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### Multi - girl - culture : an ethnography of doing identity

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## 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.