er in de klas veel groepjes? Kan je die beschrijven?

Radia: Ja, een paar wel. Zoals, uhm, meisjesgroep. En de jongensgroep.

Linda: Ja, en tussen de meisjes en de jongens, zijn daar dan ook weer groepjes? Zijn er ook weer groepjes onder de jongens en onder de meisjes?

Radia: Nee.

Linda: Nee?

Radia: Nee.

Linda: Die horen allemaal bij elkaar?

Radia: Een paar meisjes zijn alleen dus, eh, dus een groep meisjes, twee groepjes meisjes.

Linda: Ja, wie zitten daar dan in?

Radia: Uh, Aliye en Consolacion en Naoul en Beyhan en Romeysa en Chemae en Laila en soms ikke.

Gülen: Omdat zij het meest iets durven en als ze iets durven, echt hebben mensen aandacht bij hun.

Linda: En dat is voor de jongens en de meisjes hetzelfde?

Gülen: Ja, eigenlijk wel.

Consolacion: En ook als je er anders uit ziet weet je, bijvoorbeeld je bent dik, dan nemen mensen je dat kwalijk terwijl je er zelf ook niks aan kan doen.

Linda: Is dat erg als je dik bent?

Consolacion: Nee, eigenlijk niet maar zo zien andere mensen het wel.

Li: Ja...

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Consolacion: En als je denkt van 'het is niet erg' en andere mensen gaan anders denken dan jou, dan denken ze van 'jij bent niet populair ga maar onderaan staan', denken ze... zoiets. Basma is net op het nippertje omdat ze dik is.

6.1 Introduction

Linda: Wat zijn de verschillen tussen de Kantlijn en de nieuwe school?

Jenna: Te veel. Alles eigenlijk.

Roos: Ik ben het vergeten.

(...)

Linda: En Roos, jij zei van 'Ik ben het eigenlijk al weer vergeten'?

Roos: Nou kijk... Op de basisschool... [Je voelt het op een gegeven moment], dus dat is wel saai, en zo.

Marisol: Maar toen... Maar in het begin, de eerste week op de middelbare school, had je echt zoiets van 'oh mijn God, wat moet ik nu doen', maar later was dat heel normaal, dan ben je er een beetje doorheen, dat je het vergeten bent op de basisschool.

6.3 Perceived differences

Linda: En vinden jullie dat jullie zelf ook veranderd zijn?

[Stilte]

Mette: Hmm. Wel een beetje. Je bent meer ja... Ik ben wel meer eh... Ik weet niet. Eigen mening gekregen.

Linda: Ja?

Mette: Ja, maar verder is er niet zo heel veel veranderd. Nou, ik doe minder. Ik doe nu veel minder eigenlijk dan op de basisschool.

Maud: Nou ik zit nu op de Montessori school dus ik moet nu om de zes weken werken en dat moet je dan allemaal inplannen. En eh nou het is gewoon sowieso een veel grotere school en eh er zitten veel meer kinderen op.

Linda: Hoe merk je dat dat het zo groot is?

Maud: Nou eh eigenlijk is het niet zo heel groot want ik zit in het D gebouw en dat is eh dat is wel wat groter dan de Kinkerhoek was. En dan heb je nog het B gebouw en het E gebouw en het A gebouw en het C gebouw

Marisol: Het lijkt me nu echt heel raars als je... Als je op de basisschool komt en ze zeggen: 'Oké, ga maar aan je tafeltje zitten en...

Jenna [instemmend]: Als ik moet, ja... En een laatje ...

Marisol: Nu heb je alles in je tas, en zo, en...

Jenna: Of in je kluisje.

Noa: Dus je moet allemaal andere klaslokalen ... Je gaat steeds naar een ander klaslokaal. En je hebt steeds andere leraren. En, en als je pauze hebt ben je, zegmaar, niet met met je leraar, of zo. Dan ga je niet naar naar buiten, of zo. Dan mag je gewoon in kantine, of je mag zelf naar buiten, of

Linda: Ja. Maakt dat uit dat er geen leraar meer bij is in de pauze?

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?: Is juist leuk.

Jenna: Maar ook, op een bepaalde manier, vind ik dat we op het middelbare school vrijer zijn, maar dan ook weer niet. Ik bedoel, op de basisschool dan moest je soms naar buiten en dan mocht je niet binnenblijven. Maar op de middelbare school moet je ook je huiswerk maken en moet van alles en nog wat, wat je op de basisschool niet hoefde.

6.4 Changes in friendship

Sophie: Ik zat naast de grootste nerd van de klas [gelach], dat was mijn ervaring, er kwam meteen z'ou jongen naast me zitten: hallo! en dan 'hai ha.' (...) Nee maar, nu blijkt het wel maar geen nerd te zijn maar niet heeeel de bink van de klas ofzo..

Linda: Ja

Sophie: Maar hij kwam daar zitten, en toen kwam er ook nog een jongen naast me zitten en hij was ook nog een beetje zo ja ik weet niet, en iedereen zo aankijken en oh! ik voelde me een beetje ongemakkelijk omdat je niemand kent en dan zit je daar.. Ja inderdaad dan denk je wat doe ik hier, maar het viel wel mee..

Linda: en als je daar nu op terug kijkt? Had je dat ook Thirza?

Thirza: O nee, ik zat zeg maar, ik zat gelijk ehm zeg maar... We zaten in rijen en ineens zaten er allemaal meisjes naast me en die begonnen tegen me te praten en we waren al gelijk een heel clubje en ik dacht zo van oké, toen ik had gelijk zo van ehm.. ja

Sophie: Zij hadden geluk, zij zaten de dag voordat ze naar school gingen een kennismakingsdag, 's Avonds.

Aliye: Maar toen hadden we kijk, een kennismakingsdag. Dus toen kwam er zo een meisje, zei ze ja, ben je Turks en zo, hoe oud ben je, ja, eigenlijk zo, ja, zo krijg je dan vrienden.

Linda: Mensen komen gewoon naar je toe en die vragen wat dingen?

Aliye: Ja.

Linda: En bij jou vroegen ze van ben je Turks? Is dat belangrijk dat je vriendinnen ook Turks zijn zeg maar?

Nazli: Ja

Linda: Ja Nazli, waarom?

Aliye: Bij mij niet echt.

Laila: Nee bij mij ook niet als ze maar lief zijn en leuk, grappig.

Linda: En [naam van eerder genoemd vriendinnetje], is dat een Marokkaans meisje?

Laila: Nee, Turks

Linda: Turks, en jij Nazli, jij zei voor mij is dat wel belangrijk.

Nazli: Ja

Linda: Kun je daar wat over zeggen?

[Gelach]

Nazli: Wat is er? Ik weet niet, ik vind het gewoon belangrijk.

Linda: Ja, en zou je ook wel vriendin kunnen zijn met een Nederlands meisje?

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Nazli: Ja

[Gelach]

Linda: En met Marokkaanse meisjes?

Nazli: Ja

Linda: Maar vind je, waarom is het dan belangrijk dat iemand Turks is?

[Gelach]

Nazli: Je hoort toch te weten wat voor cultuur ze hebben en zo.

Consolacion: Ik ga niet om met tata's

Linda: Jij gaat niet om met tata's?

Laila [overlappend]: Ik wel

Consolacion: Nee, Nederlanders nee.

Linda: Nee, waarom niet?

Consolacion: Ik weet niet.

Laila: Waarom? Dat ben je toch zelf?

[Gelach]

Consolacion: Nee.

Maud: Maar ik dacht niet echt dat ik al die mensen zou leren kennen enzo, dat het echt mijn klas werd. Maar nu is het toch wel heel erg vertrouwd allemaal enzo, nou nog niet zo vertrouwd als dat zij [verwijzen naar Madelief-Sophie-Thirza] nu zijn, maar eh toch wel heel erg niet bij iedereen zeg maar, maar bij de meeste vind ik toch wel. Ja wel bij veel mensen thuis geweest enzo en het is toch wel heel close al.

6.5 The popularity hierarchy

Maud: Ja in de onderbouw let je nog heel erg op wat je aan hebt enzo, let je ook heel erg op. Nou eigenlijk niet, nou je gaat wel je eigen stijlje ga je proberen, wat je leuk vindt om te dragen en wat niet. En ja dat soort dingen en... Maar in de bovenbouw vooral... Mijn zus en haar vriendinnen, die willen gewoon echt zo snel mogelijk van school af, die hebben wel hun eigen kleren ofzo, maar dat zijn eigenlijk meer, je ziet eigenlijk geen verschil tussen..

Linda: En Sophie, vind jij dat uiterlijk belangrijk is geworden?

Sophie: Eh, eh, nou nee niet echt het is niet zo dat je een speciaal merk moet hebben ofzo, maar je ziet wel dat je toch ehm nou bijvoorbeeld bij ons in de klas was een tijdje heel veel mensen Björn Borg onderbroeken.

?: Allemaal van die boxers.

Sophie: Nou dat is wel leuk maar eh ik ga niet mijn geld daar aan uitgeven, dan doe ik wel een andere onderbroek aan weet je. Of sommigen ook dan heeft ze - dan zegt ze 'ik voel me niet lekker als ik geen onderbroek met iets leuk erop heb' ofzo, dan denk ik ja je doet er toch een broek overaan.. Nou dat vind ik een beetje onzin. Ik vind het niet zo heel belangrijk, want je wilt een beetje leuk eruit zien ofzo, maar ik ga niet mijn kledingstijl op mijn klas aanpassen, echt niet.

Iris: nee ga ik ook niet doen, ik ben niet achterlijk ofzo...

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Linda: Oké, hield jij er zelf ook rekening mee dat anderen je zo beoordeelden?

Sophie: Ja heel erg.

Allen: Ja he?

Maud: Alleen maar je leukste kleren aan enzo.

Gülen: Ik weet niet, dat je... Niet echt. Je wilt wel aandacht, maar niet echt zo veel.

Linda: Ja. Mette?

Mette: Ja. Niet opvallen. Gewoon, zoals anderen.

Linda: Zoals anderen. Caruna?

Caruna: Ja ook. Niet opvallen.

7.2 Gender

Linda: Vind je dat je er typisch meisjesachtig uitziet?

Gülen: Ja, ik denk het wel.

Linda: Je denkt het wel? En waarom dan?

Gülen: Ja gewoon, ik trek niet als een jongen aan.

Linda: Ja wat is dan typisch jongensachtig?

Gülen: Ja gewoon. Kleren die voor jongens passen.

Linda: Vind je dat je er typisch meisjesachtig uitziet?

Katia: Eh, ja ik vind dat ik wel... Ik vind niet echt dat ik meisje-meisje, helemaal meisje ben, maar dat ik zeg maar... Je hebt meisje-jongen of jongen-meisje, maar dan heb ik zeg maar... [lacht] Heel ingewikkeld... Meisje-jongen en daarna nog... Nee meisje-meisje en dan helft... En kwart jongen, dus driekwart is zeg maar voor mij jongen, want ik houd heel erg van avontuurlijke dingen enzo, bungeejumpen wil ik vooral doen en skydiven.

Consolacion: Een meisje dat met de benen over elkaar zit, die niet zo zit zeg maar. Ik zit gewoon zo als ik daar zin in heb, maar mijn moeder zegt: 'Je moet gewoon zo zitten, met je benen bij elkaar'.

Noa: Mette die doet wel echt jongensdingen soms. Dan weet ik wel gewoon uit mezelf dat ze een meisje is. Maar ik vind haar ook niet echt op een jongen lijken, maar dat komt omdat ik haar echt goed ken.

Linda: Hoe zou je jouw stijl beschrijven?

Esther: Sportief, maar toch weer niet te jongensachtig ofzo.

Linda: Oké, dat zijn namelijk mijn volgende vragen. Vind je dat je er typisch meisjesachtig uitziet?

Esther: Nee.

Linda: Waarom niet?

Esther: Omdat ik altijd sportkleren draag en dat is niet echt meisjesachtig.

Linda: Wat is dan typisch meisjesachtig?

Esther: Rok of een jurk of strakke spijkerbroek of een strak T-shirt. En dat draag ik niet.

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Linda: Hoe zou jij jouw stijl beschrijven?

Mette: Eh, sportief.

Linda: Ja.

Mette: En ja een beetje groot en loshangend.

Linda: Groot en loshangend, ja.

Mette: Ja, en eh, ja.

Linda: Oké. En vind je dat je er typisch meisjesachtig uitziet?

Mette: Nee.

Linda: Nee? En wat is dat dan, typisch meisjesachtig?

Mette: Eh, rokjes en een beetje strakke dingen eigenlijk.

Esther: Nou, echt zeg maar, skatebroek en dan bijvoorbeeld met een trui of een T-shirt met echt heel veel tekst. En gangsterkleren.

Linda: Wat zijn gangsterkleren?

Esther: Zeg maar, Daan heeft dan zo'n broek en zo'n shirt en dat is dan heel breed. En dat heeft Lars ook en Niels heeft een New York Yankees pak, da's toch typisch jongensachtig.

Mette: Van die afzakkende broeken. Dat vind ik echt niet normaal. Het ligt eraan hoe laag je hem doet eigenlijk. Ook van die grote T-shirts enzo, eh, sportschoenen. Ja, dat was het wel zo'n beetje.

Sophie: Wel ja. Ik ben nou niet heel erg tomboy. Eerst wel. Eerst had ik... Nu heb ik ook een paar rokjes, maar in groep 5 ofzo heb ik geen enkel rokje, was het heel bijzonder toen ik een rokje had gekocht. Nu niet meer zo heel erg, maar soms wel.

Linda: Hoe denk je dat dat komt, dat dat veranderd is?

Sophie: Nou ik denk dat je toch wat ouder wordt. Ik weet het niet eigenlijk. Op een gegeven moment zie je mensen die toch een heel leuk rokje aan hebben en dan denk je: 'Ja, dat is ook wel heel leuk'. Eerst was het ook meer dat ik niet durfde ofzo, dan denk je van: 'Hmm, zo bloot'. Ik weet niet, naarmate je ouder wordt ofzo denk ik wel. Geen flauw idee eigenlijk.

Madelief: Samantha draagt wel heel veel roze. Dat vind ik echt zo'n, echt zo'n meisje, echt zo... Echt zo'n meisje, maar ze heeft ook heel veel tasjes, ze heeft er wel twintig of zo..

Jenna: Ik denk dat Samantha er wel meisjesachtig uitziet. Qua gezicht en haarstijl vind ik haar dan wel weer wat stoerder, maar dan qua kleding vind ik haar wel het meest meisjesachtig denk ik.

Linda: Kun je jouw stijl beschrijven?

Vanessa: Weet ik niet. Gewoon normaal. Ik hou van roze, veel roze. Ja roze [lacht].

Linda: Okay, en vind je dat je er typisch meisjesachtig uitziet?

Vanessa: Ja, want sommige kinderen zien er best wel jongensachtig uit.

(...)

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Linda: Okay, en jij zegt van niet... dat jij er heel anders uitziet...

Vanessa: Ja, want hun willen geen make-up, dat vind ik heel erg meisjesachtig... En ja gewoon nagellak of een beetje meisjesachtige kleding. Hun dragen ook nooit roze ofzo.

Linda: En draag jij veel make-up?

Vanessa: Nou in het weekend bijna altijd en soms naar school en voor de rest op feestjes of na school ook wel eens.

Odecia: Misschien omdat meisjes meer met hun ogen... Zo'n oogopslagverleiding doen, weet je wel? En jongens meer met hun... met hun doen en meisjes meer met hun uiterlijk enzo, weet je wel? Als meisjes een jongen willen versieren doen ze dat meestal met de buitenkant en met de wimpers enzo, weet je wel? Als de jongens een meisje willen versieren doen ze het meestal met stoer en bla bla bla, dus dat ligt niet meer aan uiterlijk dan bij meisjes.

Maud: Aan hoe de vormen in je gezicht zijn enzo, daar kan je niks aan doen enzo. Maar als je gewoon een beetje dat je wel ja eh je wel je haar kamt enzo, en dat je het niet nooit wast enzo, ja dat je niet allemaal vlekken op je kleren hebt enzo, ja dat soort mensen daar ga ik niet mee om. Maar dat zijn ook vaak van die types die denken van de wereld 'kan me niet schelen' enzo. Daar hou ik gewoon niet zo van.

Linda: Wat betekent dat dan als je verkering hebt?

Odecia: Nou het is... ik bedoel ik voel me echt zo gemakkelijk en bijzonder bij Lars. Hij maakt me echt, hij kan zeg maar... me bijzonder voelen, weet je wel? En dan... dat vind ik gewoon echt heel fijn. Hij is gewoon heel leuk en mooi en knap en heel grappig en ik voel me bij hem ook heel gezellig enzo weetjewel.

Linda: Okay, en wat zijn dan dingen die je doet samen zeg maar?

Odecia: Zoenen natuurlijk en handjes vasthouden...

Linda: Zoenen-zoenen...?

Odecia: Niet zoenen-zoenen, want Lars en ik zijn wel klef natuurlijk, maar we zijn ook wel van... Ja ik wil niet echt om de vijf seconden zoenen. We zijn wel gewoon als een normaal stel, we zoenen wel vaak zeg maar... En nou wel vaak, heel vaak, en we houden elkaars hand vast en ik zit vaak op zijn schoot.

Linda: En is zoenen dan tongzoenen of gewoon zeg maar...

Odecia: Nou we hebben het wel een paar keer gedaan maar ik heb echt zoiets van: 'okay, ik heb mijn hele leven nog voor me om dat te doen, dus misschien kan ik nu wel van mijn jeugd gaan genieten'. Weet je wel? Dus ik had echt zoiets van laten we maar gewoon een lange, lange zoen doen in plaats van met de tong erbij.

7.2 Ethnicity

Consolacion: Mijn moeder is Colombiaans en mijn vader is Argentijns. Mijn vader heeft weer een vader die Iers is en mijn moeder heeft weer een moeder die... een vader die Indonesisch is, dus ik ben gewoon... Ik kan mijn uiterlijk niet beschrijven.

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Ik kan niet zeggen waar ik vandaan kom. Ik zeg gewoon 'ik ben Spaans... Ik ben Colombiaans', want eigenlijk is het dezelfde taal, Argentijns en Colombiaans. Dat is eigenlijk samen één ding.

Betty: Mijn vader komt uit Angola, maar hij is opgegroeid in Portugal. Mijn moeder is van Kaapverdische eiland, en zij is... Zij hebben hun, elkaar leren kennen in Nederland en mijn... Mijn oma en mij opa die zijn er samen, mijn oma die is hier in Nederland, in Rotterdam, maar mijn... Van mijn moeders kant en mijn opa die is gewoon daar in Kaapverdische eiland. Ze hebben wel contact, weet je, dat ze met elkaar praten enzo, maar niet dat ze samen wonen.

Linda: En je andere opa en oma zijn in Portugal?

Betty: Die is ook hetzelfde verhaal, van mijn vaders kant.

Linda: Ja, en als iemand vraagt 'waar kom jij vandaan', wat zeg je dan?

Betty: Ik zeg gewoon Portugal, want als ik helemaal ga uitleggen dat... Dat vind ik gewoon niet leuk, weet je, dan moet je het hele verhaal gaan vertellen, dan zeg ik gewoon in één keer gewoon 'ik kom van Portugal', klaar.

Maud: Eh, nou ja, je bedoelt zeg maar waar ik vandaan kom? Nou, volgens mij zelfs de overoveroverovergrootvader van mijn vader en moeder van mijn vader, van mij, die zijn Nederlands. En ook bij mijn moeder zo [lacht]. Dat is echt heel erg. Ik ben helemaal Nederlands dat vind ik echt heel stom.

Linda: Waarom is dat stom?

Maud: Nou ik vind het interessanter als je ook voor een klein deeltje uit een ander land komt.

Noa: Nou niet echt. Ik heb niet echt het gevoel dat ik het ben... Want ik praat ook nooit Amerikaans. Ik doe ook niet echt dingen wat daar hoort ofzo. Ik doe gewoon meer eigenlijk Nederlandse dingen.

Linda: Als ik aan jou vraag, waar kom jij vandaan? Wat zeg je dan?

Chemae: Niet uit Marokko. Nou, nee, ja, nee. Ik kom niet uit Marokko [lacht]. Ik woon hier, ik ben hier geboren en ja, ik ben hier geboren en ik ben niet uit Marokko gekomen naar hier.

Linda: Maar voel je je ook Nederlands?

Chemae: Een beetje.

(...)

Linda: Kan je een moment beschrijven als je je Nederlands voelt?

Chemae: Gewoon hier. Kijk, Marokko ga ik niet echt zo vaak naartoe. Een keer in de... Een keer in het jaar, bijvoorbeeld zomervakantie, alleen dat. Maar hier, ik werk... Ik werk... [lacht] Ik woon hier, klaar. Ik woon hier, elke dag ben ik hier. Daarom.

Aliye: Meer Nederlands en iedereen zegt: 'ben je Nederlands of ben je Turks. Laat me raden je bent Nederlands?' 'Nee ik ben Turks.'

Linda: Ja.

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Aliye: 'Oh, want je lijkt op een Nederlander', snap je?

Linda: En hoe ziet een Nederlander er dan uit? Vind je zelf dat je op een Nederlander lijkt?

Aliye: Nee eigenlijk niet.

Linda: Waarom niet?

Aliye: Weet ik niet.

Linda: Hoe ziet een Turkse er dan uit?

Aliye: Een Turkse ziet er vaak, soms, ja gewoon, of hoofddoek, dat is bij de één, of, je hebt geen blauwe ogen, want ik heb groenbruine ogen, daarom. En daarom denken ze gelijk: ja je bent Nederlander. Daarom.

Radia: Dat je Arabisch praat, Berbers. Eh, dat je niet veel dingen mag doen. Dat je... Wij geloven in Allah.

Amisha: M'n afkomst. Ik kom uit Suriname, maar daar heb ik eigenlijk niks mee te maken, dus ik ben niet echt Surinaams ofzo, maar iemand woont wel daar van me, mijn oom en mijn tante (...) Mijn stamming zoiets... Dus eigenlijk kom ik dan uit... Mijn voorouders komen dus uit India, dus ik ben eigenlijk Indisch. Zo'n beetje Hindoestaans, laat maar zeggen Hindoestaans. Maar onze afkomst is wel Suriname, dus meestal denken ze gelijk 'oh je bent Suriname, maar je lijkt er niet op'. Maar ik ben het... Nee het is eigenlijk ook niet. Nee eigenlijk snap ik het ook niet wat ik ben, want dan denk ik van ik ben gewoon ook een beetje Indisch, klaar. Indisch, Surinamers, Nederlanders, klaar.

Radia: Ik heb Islamitische afkomst.

Linda: Een Islamitische afkomst?

Radia: Ja. Bij Offerfeest eten we schaap.

Linda: Ja.

Radia: En bij Suikerfeest eten we koekjes, dan maken ze koekjes, dan eten we koekjes. Met suiker. Ennuh, je mag je wenkbrauwen niet epilieren.

Linda: Je mag je wenkbrauwen niet epilieren?

Radia: Nee.

Linda: Oké.

Radia: Ennuh, je mag niet met, bijvoorbeeld als jij een partner hebt en zo een man loopt naast je, dan mag hij niet ruiken dat je parfum op hebt.

Linda: Ben je moslim?

Chemae: Ja.

Linda: En is dat belangrijk voor je?

Chemae: Ja. Want als ik geen moslim was, dan was ik christelijk. En dan gaan ze tegen me zeggen 'ooh, jij bent geen moslim'. Net als Marcella, zij is de enigste met Kristy. Als ik haar was zou ik dat ook niet leuk vinden. Zij vindt het ook niet leuk.

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8.2 Appearance

Linda: Wat is dat dan? Typisch meisjesachtig?

Romeysa: Dat je je niet echt zo gedraagt als een jongen. En dat je gewoon jezelf blijft hoe je bent.

Linda: En wat is dan typisch jongensachtig?

Romeysa: Eh, zo hoe jongens doen ofzo. ... Die dragen jongenskleren, dragen jongensschoenen enzo.

Linda: Ja. Wat zijn jongenskleren?

Romeysa: Oh gewoon.

Linda: Nou stel je voor ik kom van een andere planeet en ik weet niet wat jongens en meisjes zijn en ik kom bij jullie in de klas, dus jullie hebben allemaal gewoon kleren aan. Hoe ga je dan mij uitleggen wat jongens en meisjes zijn?

Romeysa: [Stilte] Dan zeg ik gewoon eh... [Stilte] Dat ik bijvoorbeeld de kleren van de jongens en de meisjes.

Linda: Ja, maar hoe leg je dat dan aan mij uit?

Romeysa: [Stilte]. Dat weet ik niet.

Consolacion: Ja, hier moet je je gewoon aanpassen. Net als bij de wereld, je moet je gewoon aanpassen bij de wereld. Als het je niet bevalt dan heb je pech.

Sophie: Er is een verschil tussen Priscilla en Madelief. Nou, ten eerste de maat. Madelief heeft bijvoorbeeld ook heel vaak hele korte buiktruitjes ofzo, maar dat zijn geen buiktruitjes, ze koopt gewoon veel te kleine kleren eigenlijk. Dat vind ik niet mooi op zich. Priscilla heeft het ook heel vaak, maar ik vind bij... Ja ik weet niet... Ik vind het bij allebei niet mooi eigenlijk. Maar ja 'tuurlijk is er een verschil, bij Madelief zie je tenminste een beetje een strak buikje en bij Priscilla een beetje flub.

8.5 Conditions for the use of appearance

Linda: En als je dan nieuwe kleren gaat kopen, wie is dan belangrijk om te beslissen?

Esther: Ik.

Linda: Ja. En je moeder?

Esther: Nou, die neem ik alleen maar mee voor het geld.

Linda: Ja, die heeft er niets over te zeggen? En is ze het wel eens met wat je wil?

Esther: Ja, soms wel, maar soms ook helemaal niet.

Linda: Kan je een voorbeeld geven?

Esther: Met dit shirt.

Linda: Vond ze het niet goed? Hoezo niet, wat is daar mis mee?

Esther: Te duur ofzo en dan vindt ze hem te lelijk en dat het snel heel erg lelijk gaat worden.

Linda: Dit is een oranje KNVB T-shirt. Van Nike?

Esther: Ja, met de Nederlandse vlag. En een voetbal. Maar het is gewoon een shirt. Ja maar dit vond ze niet leuk.

Linda: Er stond Nederland op de achterkant en dat vond ze?

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Esther: Stom.

Linda: Ja.

Esther: Toen zei ze dat ik net zo goed een gewoon Nederlands elftal shirt kon kopen en dat ging ik natuurlijk niet doen.

Linda: En als je nou nieuwe kleren gaat kopen, wie zijn dan belangrijk daarbij?

Bianca: Mijn ouders, want die hebben het geld. Want ik heb deze broek gekocht voor 30 euro en dat vond mijn moeder eigenlijk te duur. Maar ja, ik dacht van, wat doe je dan, want nog goedkoper krijg je ze niet denk ik. En toen, ja want, ze hebben best wel leuke broeken maar ze zijn echt 40, 30... Ja, zei mijn moeder 'vraag dan kleren voor je verjaardag'. Maar ik dacht, ja wat maakt dat nou uit, ik wil liever iets hebben voor mijn verjaardag wat ik bijna nooit krijg. Want kleren kan je zo kopen weet je, maar iets voor je verjaardag, iets speciaals wil ik hebben voor mijn verjaardag, iets wat je niet elke dag krijgt. Niet eten of zoiets, dat soort dingen. Ook geen kleren, ook geen schoenen.

Katia: Nou dat het een beetje los is, dat het lekker zit. Niet te duur, want als het te duur is dan zit je echt zo stijf van 'niet stuk maken'. Bij mij worden witte dingen echt heel snel vies.

9.1 Influence spheres

Nazli: Kijk Betty heeft bijvoorbeeld korte rok aan tot hier.

Linda: Halverwege je bovenbeen?

Nazli: Ja bovenbeen, en dat vindt mijn moeder niet goed. Mijn moeder zegt: 'Ja, jongens gaan naar je kijken enzo'. Dat is ook zo. Jongens kijken zo naar Betty.

Linda: Zou je dat zelf wel aan willen, zulke kleren?

Nazli: Durf ik niet.

Linda: Durf je niet?

Nazli: Toen ik klein was – weet ik helemaal niks van – Durfde ik helemaal niet zo naar buiten te lopen, bloesje zo. Dan durfde ik helemaal niet.

(...)

Linda: Maar je zei van vroeger droeg je wel eens een kort topje ofzo. Maar dat kan je niet meer herinneren wanneer je daarmee gestopt bent?

Nazli: In groep zes.

Linda: In groep zes? Oké. Wat vind je van meisjes die van die korte truitjes aan hebben waarbij je je buik kan zien?

Nazli: Nou dat vind ik helemaal niet goed. Ik vind dat ze dat voor jongens doen. Vind ik. Sommigen hebben een hele korte rok aan. Zonder panty, zonder niks, zonder broek. En ik vind dat ze dat voor jongens doen. Vind ik.

Linda: En dat zou je zelf nooit doen?

Nazli: En u wel?

Linda: Ik zou dat wel eens aantrekken, ja.

Nazli: Ja?

Linda: Ja.

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Nazli: Vindt u dat mooi?

Linda: Ik vind dat wel mooi.

Nazli: Ik vind het ook mooi, maar ik weet niet [ineens verlegen], ik durf het niet aan te trekken. [Stilte] Maar u heeft toch al een vriendje?

9.2 Family

Thirza: Nee, maar eh 'tis, ja, veel kinderen zitten televisie te kijken, maar... ik heb niks met televisie kijken. Dus...

Linda: Hoe denk je dat dat komt dat andere kinderen dat dan wel hebben en jij niet?

Thirza: Omdat ik zeg maar een pleintje achter heb waar ik heel vaak speel... En andere kinderen niet. En ik, ik vermaak me dan gewoon veel met andere dingen en tis me nooit geleerd tv kijken... Het is me altijd geleerd dat ik alleen het nieuws mocht kijken of 'Klokhuis' en 'Sesamstraat'...

Linda: Want je zei dat je wel kijkt naar TMF enzo, zie je dan wel eens zulke videoclips?

Naoul: Nee. Ja. Soms. Maar dan doe ik teletekst.

Caruna: Er was een meisje op het strand die gewoon in een string rondliep... En die was ook jonger dan mij.

Linda: Okay, en wat vind je daarvan?

Caruna: Euwh!! In één woord te zeggen!

Linda: Euwh?

Caruna: Ik vond het een beetje... Zoals... Mijn moeder zegt altijd 'ordinair', dus ja, dat woordje.

Linda: Als je nou kleren gaat kopen, wie zijn dan belangrijk daarbij?

Gülen: Mijn moeder meestal. Want ik ga altijd met mijn moeder winkelen om kleren te kopen enzo. Mijn moeder heeft ook een smaak, zij is ook een meisje. Dus zij weet ook hoe, wat meisjes enzo aandoen. En met mijn vader kan ik dat niet, want mijn vader houdt echt van dichte kleding. Daarom.

Linda: Ja, dat het allemaal heel dicht is?

Gülen: Ja, niet echt heel dicht. Maar mijn vader heeft niet echt een smaak van meisjes.

Linda: Ja [gelach], en je moeder heeft wel een leuke smaak?

Gülen: Ja, die wel.

Linda: Je moeder heeft zelf ook wel leuke kleren vind je?

Gülen: Ja.

10.2 The politically correct repertoire

Consolacion: Als je gepest wordt zeg maar, kan dat erge gevolgen hebben daarop, maar ook na schooltijd. Dat is wel erg. Op films zie je ook dat die kinderen ook misschien wel zelfmoord aan het plegen zijn, dus dat is wel erg. Als je alleen maar daardoor... omdat je dik bent, daardoor ga je je minderwaardig voelen dan anderen, dan is dat geen reden om zelfmoord te gaan plegen.

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Odecia: Ik kan gewoon vriendinnen zijn met iedereen. Het maakt niet uit hoe je eruit ziet of welk geloof je hebt ofzo. Het gaat er gewoon om dat je aardig bent en dat je elkaar vertrouwt enzo. Dus ik vind het niet echt aan uiterlijk liggen om iemand als vriendin te hebben. Ik bedoel ik kan ook gewoon een prachtig mooi meisje als vriendin hebben of een lelijk eendje ook als vriendin.

Laila: Ik vind het maar een saai land, bij Marokko wonen allemaal Marokkanen en bij Suriname allemaal Surinamers enzo. Lijkt me saai. Je wilt ook andere mensen leren kennen van hun geloof enzo. Dat vind, dat lijkt me wel leuk.

Esther: Dat ik vind dat juist goed, want dan leer je elkaar kennen. Bijvoorbeeld in dorpjes ofzo dan is het wel uitgesloten dat er allerlei mensen komen. Het zijn eigenlijk alleen maar Nederlanders. En dan mogen er op sommige clubs juist geen zwarte mensen komen, of wel komen, maar niet spelen bij die club. En het is juist goed als er ook van andere afkomsten spelen, want dan is het wat leuker. En het is leuk om met andere mensen te spelen, anders is het zo saai.

Noa: Je bedoelt Marokkaanse en zulke? Dat is gewoon voor hun geloof. Ik vind wel dat ze dat mogen. Want als je gelooft... dat je dan iets. Ik weet niet wat ze dan geloven maar, als je dat voor je geloof doet vind ik wel dat het mag.

Marisol: Maar... dat moet voor hun geloof... Goed, nou als dat moet dan moet je dat gewoon op doen. Ik vind het wel stom dat ze op sommige scholen hebben gezegd dat je er geen hoofddoekjes meer mocht dragen omdat je ook geen petten meer hebt. Dat vind ik wel onzin, dat is gewoon voor hun geloof, dat ze dat moeten. En dan moeten ze dat gewoon lekker gaan dragen.

Linda: En wat vind je van meisjes die dat [buiktruitjes en topjes] wel dragen?

Beyhan: Hangt ook van hun geloof af. Als ze christelijk zijn dan vind ik het niet erg.

10.3 The repertoire of choice

Maud: Dat vind ik voor die kinderen vind ik het nogal zielig als ze dat doen voor hun ouders omdat dat moet. Maar als ze het zelf willen, ja dan vind ik het ook wel iets moois hebben. Dat ze dat geloof echt trouw willen zijn, dus op die manier vind ik het wel goed.

Linda: Een aantal meisjes uit de klas gaat volgend jaar een hoofddoek dragen. Wat vind je daar van?

Romeysa: Vind ik juist goed.

Linda: Ja?

Romeysa: Maar ik ga het niet gelijk meteen dragen.

Linda: Nee? Waarom niet?

Romeysa: Ik moet eerst klaar voor zijn.

Linda: Hoe weet je dan dat je er klaar voor bent?

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Romeysa: Gewoon, dat voel ik in mijzelf.

Linda: Ja. En wanneer denk je... Dat is moeilijk om te zeggen natuurlijk, maar wanneer denk je dat dat is?

Romeysa: Weet ik niet. Misschien zeventien ofzo.

Linda: Ja. En is dat belangrijk voor je, om later een hoofddoek te gaan dragen?

Romeysa: Ja.

Linda: Kan je daar nog iets meer over vertellen?

Romeysa: Nee.

Aliye: Dat heb ik eigenlijk nooit aangetrokken, maar gewoon als ik thuis ben, dat wel maar ik mag het wel van mijn ouders aantrekken. Maar ik weet niet, weet je, ik voel me er niet lekker in.

Linda: Nee? En wat vind je ervan als anderen wel zulke kleren aantrekken?

Aliye: Het is hun eigen keus, ik kan er helemaal niks over zeggen, weet je. Maar als ik het niet leuk vind ga ik ook niet naar hen toe en ga niet zeggen 'ik vind het niet leuk, trek het uit', weet je. Het is hun eigen keuze.

Consolacion: Toen zei ik van 'kom maar', je weet toch. Toen had ik haar met open armen ontvangen eigenlijk in ons groepje, maar toen had ze me verraden bij de meester voor iets weet je, terwijl het maar een grapje was. Toen mocht ik haar niet meer, want zulke mensen... dat haat ik echt.

Linda: Ja, verraden is heel erg?

Consolacion: Ja, daar hou ik helemaal niet van, toen heeft ze het volledig verpest. (...)

Linda: Vind je het dan niet meer zielig?

Consolacion: Zij heeft mij verraden, waarom zou ik het nu nog zielig vinden? Bijvoorbeeld als ik nu nog medelijden met haar heb, misschien verraadt ze me dan nog een keer.

10.4 The repertoire of authenticity

Thirza: Ja maar het ligt er ook vooral aan hoe je zelf bent, hoe je je kleedt, want als je dan zeg maar volgens dit schema waar wij nu zitten te verzinnen... Als je dat gaat dragen dan moet je wel zo zeg maar zijn.

Linda: Is het voor jou belangrijk om er goed uit te zien?

Romeysa: Nee.

Linda: En hoe komt dat dan dat, dat voor jou niet belangrijk is?

Romeysa: Gewoon ik draag voor mezelf.

Linda: De eerste situatie is 'de eerste schooldag'.

Jenna: Ik weet het al. Ik zou haar iets, zegmaar, niet al te speciaals, zegmaar. Nou als ze als ze wel heel veel mooie kleren heeft dan kan het wel, maar als ze maar een paar...

Linda: Bedenk maar dat je het een beetje zelf bent, zegmaar. Hoe je het voor jezelf zou doen.

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Jenna: Ik zou heel erg mezelf. Ik zou echt... Ik zou niet iets heel speciaals met allemaal mooie grote kettingen die heel erg... Ook al zijn ze heel erg in. Als ik ze zelf bijna nooit zou dragen, dan zou ik dat dus...

Linda: En waarom zou je dat dan niet doen voor de eerste schooldag?

Jenna: Ja, want als ik dan... Als ik dat dan de eerste schooldag aandoe, dan heb ik, bijvoorbeeld, voor de volgende dag zou als ik dan niet zoiets speciaals heb, misschien denken ze dan van 'Ja, je hebt één keer iets moois en de rest eh...'

Noa: Maar nu is ze echt héél anders.

Roos: Ja, maar ze wist ook nog niet echt zeker of ze het wel wou, en zo, al... Dus toen...

Maar ze had het al de eerste schooldag aan en daarna, toen had ze het niet meer aan, maar toen dacht ik echt zo van 'Ja, waar is dat ene meisje nou?', want je zag...

Linda: En vond je dat stom dat ze eerst dat ene had gedaan en toen dat andere deed?

Roos: Nee, het viel wel mee maar... Want we dachten eerst ook wel... Ik ...

Tenminste, ik dacht eerst ook wel van 'ja', maar het is een beetje raar om dan de eerste schooldag het aan te doen en de tweede schooldag niet.

10.5 The repertoire of normalcy

Linda: Hoe zou je jouw stijl beschrijven?

Marisol: Eh... [stilte] weet ik niet. Gewoon normaal...

Li: Gewoon normaal ja...

Marisol: Ik vind het niet heel erg stoer of heel erg sexy ofzo, gewoon normaal.

Mickey: Nou ze doen heel erg, ze doen de hele tijd heel kinderachtig enzo. En ze zien er een beetje stom uit.

[Gelach]

Linda: Ja, kan je dat een uitleggen?

Mickey: Nou..

Pauline: Wat is stom?

Vanessa: Andere kleren dan normaal.

Mickey: Ja, maar dat is op zich niet zo erg, maar ik bedoel het kan gewoon niet.

[lacht] En hun haar, het zit ook vaag.

Pauline: Hoe herken je een nerd?

Noa: Aan z'n kleding.

Roos: Aan hoe hij eruit ziet en hoe hij zich gedraagt.

Noa: Hij heeft gewoon driekwart broeken.

Roos: En sandalen met sokken en zo dan zo een beetje van dat gekke haar dan heeft ie z'n tas zo helemaal zo boven in z'n nek zitten.

Linda: Ja. Vaag. Oké, dan weet ik nog niet heel veel meer...

Mickey: Nou kijk, bijvoorbeeld een jongen uit mijn klas die heet [naam], nou dat verklaart al een hoop. Maar, en die heeft zijn haar, die pakt gewoon gel zo en dat stopt ie er zo in en dan is ie klaar. Dat ziet er echt niet uit.

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Amisha: Dus dan, maar dan doet ie geen riem aan. Dat eh, oké. Dus eh, hij doet heel meisjesachtig. Dus als we gaan gymen, dan rent ie als een meisje. Echt zo grappig! En eh, en hij is ook een soort van betweter. Ja zoiets. En dan zijn haar, ieuwh! Echt, nee is niet goed! Van voren is het echt niet goed, van achter ook al helemaal niet. En hij houdt ook altijd zijn boeken bij zich. En hij.. ja echt zo'n nerd.

Jenna: In ieder geval niet iets wat heel erg bij elkaar vloekt. Dat moet je niet aan gaan doen. [gelach]

Linda: En wat bedoel je met 'vloeken'? Roze en rood samen, of...?

Jenna: Nee, paars en oranje, ofzo.

Marisol: Dat heeft [naam] trouwens alijd; dat meisje [onverstaanbaar]. Dan heeft ze [lacht]... eh wat was het ook alweer? Nou, heel vaag in ieder geval. Had ze een lichtgroene joggingbroek – een beetje appeltjesgroen – en dan zo'n roze T-shirt erboven en dan een felrode tas.

(...)

Linda: En zeg je daar normaal wat van?

Marisol: Als iemand er niet... Als we vinden dat iets vloekt, of zo, dan zeg ik wel van 'dat vloekt echt', of zo. Of 'Dat ziet er niet uit', of ...

Noa: Ik vind dat zielig.

Jenna: Ik zeg dat niet tegen de persoon, want dat vind ik zielig. Ik ga niet van 'ieuwh, dat vloekt'. Als ze, zeg maar, vragen wat ik er van vind, dan zeg ik zelf van 'ja, ik zou het zelf nooit dragen, maar ik vind het op zich wel leuk'.

Linda: Bevalt het je, want je hebt hem nu een tijdje af. Hoe is het om hem af te hebben?

Amisha: Heel anders, want toen ik hier kwam begonnen ze te schelden, van 'oh kijk, zij met die hoofddoek' en was ik meestal eenzaam, omdat ze dachten van oh ik ben anders met die hoofddoek en ja... Nu ik mijn hoofddoek af heb, doet iedereen nu aardig tegen me.

Naoul: Misschien, heel misschien in de tweede.

Linda: Ja, hoezo?

Naoul: Weet ik niet.

Linda: Ja. Is dat iets wat je wil, een hoofddoekje gaan dragen?

Naoul: Ja.

Linda: Maar misschien nog niet volgend jaar?

Naoul: Nee.

Linda: En waar ligt dat dan aan of je het volgend jaar, of in de tweede of in de derde wil?

Naoul: [Stilte.] Gewoon omdat ik eerst ga ik nog kinderen leren kennen enzo, en misschien als hun ook hoofddoek dragen enzo. Ja, ik denk het wel, heel misschien.

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Appendix VIII: The Relevance of Popular Media

Youth has long been associated with popular culture in general, and popular music in particular (Ter Bogt & Hibbel, 2000). Nevertheless, the importance and relevance of popular culture remains an empirical question, and one must avoid generalisations. Dutch teenagers spend about half of their leisure time engaged with popular media (Breedveld et al., 2006: 50) and indeed the girls in this study named media activities (watching television, instant messaging or listening to music) as pastimes. Furthermore, I observed many conversations about television, movies and popular music in class. However, media scholars tend to overvalue media's importance and relevance (see Hermes, 1995). Although I often observed media talk in class, the girls trivialised this type of talk in the interviews and regarded it merely as a means of passing the time. In the focus groups, I questioned the girls about the uses and importance of a number of media, like the ringtone on a mobile phone or handheld gaming devices. After diligently answering my questions, Laila remarked:

Laila: Miss, all these things that you say, about finding music important and all, that's not the case with us. It's just about being nice and getting along with someone. [Focus group 3, 27 February 2007]

To assess the relevance of popular media for girls, I investigate the girls' use of popular media in their photo narratives and on their websites (Gunningschool only), and as a conversation topic.

To start with the latter, the girls listed many different conversation topics in the interviews. Conversations mainly happen for the sake of having something to say. Nursen told me her conversations often consist of finding a topic to discuss. Most topics are of a social nature ('what did you do this week') or are about intimate self-disclosure ('tell me your secrets'). Gossip is clearly the girls' favourite topic, but three girls immediately named popular music as favoured conversation topic and four girls named television or film. This makes television more central than boys (named by three girls) or clothes and make-up (also named by three). When asked if they ever talk about popular music, only three girls said they never did (Betty, Dilara and Thirza). Betty felt music is something to listen to, not talk about. Her peers disagree.

The websites are a second entry point into the relevance of popular media. As stated in section 4.6, asking informants to create data themselves discloses informants' own understanding of themselves. The

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websites look like a profile on a friends-networking site. Such profiles are not as new as the technology, as they are comparable to friendship books (cf. Herring, 2004), which are still in use. The girls created a representation of their identity through completing or deleting several favourites (colour, artist, animal etc.) and through adding pictures and photos. The visuals fall into three categories: personal, national, and popular. As already described, the girls shunned personal photos on the site. Personal notes are also pictures of pets and of Zodiac signs. The national imagery consists of flags and other pictures with flag-like symbols of the country of origin. Imagery from popular culture is the largest category. Dilara and Gülen added baby photos of a particular photographic style popular with young teens (for instance search under 'baby' on <http://www.allposters.com>). Almost all girls added pictures from the drama series *Charmed*. In addition, many girls added pictures of female celebrities like Beyonce and Ciara. Only Consolacion inserted a picture of male artists.



Figure 1: Amisha's display of GameBoy games

Like the website project, the photo narrative project invited girls to represent their identity visually rather than vocally. I asked the girls to tell a story about themselves through photos. The photos they took show the elements of the girls' lives that they deemed important. Some girls feature prominently, posing in almost all pictures; other girls only photographed objects or significant others. The most recurring categories

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are pets and friends, but popular media plays a significant role in the photo narratives. Several girls photographed the posters on their bedroom walls, which featured horses or celebrities. In addition, several girls photographed the computer, the television and/or their stereo. Amisha's photos show a performance of various positions. She photographed her old bedroom, as well as the empty, recently painted new one. She photographed her sister, but also the *surprise* she received from a friend at Sinterklaas. In one photo (figure 1), she arranged her GameBoy games in a neat display¹. Amisha performs family and friendship ties, but she also intentionally performed her involvement with video games.

In sum, the girls downplayed the importance of popular media in the focus groups and interviews. This is consistent with the dominant perception of popular culture as trivial (Ang, 1985). The girls are well aware of such societal notions about popular culture. However, popular media functions as an important performance practice. When approached via a different research method, popular media materialise as a central element of their everyday lives and as a performance practice.

Notes

Chapter 1

1. I use porno-chic (McNair, 2002) as a collective term for 'sexy' clothing such as belly shirts, visible G-strings, and T-shirts with provocative texts like 'FCUK me', 'up for it', and 'Porn star'.
2. The American Psychological Association (2007) similarly points to media as the main cause of the sexualization of girls.
3. In an opinion piece, a Muslim publicist hailed Plasterk's memorandum and argued that less sex in the Dutch media might be a way to 'win the hearts of Muslims and make them feel at home' (Benzakour, 2007). A responding columnist mums about sexualisation but accuses Benzakour of wanting to 'stab the freedom of speech' (Etty, 2007).
4. In Marx' famous words: "Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past" (Marx, 1852: 10).

Chapter 2

1. *Jem* was a 1980s American animated television series about an all girl pop band. The main character, Jem, was in fact the secret identity of the owner of a record label. In her spare time, she also ran a foster home for orphaned girls.
2. American authors sometimes mention McRobbie together with Carol Gilligan (1982). However, she is less quoted (in the transatlantic context).
3. See Karniol (2001) for an analysis of the facial attributes of teenybopper idols.
4. One might wonder if the post-feminist label is deserved, for instance: is *Ally McBeal* post-feminist (as Dubrofsky, 2002 claims) or just traditional? Furthermore: is the phenomenon truly new? Osgerby (2004) argues that since the 1960s, teen genres have always emphasised freedom and fun, independence and activity.
5. Differences have been located in the respective practical guidance offered (Schilt, 2003b) and in degree of commercialisation (Riordan, 2001).
6. The basis for the movie *Mean Girls*.
7. Walkerdine et al. write: "This book is about something that refuses to go away: social class in Britain" (2001: 1).
8. Although I suspected more parental monitoring of girls' online behaviour, parental self-reports show this is not the case (Livingstone & Bober, 2005). However, Nikken and Jansz (2006: 194) did find significantly more restrictive parental mediation for the video gaming behaviour of girls.
9. The original quote reads: "The idea that girls lack spatial ability or mastery orientation or autonomy or holistic thinking, or whatever the next incapacity turns out to be, is not best served by trying to prove either that they really have it or by trying to find the cause for their deficit" (Walkerdine, 1989: 18-19).

Notes

Chapter 3

1. 'Self' and 'identity' are not the same, as identity usually refers to a particular kind of self (Luhmann, 2001).
2. Not all scholars agree that reflexivity is specifically characteristic of modernity, see Jenkins (1996) for such a critique.
3. A similar understanding of gender as relational can be found in De Lauretis (1987) notion of gender not as a property of the body, but as the "product of various social technologies, such as cinema, and of institutionalized discourses, epistemologies, and critical practices, as well as practices of daily life" (p. 2). To her, the construction of gender is both the product and the process of representation and self-representation.
4. Like identity, identification means different things to different scholars. Identification usually refers to forms of emotional attachment or being able to place oneself in the position of another (Andermahr et al., 2000: 123).
5. 'Style' is related to the concept 'lifestyle', which is often used in relation to consumer culture and marketing. In social science, the term has varying other theoretical meanings, e.g. in the work of Foucault (1988; 1990) and Giddens (1991).
6. I prefer 'use' to 'availability' because the latter can encompass anything. I prefer 'distinction' to 'identity construction', because distinction is directly observable (by looking at sameness and difference), whereas 'identity construction' is not.
7. Interestingly, this latter point is firmly present in Hebdige's work on subcultures, since he argues that dissemination of a subculture through the media leads to incorporation in the mainstream.
8. De Bruin (2005) touches upon performance when he argues that young people use three different "performative styles" in talking about soaps, teen drama, police drama and comedy. However, he uses 'performative' as an adjective of performance (thus not in its meaning of productivity) and these styles do not apply to *identity* performance.

Chapter 4

1. Epistemology means the theory of acquirement of knowledge about the external world. Ontology refers to the nature of existence, or what kind of entities exists.
2. These terms are contested; nevertheless, schools are referred to as 'black' [zwarte school] when more than half of the students are of non-Western origin (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2007: 20).
3. This method provides extra attention for children with special needs (Van Kuyk, 1999).
4. In Dutch, the second person singular has an informal and a formal form, respectively 'jij' and 'u'.
5. To the teachers, the change was a window of opportunity. For example, some teachers wrote a strong letter to the new principal, in which they drew his attention to a number of problems that were – according to them – previously non-debatable.

Notes

6. The CITO-test is a standardised test taken by all 8th formers. CITO-scores are generally used to indicate school quality (De Regt, 2004). In chapter 6, I elaborate on the Dutch school system, as well as the CITO-score.
7. I thank Yana van den Bor, Stijn van Doorn, Miranda de Lange, Nathalie Magnée, Ilona Noorman, Maartje Vrolijk and especially Manon Gravekamp for their work.
8. I thank Pauline van Romondt Vis for pointing me towards this literature.
9. I thank Rosanne Bobeldijk, Coen de Ruwe, Merel Tukker and Marlous Weel for their work. They had previously been trained in conducting and transcribing focus groups in one of my courses on qualitative research.
10. Pauline van Romondt Vis assisted with focus group 2.
11. Strauss and Corbin define concepts as “the building blocks of theory” and categories as “[c]oncepts that stand for phenomena. In turn, phenomena are “[c]entral ideas in the data represented as concepts” (1998: 101). These circular definitions are confusing. I employ ‘category’ to refer to major codes in the code tree.
12. My choice of *MaxQDA* was pragmatic, as this is the software package chosen by my university. Titles like *NVivo*, *NUD.IST*, *Atlas.ti* have the same basic search and retrieve functions.
13. Actually, my research question did not make much sense to the teachers either.
14. Some ethical guidelines require signed forms from the parents, but these are hard to obtain. For instance, the teachers of both schools needed signed slips from the parents for the end-of-year camp. The teacher had to remind the pupils several times to bring the slip and threatened the pupil could not attend this fun activity without one. The process took two weeks in both schools.

Chapter 5

1. Most Dutch primary schools are part of a coordinating school board, which sets boundaries for the school’s identity. The Gunningschool was part of the Stichting Protestants-Christelijk en Oecumenisch Onderwijs Amsterdam [Foundation Protestant-Christian and Ecumenical Education Amsterdam]. The Kantlijn, as a public school, was governed by the neighbourhood council’s executive committee.
2. I translated both *knutselen* [Gunningschool] and *handarbeid* [Kantlijn] as handicrafts. The first, however, has the more childish connotation of ‘to tinker’ and the second has a more serious connotation of ‘training’.
3. Both girls and boys engaged in note passing, although Hey (1997: 51) found in her ethnography that note passing was an exclusive girl activity.
4. Luck would have asked for an extra teacher had I not been present.
5. In chapter 4, I mentioned how the schools scored differently on the national placement exam CITO.
6. An arrangement where under four-year-olds with language deficiencies can adjust to a school setting.
7. Using *Pajek* software for social network analysis, I entered social ties: (1) girl X named girl Y as friend; (2) girl X named girl Y as most popular classmate. *Pajek* then generates a visual representation of the social network.

Notes

Chapter 6

1. Education after secondary education further diversifies into MBO (Intermediate Vocational Education), HBO (Higher Vocational Education) and WO (University Education).
2. *PraktijkOnderwijs* is always the sole level on offer, as these are specialised schools.
3. Proximity of the new school was the main factor for the girls of the Gunningschool. There was little attention paid to the choice process in class. Girls from the Kantlijn chose based on a number of criteria, including proximity, school reputation, and extracurricular activities. At the Kantlijn, the choice process was discussed almost every day in March.
4. Since the 1990s, the number of 'higher' advices has increased, whilst CITO scores indicate the educational level of pupils is actually decreasing (Bronneman-Helmers, Herweijer, & Vogels, 2002: 94). De Regt (2004: 306), suggesting parents pressure schools into giving their children a higher advice.
5. As explained in chapter 4, I conducted focus group 5 after coding the first four focus groups.
6. All girls in this study chat exclusively through instant messaging and they all use Microsoft Networks instant messaging client, *MSN Messenger*. MSN is turned both into a verb and into a noun. To chat is 'to MSN' and an MSN account is known as 'an MSN' (see also Schouten, 2007).
7. The movie *Mean Girls* is a recent example of this genre. Interestingly, it was based on Rosalind Wiseman's (2002) self-help book. Dutch girls thus view a specific representation of American high school life, which did not correspond, according to Sophie, with Dutch school life. Still, the representation fuelled her fears beforehand.
8. Note that the specific setting of a focus group precludes the girls from saying making friends was difficult.
9. Funnily, when I went to secondary school (in 1989), I learned that the 'right' way to carry your backpack was on your back, and only nerds carried their pack over one shoulder. One might thus map the fashion of carrying backpacks.

Chapter 7

1. See the topic list in appendix III, the first set of questions under 'appearance'.
2. One girl mentioned media in her answer. She said that girls sometimes wear K3 (a Belgian all girl pop group) T-shirts. The absence of media in the girls' answers does not imply media use is not constitutive in identity performance. It does suggest it is less obvious to these girls than to a media researcher.
3. I wanted the girls to describe how one recognised boys from girls by looking further than the penis/vagina dichotomy. I also felt uncomfortable talking about genitalia with twelve-year-olds.
4. I.e. me and my assistant Pauline.
5. Examples are *Vrijen* [Making out] by Haye van der Heijden, *De aarde, mijn billen en andere grote ronde dingen* [The earth, my butt and other big round things] by Carolyn Mackler, and *Beha's en Bezemstelen* [Bras and broomsticks] by Sarah Mlynowski.

Notes

6. See figure 8.1 for sample skin colours and section 8.5 for bodily limitations on the ability to perform ethnicity.
7. *Hindoestanen* is a Dutch designation for people from Hindustan, a region in North-India. From 1870 onwards, they migrated to Suriname to work on the plantations. After Suriname's independence in 1975, many *Hindoestanen* migrated to the Netherlands. The majority of *Hindoestanen* is Hindu, a minority of 17 per cent is Muslim (Wikipedia, 2007b).
8. Berber is an Afro-Asiatic language spoken in North Africa. It is not the same as Arabic, which is the official language of Morocco.
9. Sinterklaas is a traditional Dutch holiday celebrating children in honour of Saint Nicholas.
10. At the time of writing, one of my students had taken up these questions for her MA-thesis.

Chapter 8

1. Although educational media use (e.g. a movie about WWII, a documentary about a foreign country or educational SchoolTV) occurred, I focus on the pupils' own use of popular media.
2. Although the clusters differed slightly, the general clothing styles between the two schools did not.
3. See sections 7.3 and 8.5 for a discussion of the consequences of skin colour on identity performance.
4. The girls used the internet for either playing games or MSN. Mobile phones were not allowed in class. In the focus groups, I specifically asked about their importance, and all groups indicated mobile phones were only important if they incorporated an MP3-player. The phone itself, then, had a low importance to the girls.
5. The lyrics of this song are very sexually suggestive. However, nothing indicated Jenna and Noa were aware of this.
6. In the focus group interviews, the girls remarked that teachers had less control over them in secondary school, but they did not volunteer loosened parental restrictions.

Chapter 9

1. Teletext is an information system 'behind' television widely known and used in Europe, but practically absent in the US.
2. Naoul was a naughty girl, but in the interview she performed the good girl. Naoul was also not allowed to watch scary movies, but told me she watched those nonetheless. Sexually explicit content is forbidden for religious reasons. Scary content is forbidden for other, less abstract reasons. Perhaps this made it easier for Naoul to confess her transgression.
3. *Las Ketchup Song (Aserejé)* was a 2002 summer hit by Spanish girl group Las Ketchup. The song's lyrics are a mixture of fantasy language with English and Spanish. The dance moves became a global hype, comparable to the *Macarena*.

Notes

4. Two other observations from music lessons are noteworthy. First, the pupils ridiculed teacher E., for his ignorance of class routines and his dancing. The pupils labelled his dancing weird and 'homosexual'. The nice atmosphere in class was unattainable for outsiders and the pupils acted as a collective. Second music lessons showed the pupils' aversion to classical music and Dutch *Schlager* music. When asked to sing the Dutch version, they always 'rebelled' by singing the English version or lip-syncing.
5. A sponsored magazine of super market chain Dirk van den Broek.

Chapter 10

1. See Suhr and Johnson (2003) for a discussion of the origin of the term.
2. Dyer points to "trends within western culture". Marxism taught us that "the political activity of society ... is not the real politics of society at all". "Psychoanalysis equally proposes that consciousness is not really consciousness". Nazism and Stalinism showed how "human discourse and intercourse" are manipulated (1991: 134).
3. In the focus group transcripts, the words 'normaal' and 'gewoon' appear 449 times.
4. Pauline was my assistant during the focus groups.
5. Skinny jeans were in fashion at the time of the focus groups. These jeans fit tightly around the leg and ankle.
6. This interview took place in a separate room, but was not audio taped. Hence, I have no verbatim transcription.

Chapter 11

1. Several Gunning-girls told me their secondary schools actively encouraged interaction with boys. They had no problems with this.

Appendix VIII

1. I promised the girls I would not use any of their visual material in this dissertation. I obtained Amisha's permission for the use of this photo.

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In de afgelopen jaren zijn er verschillende maatschappelijke debatten gevoerd over meisjes, waarin meisjes zelf nauwelijks aan het woord kwamen. Aan de ene kant werd er gesproken over de hoofddoek, aan de andere kant over onthullende kleding ('porno chique') zoals buiktrui-tjes. Hoewel het laatste debat minder prominent was, kwam de 'seksuali-sering' van meisjes uitgebreider ter discussie te staan naar aanleiding van berichten over zogenaamde breezerseks. Hoewel deze twee kanten in het maatschappelijk debat nauwelijks met elkaar in verband zijn gebracht, zijn ze op drie wijzen met elkaar verbonden. Ten eerste richten beide discussies zich tot de school, een plek waar de publieke en pri-vate sferen samenkomen. Ten tweede wordt in beide gevallen de seksua-liteit van meisjes aan de kaak gesteld: het gaat over te weinig seksualiteit of juist te veel. Ten derde ligt een ontkenning van agency ten grondslag aan de twee debatten. Hun kledingkeuzes worden niet beschouwd als autonome beslissingen, maar als het resultaat van onderwerping aan Islam enerzijds en de kapitalistische consumptiemaatschappij ander-zijds. In beide debatten wordt een aantal aannames gedaan over wie meisjes zijn, wat meisjes doen en wat dat betekent. Deze aannames over de identiteit, cultuur en agency van meisjes zijn niet empirisch onder-bouwd met systematisch onderzoek. In deze dissertatie heb ik op een kritische doch respectvolle wijze onderzoek gedaan naar de manier waarop meisjes hun cultuur begrijpen aan de hand van de volgende centrale onderzoeksvraag:

Op welke wijze positioneren meisjes zich in de multiculturele samenleving?

De Nederlandse samenleving is divers en in Amsterdam is ongeveer veertig procent van de bevolking van niet-Westerse afkomst. In het maatschappelijke debat over seksualisering wordt meisjescultuur steeds besproken als een exclusief wit fenomeen, waardoor bijvoorbeeld Mos-lima's worden uitgesloten. Om een dergelijke eenzijdige benadering te vermijden heb ik hedendaagse meisjescultuur benaderd als een sub-cultuur, dat wil zeggen als een min of meer identificeerbare groep die een min of meer coherente pakket normen, waarden en overtuigen deelt. De subculturele benadering houdt ook in dat ik me alleen heb gericht op meisjes. Controversiële jongenskleding (denk aan Lonsdale) heeft

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een fundamenteel andere status in debatten, omdat deze automatisch onder de vrijheid van meningsuiting wordt geplaatst. Een vergelijking tussen jongens en meisjes zou dan hebben geleid tot een vergelijking van de verschillende wijze waarop meisjes- en jongenslichamen worden geconstrueerd, in plaats van tot de benodigde inzichten in meisjescultuur. Daarnaast bestaat iedere subcultuur in onderhandeling met andere groepen, in dit geval naast jongens ook bijvoorbeeld ouders en leraren.

Dit boek bestaat uit drie delen. In **deel I** wordt het onderwerp en de studie ingeleid en worden acht deelvragen geformuleerd, die in deel II en III beantwoord worden. *Hoofdstuk 2* biedt een overzicht van onderzoek naar meisjes en hun identiteiten. In dit hoofdstuk beargumenteer ik dat onderzoek naar meisjes, identiteit en agency moet beginnen bij de manier waarop meisjes hun eigen cultuur zien en begrijpen, maar dat een dergelijke benadering niet onverenigbaar is met een kritisch perspectief.

Hoofdstuk 3 presenteert het theoretisch kader voor de studie. Het centrale concept van dit onderzoek is identiteit. Ik beschouw identiteit als een narratief dat reflexief wordt gevormd en onderhouden, en dat zich vormt door identificaties met verschillende discursieve subjectposities. Identiteit wordt hierbij gezien als een project, waardoor de nadruk komt te liggen op de dingen die een individu doet. Deze theoretische inzichten heb ik geoperationaliseerd in het concept performance-praktijk: een onderscheidende handeling waarmee performatief een subjectpositie wordt geconstrueerd. In deze studie richt ik me daarbij vooral op stijl als performance-praktijk.

In *hoofdstuk 4* worden de methoden en methodologie beschreven. Dit etnografische onderzoek heeft eerst plaatsgevonden op twee Amsterdamse scholen, de overwegend 'zwarte' Gunningschool en de overwegend 'witte' Kantlijn. Deze meisjes zijn vervolgens gevolgd tijdens hun overgang naar de brugklas. Naast langdurige participerende observatie zijn diepte-interviews, focusgroepen en verschillende alternatieve methoden gebruikt.

Deel II bespreekt de contexten waarin identiteitsperformance plaatsvindt. *Hoofdstuk 5* biedt een uitgebreid overzicht van het leven in groep 8. Achtereenvolgens zijn de wijze waarop de scholen zich aan de buitenwereld presenteerden, de routines en rituelen in de klas, en de relaties tussen leerlingen, docenten en ouders geanalyseerd. De twee onderzochte scholen verschilden sterk. De Gunningschool was een gesloten regime, waar de nadruk lag op conventioneel leren. De Kantlijn daarentegen

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was een gezellige gemeenschapsschool, waar de nadruk lag op de eigen leef- en ervaringswereld van de leerlingen. Als gevolg van deze verschillen positioneerden de twee scholen de meisjes op verschillende wijze. Op de strenge Gunningschool was minder plek voor identiteitsperformance en werden leerlingen vooral aangesproken op hun etnische achtergrond. Op de Kantlijn was er meer ruimte, niet in de laatste plaats omdat de leerkracht de klas vaak alleen liet, en werd zelfreflectie voortdurend aangemoedigd.

Hoofdstuk 6 gaat over de verschillen tussen de basis- en de middelbare school. De pragmatische verschillen tussen deze twee, zoals minder volwassen supervisie, betekent dat de meisjes meer tijd, ruimte en praktijken voor identiteitsperformance tot hun beschikking hadden. Slechts een paar meisjes stelden zich significant anders op dan op de basisschool; voor de meeste meisjes hield de overgang nieuwe verbanden en nieuwe vriendschappen in. De overgang naar de middelbare school betekende ook dat meisjes voor het eerst werden geconfronteerd met hun plaats in wat ik de intelligentiehiërarchie noem. In deze levensfase moeten intellectuele capaciteiten opgenomen worden in het reflexieve zelfnarratief. Daarnaast wordt op de middelbare school de plaats in de populariteitshiërarchie belangrijker, wat ook betekent dat er meer aandacht aan uiterlijk wordt besteed. De overgang van groep 8 naar de brugklas is meer een evolutie dan een revolutie in het leven van de meisjes. De overgang wordt uitgebreid voorbereid in groep 8, onder andere door het maken van de CITO-toets. Oude vriendschappen en familierelaties veranderen gestaag. Daarnaast beleven de meisjes zelf, in tegenstelling tot verwachting, de overgang niet als een drastische verandering. Bij het praten over de overgang haalden de meisjes vooral veranderingen in materiele omgeving aan en benadrukten zij dat zij hetzelfde waren gebleven. Deze manier van interpreteren duidt op een repertoire van authenticiteit, waar het belang van een coherent zelfnarratief continuïteit tot norm maakt. Dit benadrukken van continuïteit, coherentie en authenticiteit is een manier van omgaan met verandering. Dit had ook zijn weerslag in de toegenomen behoefte aan roddelen. Roddel is een vorm van reflectie, op eigen handelen en dat van anderen.

In **deel III** zijn identiteitsperformances in kaart gebracht. *Hoofdstuk 7* laat zien welke subject-posities de meisjes innamen. Ik beargumenteer dat de meisjes op verschillende momenten verschillende posities innamen, bijvoorbeeld op het ene moment het *streetwise* meisje en het andere moment het Moslimmeisje. De meisjes waren echter niet vrij in

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het opnemen van posities, en hun begrip van verschillende identiteiten is stevig verbonden met discursieve identiteitsdichotomieën: man/vrouw, allochtoon/autochtoon. Daarnaast vereist de eerder genoemde behoefte aan een coherent en authentiek zelfnarratief min of meer stabiele identiteitsperformances.

Hoofdstuk 8 geeft inzicht in performance-praktijken. Het laat in detail zien hoe praktijken rond uiterlijk en media gebruikt worden om discursieve conventies zoals mannelijkheid en volwassenheid te citeren. Ook hier weer is vrijheid beperkt, omdat toegang tot deze praktijken beperkt is. Enerzijds moet men over de nodige cognitieve, culturele en taalvaardigheden beschikken; anderzijds is toegang afhankelijk van financiële haalbaarheid, lichamelijke beperkingen en de beschikbaarheid van media thuis.

Hoofdstuk 9 gaat over de verschillende actoren die invloed hebben op de performances van de meisjes: familie, *peers* en de maatschappij. Identiteit gebeurt in constante onderhandeling met anderen. Familieleden geven kennis en waarden door. Wat gepast gedrag is, wordt vastgesteld door continue observatie van en reflectie met leeftijdsgenoten. Op de middelbare school wordt de rol van leeftijdsgenoten steeds belangrijker ten koste van de invloed van familie. Tot slot weerklonken dominante maatschappelijke opinies in de meningen en opvattingen van de meisjes.

Het laatste empirische hoofdstuk, *hoofdstuk 10*, bespreekt de vier interpretatieve repertoires waarmee de meisjes de gebeurtenissen en fenomenen om hen heen ordenden en begrepen: de repertoires van keuze, authenticiteit en normaliteit, en het politiek-correcte repertoire. Deze repertoires laten daarmee zien welke normen belangrijk waren. De meisjes wisselden repertoires af en combineerden repertoires, soms op een ogenschijnlijk inconsistente manier. De repertoires moeten dus gebalanceerd worden, waardoor bijvoorbeeld het repertoire van keuze strijdig kan zijn met de moraliteit die gepaard gaat met politiek-correcte repertoire. Dit gebeurde bijvoorbeeld wanneer er over pesten werd gesproken. De behoefte aan authenticiteit beperkt op haar beurt bijvoorbeeld weer de repertoires van keuze en normaliteit. Normaliteit is het lastigste repertoire, omdat het onduidelijk is wat normaliteit precies inhoudt, zelfs als die normaliteit door de meisjes zelf geconstrueerd en geperformed wordt. Ook hier weer geldt dat observatie en reflectie de sleutel is tot inzicht in deze normen.

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Hoofdstuk 11 sluit de studie af. Ik beargumenteer dat meisjes zichzelf in de multiculturele samenleving positioneren door een verscheidenheid van performance-praktijken te gebruiken, waar ze constant op reflecteren. Zij performen verschillende subjectposities op verschillende momenten, maar dit is geen kwestie van keuze. Enerzijds hebben niet alle meisjes gelijke toegang tot deze praktijken; anderzijds bevordert het dominante discours bepaalde identificaties boven anderen. Nadat de deelvragen één voor één zijn beantwoord, bespreek ik in dit hoofdstuk de stand van zaken in hedendaagse meisjescultuur. Deze is veel alledaagser dan men zou verwachten op basis van berichten in de media en de academie. Ten eerste is de vermeende seksualisering niet zichtbaar bij deze groep. Ten tweede is het leven op school veel minder digitaal dan gedacht en voldoet deze groep niet aan de verwachtingen van de 'internetgeneratie'. Ten derde is meisjescultuur veel minder geclassificeerd naar verschillende subculturele stijlen dan onderzoek naar jeugdculturen suggereert. Deze drie opmerkelijke uitkomsten zijn het resultaat van de etnografische benadering van deze studie. In plaats van te focussen op één aspect waarbij van tevoren al is vastgesteld dat dit afwijkend of zelfs schadelijk is, is meisjescultuur als geheel onderzocht.

Naast methodologische en persoonlijke reflectie op het onderzoek, worden in de conclusie de theoretische implicaties van dit onderzoek besproken. Aan theorie over identiteit voeg ik toe dat interactie en normativiteit essentieel zijn in het reflexief vormen van een zelfnarratief. In de theoretische discussie over de mogelijkheid van agency wordt gesteld dat agency bestaat wanneer individuen de structuren die hen vormen bekritisieren. Ik voeg hier aan toe dat meisjes zulke reflectie voortdurend laten zien, hoewel dit afhangt van het onderwerp, de setting en het meisje. Dit heeft ook consequenties voor meisjesstudies, waarin meisjes worden neergezet als slachtoffers van het neoliberalisme. Deze studie laat zien dat meisjes wel degelijk kritisch kunnen reflecteren. Door verschillende methoden te gebruiken is het mogelijk kritisch te luisteren naar het begrip dat meisjes hebben van de dingen die hen beïnvloeden, naar hun onderhandeling van deze invloeden, en naar hun momenten van transgressie – hoe klein en onbeduidend die ook mogen lijken.

Glossary of terms

Citation

Appealing to known norms or conventions associated with subject-positions.

Identification

Temporary attachment to a subject-position.

Identity

The narrative of the self.

Performance practice

A distinctive act (involving style) which performatively constitutes a subject-position.

Reflexive project of the self

The routine creation and maintenance of the narrative of self.

Subject-position

A discursively created location a person can take up, which implies directions for living.

Style

Materials used in the distinction of one person or group from the other.

UvA Dissertation

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Linda Duits (1976) obtained her masters degree in Political Science and her PhD in Communication Science. She is currently Assistant Professor in Qualitative Methods at the department of Communication of the University of Amsterdam, and affiliated with the Amsterdam School of Communications Research (ASCoR) and the Centre for Popular Culture.

In this highly readable book, Linda Duits investigates girl culture in the Dutch multicultural society. Her ethnographic account provides a thick description of life at school, still the most prominent setting for today's youth. She followed young girls of diverse ethnic backgrounds in their transition from primary to secondary school, focusing on the ways they use the body, clothing and media in their *performance* of identity. Countering several media hypes, including the internet generation, the headscarf debate, and the sexualisation of society, Duits shows how contemporary girl culture is a mundane culture that is reflexively negotiated in an everyday setting.

