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IMIGRANT GIRLS: ETHNICITY AND GENDER

SUMMARY

This article focuses on the differences between male and female in relation to processes of ethnicity among immigrant girls. Two cases are used as examples, namely Turkish and Surinamese girls in the Netherlands. Ethnicity or ethnic identity is considered as consisting of two aspects: ethnic cohesion and ethnic consciousness. Both seem to be different for boys and girls. Futhermore, it is argued that ethnic identity is only one of a large range of social identities and that — depending on the context — gender- and generation-identity may be of equal importance. Other variables — relating to culture, class and the migration process — account for the differences which can also be found between girls of the same or other ethnic groups.

Until recently hardly any social research was done among girls. Even by now much of the research on youth, either Dutch or immigrant, concerns the most visible among them and these are mainly boys. Not only are girls less visible, but in this way they are also made unvisible. And this neglect is also felt when ethnicity comes up for discussion. There are considerable differences in ethnicity between male and female, while diversity in ethnicity also exists among girls of different ethnic groups. Popular images of immigrant girls, however, tend to be stereotypical or suggest a homogeneity which in reality does not exist. For this reason the main subject of this paper will be the differentiation in ethnicity which exists among immigrant youth and notably between male and female.[1]

Domestic and public roles

The fact that girls are less visible has much to do with the specific position of women in society. Social scientists do not agree on the question of whether the position of women is marginal and subordinated or complementary but equal (see 12; 13). Agreement exists on the fact that the position of women in almost all societies is structurally different from that of men. By

[1] The main arguments are largely based on a project on ethnic identity (16), in which I participated. In this project research was carried out among Surinamese, Chinese and Turkish people living in the Netherlands. In two cases research was done among girls only and these are used here as examples: Joke Bakker's research on Turkish girls and my own on Creole girls from Surinam.

now it is generally acknowledged that this cannot be reduced to biological differences and that social and cultural processes have to be taken into account.

Rosaldo (12) argues that the emphasis on women's maternal role in most societies leads to an asymmetrical opposition between domestic and public spheres of acitivities. The socialization of girls — as opposed to boys — — is oriented to the domestic role: they are more confined to the house(hold) and involved in the family (cf. 8). Chodorow (6:57) puts it as follows: »From childhood, daughters are likely to participate in an intergenerational world with their mothers, and often with their aunts and grandmother, whereas boys are on their own or participate in a single generation world of age mates. In adult life, women's interaction with other women in most societies is kin--based and cuts across generational lines.«

Furthermore, Chodorow (6) shows that the mothering role of women has implications for the development of personality in young children. Sex-linked personality differences are often the unintended consequence of the fact that women have the primary responsibility for raising children of both sexes. Without going further into Chodorow's theory, it is of importance here that for girls this primary socialization leads to a stronger attachment to others and to relational and nurturous activities. Boys on the other hand are better prepared to take part in the non-relational sphere, to participate in the world of work and achievement.

Besides the family, school is an important socializing agency. But while education for boys is primarily aimed at a position in the labour market, education for girls contains a certain contradiction: on the one hand they are prepared for life outside the home, but on the other hand their perspective of marriage and family often predominates in this training (5; 15). »Employment is still considered more essential to a man's identity than a woman's« (17:139).Changes in the labour market — notably the growth of youth unemployment — may have a marked influence on sex-roles and gender-identity. For girls with low qualifications and few job opportunities there is a commitment to early marriage (3; 15). For boys, lack of work and wages may affect the traditional gender-identity, because masculinity and earning a living are strongly related in working class culture (19; 20). Consequently, leisure time and the development of alternative lifestyles grow in importance (cf. 14).

The above-mentioned characteristics of the position of girls influence the way in which ethnic identity or ethnicity develops and is expressed. Of course, other factors may equally play an important part, notably the socio-economic position, the migration process, age and length of residence, etc. This paper, however, is confined to gender as a factor in processes of ethnicity. *Gender influences the way in which immigrant girls enter into contact within the host society.* These interethnic relations, together with the relations within the ethnic community, are to be seen as one aspect of ethnicity. In a more limited sense ethnicity refers to ethnic consciousness: the degree to which people identify with their own ethnic group (16). The main arguments of this paper refer to both aspects of ethnic identity.

Ethnic cohesion: family and ethnic community

Girls spend more time at home than boys: they are expected to work in the household, they have less freedom outside the home and are under stricter control of their parents or elder brothers. Girls are usually more involved in the family, notably female relatives. This means that girls have stronger ties

within their own ethnic group, notably the family, than boys. We will look at this now from two examples: Surinamese and Turkish girls in the Netherlands.[2]

Traditionally, lower-class Creole men and women in Surinam live in largely distinct worlds, each with its own networks. For the greater part men spend their leisure time outside the home with friends. They do not bring their women to the places where they meet their friends. Women, on the other hand, have a central part in the matrifocal family network: not only affectively, but also as authority and breadwinner. An alternative lifestyle outside the family and the labour market, as exists for men in the hustler-subculture, is not open for them (2; 4).

Although this traditional pattern changes, Surinamese girls still have relatively strong ties with maternal relatives. They often go along with their sisters or cousins and some of them spend quite a lot of time visiting them. More often than boys they participate actively in family parties or Surinamese parties or meetings. Yet, this does not apply to all girls equally. Many girls, notably the younger ones, also spend much of their leisure time outside the family and home. They take part in youth subcultures and frequently visit community — or youth — centres. They have more social relations with their Dutch contemporaries than the more traditional girls.

Turkish girls generally spend more leisure time at home than Surinamese girls. Among the Turkish there also exists a rather sharp division between the male and female world, especially in traditional or orthodox Moslem families. Girls from such families infrequently leave their homes and have few or no contacts with Dutch contemporaries. Their parents, and often the girls themselves, feel obliged to live as good Moslems and in this view the Dutch surroundings constitute a threat to their way of life. The main social contacts of these girls are restricted to relatives and people from the same village or region in Turkey. They are only allowed to visit friends of acquainted families and usually they are accompanied by the father or a brother.

Sometimes these girls come together by forming Koran-reading groups. Non-attendance at school is frequent among them and this further restricts their social contacts. Girls from less traditional families come into contact with Dutch people precisely through school or work. For some of them this is the only outside contact, although schoolgirls sometimes meet with Dutch girls outside school hours.

Thus, Turkish girls generally have fewer social contacts with their Dutch contemporaries than Surinamese girls. This is largely connected with the respective position these girls have in Dutch society: whether or not they go to school or have a job. Furthermore, religion and the degree of familiarity with Dutch language and society[3] play an important part. Partly, however, the explanation can also be found in differences in family structure and the position of women. The matrifocal family structure of Surinamese Creoles possibly contributes to the more open character of this group. Not only is the male peergroup more outwardly directed (4), but many women also manifest

[2] The Turkish came to the Netherlands as labour migrants in the sixties and seventies. Migration from Surinam, a Dutch ex-colony in the Caribbean, dates from the Second World War, but became more massive just before independence in 1975. The social background of these Surinamese migrants is more varied, although recently-arrived migrants are mainly of lower-class origin. They largely stem from the two largest ethnic groups of Surinam: the Creoles and the Hindustanis.

[3] Because of their colonial background the Surinamese are generally more familiar with the Dutch language and culture than the Turks. Dutch is, even today, the official language in Surinam and education is strongly influenced by the Dutch school-system.

themselves publicly to a larger degree in their quality of breadwinner and head of the household (7). Therefore, relatively great importance is placed on education for girls: in this way they are prepared for a possible future role as breadwinner. Usually, lower-class Creole women assume that they might have to earn a living for themselves and their children or — as a Surinamese woman explained: »Your diploma is your husband« (7). For some of the Turkish girls, especially the more traditional ones, a sound preparation for marriage is of more importance than a good education. Higher qualifications and having a job mean a somewhat stronger position at home, but above all they mean that girls are a potentially better match.

Yet, for both ethnic groups ethnic cohesion can be said to be stronger for girls than boys, that is to say girls are more involved in the family and ethnic community. This applies more to Turkish than Surinamese girls and this difference may partly be explained by the different family structure and the specific position of women and girls.

Girls and boys: inter-ethnic relations

The relations which girls maintain with contemporaries have usually a more individual character. It is quite usual that girls go along with one or two good friends, while boys spend much of their time in peergroups. The »best« friends of Turkish and, to lesser degree, Surinamese girls are nearly always girls from their own ethnic group. Besides, most girls also regularly come into contact with Dutch girls. Mostly, these contacts take place outside the home: in and around school or in community — and youth-centres. But some girls visit each other's home, which happens far less in the case of boys, and become more familiar with each other's cultural background.

On the other hand, boys have more social relations or contacts with Dutch girls than girls have with Dutch boys. However, these relations with girls usually remain only temporary and are not regarded as serious. Most Turkish boys ultimately want to marry a Turkish girl. For Turkish girls to have contact with a boy without their parents' knowledge is often forbidden. Their concern not only applies to Dutch but also to Turkish boys: in this case gender may be as important as ethnicity. Girls are expected not to compromise their family. Men protect the virtue of their women and daughters and, in doing so, protect the honour of the family. Girls going out to school or work more frequently come into contact with Turkish and sometimes Dutch boys.

Surinamese girls more frequently have a Dutch boyfriend, but less often than Surinamese boys have a Dutch girlfriend. More generally, among the Creole population in the Netherlands men more frequently have a Dutch partner than women (10:29).

Peergroups of immigrant boys largely consist of members of the same ethnic group. Often contact with their Dutch peers takes place in groups and it is not unusal that *competition for (Dutch) girls* arises among them. Conflicts are then readily translated in ethnic terms. The fact that immigrant boys have relatively more access to Dutch girls than Dutch boys have to immigrant girls might be connected to this.

In the relations between girls and boys gender, age and ethnicity are — depending on the context — emphasized in varying ways. Ethnicity appears not to be always the only relevant criterion: sometimes gender and/or age can be of more importance. For instance, Surinamese girls may dissociate themselves from Surinamese boys and sometimes it seems as if they are more

positive about Dutch boys: »they are more serious«, they do not try to get hold of one another's girlfriend, etc. This image of Surinamese boys sometimes even resembles the stereotypical images which exist among the Dutch. But usually, in cases like this, girls refer to older boys or men and this may be a reason for them to avoid 'Surinamese' places. Among their peers, however, these contrasts seem to be much smaller. Rasta-girls,[4] for example, find Rasta--boys more peaceful and cool. Also, more traditional patterns of sex-segregation during leisure time change, at least among teenagers (14).

Ethnic consciouness and ethnic ideology

Generally, ethnic consciousness seems to be more pronounced among boys than girls and the elaboration of ethnic ideology is mostly practiced by men. The attitudes of girls towards the Dutch is usually more open and tolerant. This may in part be due to the specific nature of socialization of girls: they show more readiness in adaptation and seem to be more flexible in new circumstances. Partly, however, this difference between boys and girls may be related to two other factors.

In the first place, attitudes among the Dutch seem to be more negative towards immigrant men than women. Of course, typical 'female stereotypes' also exist: Turkish girls, for instance, are frequently faced with stereotypes of Turkish countrywomen and Surinamese girls often are depicted as either noisy and aggressive or exotic. The most negative stereotypes, however, concern men, notably when referring to drugs, aggressiveness and crime.

What has been said about attitudes among the Dutch seems to be equally true for their behaviour towards, and treatment of, immigrants. Surinamese boys experience more racial discrimination than girls. For instance, boys are often denied admittance to discotheques, while girls are rarely refused. In such cases girls often solidarize with boys, although — in different situations — they may also dissociate themselves from the 'annoying' behaviour of those same boys. Among the Turkish, apart from sex differences, differences according to origin may be important: people originating from Turkish cities mention less discrimination than rural residents.

Secondly, unemployment, discrimination at work or in the pursuit of work evokes a stronger reaction in boys. As mentioned above, gender identity for men is associated with wagelabour and earning a living. For men 'failure' in this respect affects their self-esteem more severely. It may lead toward a stronger attachment to the ethnic community or the country of origin. Among some Turkish boys, for example, for whom migration to the Netherlands did not come up to their expectations, there is a revival of ethnic consciousness as a reaction to their position in Dutch society. *Generally, reactive ethnicity is more characteristic of boys than girls.* This seems equally true for Surinamese boys, although there are more options open to them for culturally legitimized 'alternative carreers' in the subcultures of hustlers or Rastas (5). In Rasta ideology, for example, the concept of 'Babylon' is central, this refers to the white, western world which exploited and suppressed the blacks for centuries. But 'Babylon' is equally used to denote negative experiences with the police or wagelabour.

[4] Rastafarianism is a political-religious movement which originates from Jamaica. The main theme in Rasta ideology is the belief that one day blacks will be liberated from the evils of white, western society ('Babylon') and will go back to their roots: Africa. In the seventies these ideas spread among West Indian youth in Great Britain, mainly by reggae--music, and in the eighties among young Surinamese in the Netherlands.

Generation-identity and subcultures

There is also a difference between boys and girls in the way they express generation-identity. Somehow, girls seem to be more traditional or at least closer to their parent culture. This stems largely from girls' orientation to the domestic sphere. Differences between the generations are less emphasized by girls. However, this is a very generalized view, which is actually far more complicated, because it is not simply so that girls are more traditional than boys.

Girls easily come into conflict with their parents, just because they have less freedom and are under stricter control. When they demand more freedom and independence they are also more likely to oppose their parents' view. Girls then are readily inclined to compare their own situation with that of their Dutch contemporaries. In this respect they observe more differences with the Dutch than boys do, which affects their ethnic consciousness. For example, some girls find a 'Turkish' or 'Surinamese' upbringing too oldfashioned and try to change their parents' rules. In some cases, they might ultimately run away. Although this is by no means a typical problem for immigrant girls, they may be under severe pressure because of conflicting rules and values. On the other hand, some girls — aware of differences with the Dutch — more or less share their parents' views. Many Turkish girls of orthodox Moslem origin adjust themselves to their parents' rules and it is not unusual that they prefer their own way of life to the Dutch one. This may partially happen in reaction to negative or disappointing experiences in the host societies (1).

Another departure from this more traditional pattern concerns the participation of girls in youth subcultures. There are many Surinamese girls who spend much of their leisure time outside the domestic sphere, with their contemporaries in the disco — or Rasta — subculture. There are quite a number of girls among the disco-youth, while they are less present among the Rastas. The disco-peergroup is more mixed with respect to gender and ethnic origin. Shared interests in disco-music, dancing style, clothes, etc. among Dutch and Surinamese youth contributes to the increase of inter-ethnic relations. In their parents' view they are 'Hollandised' and, conversely, they regard the criticisms of older Surinamese people on Surinamese youth as oldfashioned. The Rastas use — more than the disco's do — their ethnic culture as a resource in the development of a style of their own. But they provoke criticism from the older generation as well, because Rasta is considered not to be very Surinamese-like. The *Rasta-subculture expresses both generation- and ethnic identity.*

Girls in youth subculture are less visible, which has to do with the dominance of boys as well as with the smaller number of girls. In male-defined youth subcultures girls lack room of their own and for this reason girls are frequently seen as marginal. But the question arises whether girls are really marginal or whether their position is merely different. Girls play a minor part in male subcultures, but they develop alternative strategies and activities from which boys (and adults) are excluded (cf. 9; 8). Surinamese girls, both disco's and Rastas, meet together in each other's home or try to find a place or activities of their own in community- or youth-centres. Another example of girls' activities is what is sometimes called the 'culture of the bedroom': girls come together in the bedroom of one of the girls. Here they listen to music, dance, talk about popstars and boys, smoke cigarettes, experiment with make-up, etc. Notably for the more modern Turkish girls these meetings at the parental home are important as a way to spend leisure time among girls.

These girls, most of whom still attend school, resemble their Dutch contemporaries in appearance. School and the prevailing youth culture there affects their behaviour and this may be a reason for conflict with their parents. These girls themselves oppose the notion that being 'modern' always means 'westernized'.

Conclusion

Gender appears to be an important factor in determining the degree of intra- and inter-ethnic relations. In a sense, ethnic bonds are stronger among girls than among boys, that is girls are more involved in the ethnic community, especially through the family. Still, girls seem to have a more open attitude towards Dutch people than boys, which may be related to the more negative attitudes and behaviour of the Dutch towards immigrant males. Reactive ethnicity, i. e. an increase of ethnic consciousness in response to negative experiences in the host society, is more characteristic of boys than girls.

However, this general picture is actually far more complicated, because gender is by no means the only factor which influences ethnicity. Especially the socio-economic position in the host society has a marked influence, together with the attitude and behaviour of the Dutch. This largely explains the differentiation in ethnicity which exists among girls. As we have seen, it makes a difference whether people originate from cities or countryside and whether someone attends school, has a job or is unemployed.

Furthermore, it appears that gender, as a factor in determining ethnicity, is not to be isolated from age or generation differences. Actually, ethnic identity is only one aspect of an individual's social identity, apart from — among others — gender- and generation-identity. It depends on the context people may emphasize: ethnicity, gender or age.

In certain situations gender may be of more importance than ethnicity. Sometimes it is an important criterion for inter-ethnic relations among girls and frequently leisure activities are sex-linked. Often ethnicity and gender are emphasized together, which is evident from the existence of ethnic women's organisations or girls' acitivities.

Sometimes age or generation differences may be more relevant than ethnic differences. Much of the literature on immigrant youth refers to generation or identity conflicts. These are said to stem from their position 'between two cultures'. However, it appears inappropriate to relate such conflicts exclusively to differences in culture or ethnicity, because they are also largely related to gender and age (cf. 18). Furthermore, the development of subcultures shows that immigrant youths are capable of creating their own life-style, which draws upon elements of the parent culture and cultural developments among their Dutch contemporaries. This is most clearly evident among the Surinamese disco- and Rasta-girls, but also among the modern, school-attending Turkish girls.

This expression of generation-identity, however, does not necessarily mean a decline in ethnic consciousness. Frequently, a longer residence in the host society and a certain degree of westernizing coincide with an increase of ethnic consiousness. Cultural factors seem to be of less importance than daily experiences, which are associated with their class position, gender and age. A one-sided emphasis on culture and cultural differences neglects the subjective experience and evaluation of one's own position as a member of an ethnic group, which may be different for parents and children and for boys and girls.

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DJEVOJKE-DOSELJENICE: ETNIČNOST I SPOL

SAŽETAK

U središtu interesa su razlike muško-žensko u odnosu prema procesu etničnosti kod djevojaka-doseljenica. Kao primjeri koriste se dva slučaja: turske i surinamske djevojke u Nizozemskoj. Smatra se da se etničnost ili etnički identitet sastoji iz dva aspekta: etničke kohezije i etničke svijesti. Čini se da su ti aspekti drukčiji za mladiće i djevojke. Nadalje, iznosi se argument da je etnički identitet tek jedan u velikom rasponu društvenih identiteta i da — ovisno o kontekstu — spol i generacijski identitet mogu imati jednaku važnost. Druge varijable povezane sa kulturom, klasom i migracijskim procesom objašnjavaju razlike između djevojaka iste ili različitih etničkih grupa, koje se također mogu ustanoviti.