

MASTER DE SPÉCIALISATION EN ÉTUDES DE GENRE

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« What makes us so different ? »

**An essay on the use of a 'lived bodily experience' approach to explore the
formation of embodied gender identities among adolescents**

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Table of Contents

2. INTERNSHIP REPORT	5
2.1 THE COLLECTIF MIXITÉ	5
2.2. MY PARTICIPATION IN THE PROJECT	6
2.3. CRITICAL REFLECTION.....	11
2. 4. AUTO-EVALUATION	14
2. THEORETICAL ANALYSIS.....	16
3.1. INTRODUCTION	16
3.2. GENDER IDENTITIES IN ANTHROPOLOGY.....	16
3.3. IDENTIFICATION AND SUBJECTIFICATION IN POST-STRUCTURALISM	19
3.4. UNDERSTANDINGS OF THE BODY AND FEMINIST CRITIQUES OF THE CARTESIAN PARADIGM IN SOCIAL SCIENCES	22
3.5. EMBODIED IDENTITIES AND ADOLESCENCE	24
3.6. THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE LIVED BODY EXPERIENCE	25
3.7. POTENTIAL FOR CHANGE	31
3.8. CONCLUSION.....	32
4. BIBLIOGRAPHY:	34
5. APPENDIX:.....	37
5.1. PROS AND CONS	37
5.2. THE <i>COLLECTIF MIXITÉ</i> 'S MISSIONS:.....	37
BACK COVER:	39

2. Internship report

2.1 The Collectif Mixité

The project congregates nine different youth houses all based in and around the city of Liège (Belgium). A Youth House (*Maison des Jeunes*) is a community-based organization aiming to offer young people a living environment, complementary to their school and family. Its role is to promote autonomy and responsibility by working on members' personal and social skills in order to facilitate their transition into adulthood by helping them become active and critical citizens. More precisely, the Youth House offers a range of differing activities, organised by and for young people, which are supervised by a team of professional animators.

The *Collectif Mixité*'s creation in 2008, arose from the initiative of a few girls who were complaining about their limited access to youth houses. Despite the fact that Youth Houses are open to everyone between 12 and 26 without discrimination, males largely composed the general contingent. Many activities organized by the Youth House often revolved around a street culture, which was commonly considered as rather manly, such as graffiti, breakdance, rap, football and so on. As a result, many parents were quite reluctant to the idea of letting their daughters go and hang with young men, and as a result, very few girls were active in the Youth Houses.

The project started by gathering all the girls present in the Youth Houses and arranging for them to invite female friends, organizing what they started to call the 'landings' (*débarquements*), in reference to the military term. The way a landing works is the following: One particular Youth House is chosen and a pancake-making activity is offered, aiming at luring in boys. Once, the Youth House is full of young boys eating pancakes and going about their usual activities, the group of girls then 'land' in the Youth House and make their presence known as a group. 'Landings' were organized in every Youth House and the first edition of the *Collectif Mixité* was hence formed.

Those girls, coming from the nine different Youth Houses in and around Liege started gathering to talk about girls' place in Youth Houses and furthermore in society. Several projects were put together to denounce and sensitize a broader public in regard to issues affecting women. As an example, the *Barbarie* project, which later became an organization of its own, started their activities by transforming Barbie dolls into artistic installations denouncing physical and moral violence against women. The '100% Young Festival' (*100% Jeunes Festival*), to which we will come back later, serves every year as a *vitrine* (showcase), offering an opportunity for Youth Organizations to set-up a booth presenting their projects,

as well as some time on stage for artistic performances. Spanning 10 years now, the collective has hence presented a large variety of projects and performances addressing women's issues.

From the beginning of this year (2018) the *Collectif Mixité* has been granted subsidies from the Wallonian Federation. Two organizers were officially hired for the project, with its missions being precisely defined. Moreover, for the two last editions (2017, 2018), boys have also joined the *Collectif Mixité*. Boy's inclusion in the project was debated at a preparation session (*mise au vert*) during which the goals and means of the project were re-discussed with a professional from a feminist organization called *Crible*. This session will also be elaborated on later.

2.2. My participation in the project

As part of my internship, I took part in the *mise au vert*, two preparation meetings and the eastern workshop. My supervisor currently has a part time job at the *Collectif Mixité* and second contract at one of the Youth Houses. Hence, the first part of my internship provided me with the opportunity to assist in the preparation process, while the second part allowed me to see the practical realization of the first step with young people as its participants.

2.2.1. *Mise au Vert*

These types of intensive reflexional sessions take place every three years and are usually headed by an outsider of the organization. It aims to clarify the goals set for the project and explicit the means by which to achieve those goals. For the last two years these sessions have been organized by the same person from the feminist association *Crible*. '*Crible asbl*' is a non-for-profit organization that coordinates activities around gender issues in secondary schools. Additionally, the association offers training programs for any one above 16 who may be working with kids or young people to instruct them on gender issue.

This specific session took place during three days. All the animators and coordinators involved in the project were present.

Firstly, after introducing ourselves and briefly discussing our different involvement with Youth Houses, we focused on the definition of the *Collectif Mixité*. We were first put into small groups and instructed to write down our definition, following that we were separated into two big groups and had to try to find a definition in common consensus, eventually the two definitions from each group were then also put in common to come up with the official definition (destined for the website, the flyers and so on). We then played games where we

had to come up with a radio announcement to attract new participants or slogans to shout out at a protest. Overall, the goal was for everyone to come to terms with what the *Collectif Mixité* is about in a precise and extended manner.

As mentioned above, this year (2018) marks the first time the *Collectif Mixité* has been subsidized by the Wallonian Federation (lasting four years). The organization has hence clearly defined missions forming guidelines to follow. We read those missions and wrote each down on a different poster, then proceeding to go and write down ideas on each poster.

We debated the integration of boys in the *Collectif Mixité*. The reason for this debate was that amongst the 9 Youth Houses participating in the *Collectif Mixité*, there is a big variety of relations between girls and boys. In some Youth Houses it is far from being a problem, activities attract both boys and girls and they frequent together as a group regardless. In the others, the relation is more complicated, boys and girls barely interact and boys' presence in the *Collectif Mixité* can prevent some girls' access, due to parental authority. Hence, the debate was organized as such: we were separated in two groups, one of 'pros' and one of 'cons' and we given 20 minutes to come up with arguments and write them down on post-it notes. Re-assembling after 20 minutes one team after the other started presenting their arguments, sticking one-by-one up on a big poster.

The next activity was preparing a four years plan of activities and objectives. First, undertaking this in small groups and later all together, but based off what those small groups had prepared. The program they came up with gradually includes the boys into the program. The two first years, girls and boys would both go on a separate weekend camp. As of the third year they would commence going on the weekend away together. This allowed boys and girls to both be sensitized to the issues before working together. Planned activities included a festival, the creation of a short movie and a trip in a foreign country.

At the end of each day, the animator was teaching us about gender and sexism. As an anecdote, she deconstructed sexist, though popular terms, such as 'MILF' or 'friendzone', she made us watch videos of documentaries, youtubers or social experiments denouncing sexism and made us play games such as the 'privilege game', which is designed to make male participants realize a few privileges they might have over female participants.

2.2.2. Preparation meetings

Consisting of two meetings that both took place in the Youth House of Sclessin during two hours at lunch. All the animators were present as well as my supervisor, who, as mentioned above, is the *Collectif Mixité*'s coordinator.

During the first meeting, ideas were discussed on how to organize the Easter camp. Information regarding the location, the schedules and so on was provided and proposals for several workshops arose, being: theater, dance, writing, photography, textiles printing and arts & crafts. It was decided that for the next meeting, every Youth House should have a brainstorming session with their young members around the question '*How is the relationship between girls and boys at my Youth House?*'. The answers would then help to decide on the theme for the camp or at least a guideline on which topics to work on.

Furthermore, a comedian came to present his play which was proposed as an optional activity for the members of the *Collectif Mixité*. Her play, 'Don't be a Primal Human', (*Ne sois pas un Humain Primaire*) aims at tackling the broad issue of sexism through a variety of stand points and topics.

On the second meeting, every Youth House brought with them the results of their respective brainstorming sessions, in what they call an 'emergence fresco'¹. My supervisor laid all the frescos down on the floor and each animator read out aloud their content. We then discussed the day-to-day program and everyone's respective roles.

2.2.3. The Collectif Mixité in practice

The project held place in a hostel between 9:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on the first week of holidays during Easter. Each day would start and end with a general gathering. In the mornings we would play a few energizing games with the kids and explain them the program of the day. Right before the end of the day we would gather the kids back together again to get feedback on their day. The 30 participants were aged between 10 and 18, plus one girl aged 22. It consisted of 13 boys and 17 girls.

The final project of the four days is to prepare a show and a booth for the 100% Young Festival. The one-day festival is held in a big space in the center of Liège. It promotes young talents and youth citizen participation. There are three different stages and approximately 8 booths. Shows range from dance, theater or singing, to art performances and fashion shows. Booths are held by different youth organizations presenting their projects and often proposing a small activity. The idea this year was, firstly, to put together dance, theater and writing to create a show that was to be presented on stage. Secondly, the goal was to create decorations and plan an activity for the booth. Hence the dance, theater and writing

¹ An 'emergence fresco' is a pedagogical tool designed to make representations emerge. It consists of a question or a theme written down on a poster where all the participants are asked to write what it makes them think of.

workshops were destined to the stage while the photography, textile printing and arts and crafts were intended to the booth.

On the first day, after having played a few names and ice-breaking games, we separated them by age into focus groups and asked them to think of positive and negative aspects of their relations with the other gender in their Youth Houses. Afterwards we combined all the groups' answers and decided that the main focus of the week should be put on gender stereotypes. We then got them to choose the workshop they wanted to participate to for the rest of the week. After lunch break, the different workshops went to their respective rooms and started their activities.

The second day started as well with energizers and a few words on the program of the day, after which the participants went straight to their workshops to continue with their projects. At 2 p.m. a local radio came to interview some of the kids, my supervisor and myself, as I was responsible for that radio recording. My role was to be the point of contact with the head of the show, and also explain to the kids what was happening and who wanted to participate. I had to plan ahead what was going to be said, in what order and by whom. The whole session lasted for a bit more than an hour and a half and afterwards the kids went back to their workshops.

The third and fourth day, after the usual energizers and daily program announcement, the different 'stage workshops' were finishing and rehearsing their parts in the morning, while the afternoon was dedicated to putting it all together. On the last hour of the very last day all the workshops were invited to see the final show. After a final evaluation with the participants, the camp was over.

Each day, after the evaluation with the participants, the animators and coordinators would gather for a short period to evaluate the day as a whole and make sure we were in tune for the next one. On the very last day the discussion at the evaluation meeting mentioned broader issues such as the integration of boys, the depths of the critical reflection with the kids or the need for pre-sensitization on gender issues before access to the program.

Content of the workshops

'STAGE WORKSHOPS':

Dance: Consisting of three different choreographies symbolically tackling issues of sexism. The first one represented street harassment and more precisely the feelings triggered by being watched by a group of strangers. The second choreography enacted

gender stereotypes and the last one represented how '[essentially] we are all the same but, [socially] we are trapped in different roles' (Cassey, dance animator; words added by me).

Writing: A rap was written as a dialogue between a boy and a girl, who were friends. It discussed a few stereotypes, in their words, and how those stereotypes do not match their realities. The text was a story of friendship and insists on being one later in the text, when they start growing older.

Theater: Involving four short scenes designed to introduce the dances and the final song.

The first scene featured three boys hanging out while a girl walked past them in a dress. The boys commented on her look and whistle at her. The girl then wears a big jumper on top of her dress and walks past them again, triggering their reactions again, although less positive this time. She then puts on a big track suit over the bottom of her dress and walks past the boys for the third time, head down, and the boys react a third time but this time insulting her.

The second scene depicts a situation in a Youth House. The girls are sitting and talking and the boys are playing table football. The girls start talking about their new shoes and hairstyle and the boys start a fight over one of them having cheated.

The third scene is the exact opposite of the second one. The boys are chatting about their new shoes and hairstyle while the girls start a fight over the table football.

The last scene shows a boy and a girl playing together when a third person comes in and starts laughing and telling them they are obviously in love since a boy and a girl being together can only be so in a romantic manner. While that person is laughing and blabbering away, a fourth person walks in and starts mocking that conception according to which boys and girls can only have romantic relations. A fifth person joins and starts quoting more stereotypes, pointing out the absurdity. The mocker eventually leaves the stage, ridiculed.

BOOTH WORKSHOPS:

Photography: Photos (numerical and polaroid) of all the different workshops and selections of the best ones were chosen to make a slideshow, presenting the different activities of the *Collectif Mixité*. Posters were created with all the polaroids to decorate the booth. They also interviewed and recorded other participants.

Arts and crafts: Comprising macramé decorations for the booth and speech bubbles destined for a face-in-hole poster, denouncing gender stereotypes. For example: '*I'm not an object*' or '*I'm not a savage*'. They also drew a crocodile in a suit and a turkey in a dress, on high heels with a tiny chihuahua on a leash as a representation of gender stereotypes.

Textile printing: Involving 30 Acrylic printed tee shirts with the *Collectif Mixité* logo for people to wear on stage and at the booths for the festival. 200 tote bags with the logo spray painted on with a stencil on one side were made. They were offered at the booths as an activity where people can decorate the other side of the bag with markers writing something about gender stereotypes.

2.3. Critical reflection

The main critique regarding the execution of the *Collectif Mixité*, is the discrepancies I observed between theory and practice. My internship started with the '*mise au vert*' which was essentially theoretical. Even though the atmosphere was relaxed and we would play games, we were dealing with significant theoretical content. Such as, the definition and the description of the 'missions', secondly feminist theories and sensitization to several forms of sexism and finally the debate about the inclusion of boys in the project.

The definition and missions of the *Collectif Mixité* have to do with the organizational aspect of it. Who are we? What are we doing? How are we doing it? What do we want to achieve? To me those are essential questions a team has to ask itself to work and progress together. As an academic, words matter to me, furthermore, definitions are inevitable and it is important that they are clear. Nevertheless, for many animators and coordinators participating in the exercise, it was merely a formality. At the evaluation, at the end of the day, several of them expressed their boredom and lack of motivation during the exercise.

One coordinator illustrated that feeling as she commented during the exercise of putting the two definitions in common. We were discussing whether to leave what had been written on our poster; 'the *Collectif Mixité* is helping girls to find their place alongside boys in Youth Houses, in society and in their lives'; or to change it to something along the lines of; 'the *Collectif Mixité* is working on gender relationships in Youth Houses and in society'; As we were debating about those two sentences, the coordinator said: "*Oh it's fine! It will do! Come on, let's get this done with!*"², which resulted in us leaving the sentence as it was. To me, the problem of the first formulation is that it focuses only on girls, leaving boys out of the equation. Furthermore, it might influence a conception according to which girls are essentialized as 'victims' or 'dominated' and boys as 'problematic' or 'dominating', hence masking more complex systems of gender relations.

The same problem appeared in the missions, which were focusing on 'girls' place in society'. I personally find such an approach limited in the sense that, once again, it essentializes girls as 'prey', who need protection and boys as 'predators', from which we

² Extracted from my field notes on the 3rd January 2018.

have to protect girls. Furthermore, it fails to account for agency, exceptions, negotiations and social structures, patriarchy, socio-cultural and economical contexts.

This leads us to the second point: gender and feminist theories and forms of sexism. Through many comments I noted that I realized firstly, how many animators are quite uninformed regarding the above issues. Secondly, that opinions and conceptions are sometimes in tension.

For example, as we were watching short videos about street harassment and cat calling, one of the coordinators repeated several times: "*Really? Is it really like that girls? It's not like that here, is it?*"³. Another example arose from a focus group where we had to think of activities around gender and sexism during the Easter camp. One animator said: "*We should get the boys to wear high heels, so they would understand what it feels like.*" To what another animator answered: "*No, you should stop to wear high heels. They are also a product of patriarchy. Why would you have to suffer to [she mimicked quotation marks in the air] 'be pretty'? To me it's just another subjugation to male gaze and it's sexist.*"⁴

These two examples show that the team is not on the same page concerning sexism and gender theories, which to me, requires discussions and clarifications. My point here is certainly not that everyone should agree and think the same, but rather to highlight the lack of theoretical background and unity in the team. Indeed, the *Collectif Mixité* is uniting people who are not working together on a daily basis. Some of them take part in the project because they have personal interest in gender relations and sexism while others are part of it because they thought the project might be nice and interesting. In my opinion, this is exactly why it would be necessary to have a basic formation on gender and feminist theories for the animators, providing them with tools to deconstruct stereotypes, as an example. The women from 'Crible' organizing the '*mise au vert*' had actually started to do so, educating their team in some theoretical terms, but unfortunately it was greatly restricted by time. What I believe might be problematic here is that the team itself might participate in the reproduction of the very stereotypes they are trying to break, I will come back to this and develop it in the 'theoretical analysis section' below.

The debate about the inclusion of boys' in the project showed the same issues. For example, an argument stating that the animators would have to 'watch the dorms at night'⁵ illustrates a heteronormative⁶ conception of gender relations, which will thus potentially be reproduced through the team's discourses and practices (see section below: 'theoretical analysis'). Furthermore, another range of arguments demonstrate essentialist conceptions of boyhood and girlhood. Unfortunately, the size of this essay does not allow me to further elaborate on this point.

Finally, the practical application was the part that struck me as the most lacking in theoretical background, which was deeply necessary to support the discussions and the activities undertaken with the kids. The organization of the camp was based on a combination of what the kids expressed in their Youth Houses and on the camp, regarding their experiences of gender relations and the different workshops proposed with a final goal of creating a performance and a booth for the festival.

It seemed to me that the workshops proposed were very standard and everyone knew what they had to do. At the preparation meeting, the planning of the schedule and the repartition of the different workshops took less than 30 minutes to be completed. We filled the gaps with ice-breaking and energizer games and age-based focus groups on the first day to collect their experiences.

We collected the results of the focus groups and put them in association. In the arts and crafts workshop, it commenced by the girls writing down the 'pros' of being a girl, the same was done for the boys. After, they had to 'answer' to what the other group had written by writing the 'cons' of being a girl (for the girls) and vice-versa for the boys. Again, there was not much discussion about what had been written for both of the exercises. The animators progressed to read out loud what the kids had written, explaining briefly what stereotypes are and announced that we would be working on them for the rest of the week. Ultimately, for the rest of the week, the kids were separated into different workshops, as a result the deconstruction of the gender stereotypes depended on the animator responsible for that specific workshop. As I mentioned above, this could be problematic, as their opinions are not necessarily aligned, resulting in occasionally rather diverse conceptions of gender. I personally thought that the kids were not provided adequate tools to theoretically deconstruct stereotypes, but rather that the stereotypes were merely classified as 'just a stereotype' and 'not being true'⁷. Additionally, I thought that as a result of the age gap between some participants, new stereotypes came to be exposed (from older participants or from animators) not relating to their personal realities and potentially inducing unconscious inculcation of these stereotypes. I will also elaborate on this point in the analytical section.

Finally, the inclusion of the boys did not happen gradually like originally planned during the *mise au vert*, which led to a number of problems. Unfortunately, here again, the size of this essay forces me to make choices and I have decided not to further elaborate on this point. Nevertheless, during the short evaluation time the organizing team allotted at the end of the camp, most animators made similar critiques. Globally, the critiques revolved around the boys' inclusion 'not being prepared enough', which had resulted in some boys 'not even knowing what they [were] doing [t]here'. Consequently, the team agreed on the

necessity to 'take more time for upstream preparation with the boys who want to participate'⁸.

To finish the critical reflection on a more positive note, I want to highlight the fact that the *Collectif Mixité* project started from scratch 10 years ago, with the main concern being to facilitate access to Youth Houses for girls. Now that the problematic in itself is changing and that the project aims to work on gender relations and sexism in broader perspectives, *Collectif Mixité* is going through a time of transition and transformation. The operational mode of the project has always been demand-based in order to answer to problematics expressed by young people themselves, as well as letting them take a pro-active role in the realization. The team is very attached to evolve and learn from their mistakes as demonstrated through the mandatory evaluation sessions, the tri-annual '*mise au vert*' and my supervisor's instructions to 'analyze everything' and inform them of 'what is going wrong'⁹.

2. 4. Auto-evaluation

Personally, I have substantial past experience in animation. I have been part of numerous camps as a participant and as an animator. I therefore felt really competent during the camp with the kids. I animated the morning games twice and provided a helping hand in the theater workshop and also in the textiles, printing and arts and crafts workshops. My low voice and extraverted presence have always served my animation skills right. In addition to that, I also felt really comfortable with the team. Starting my internship with three full days of '*mise au vert*' allowed me to spend formal and informal time with the team and understand in a rather complete fashion how the team and the organization was functioning. Furthermore, my educational background in gender theories made me one of the most qualified elements of the group regarding gender and feminist theories. For all these reasons, I felt entitled to participate thoroughly during preparation and evaluation meetings.

Though, I was not always sure what my position during this internship should be. On the paper, it was an observation internship and having an anthropological educational background, I consider the best method for me is to collect data to work with as participative observation. Thus, I did not want to influence the process too much, but on the other I wanted to help and participate with the preparation. I was hence sometimes in tension regarding which side to be on.

In reflection, I would describe my participation as mostly effective rather than analytical or intellectual. For the debate on the inclusion of boys in the project, I mobilized various

feminist theories and concepts such as 'heteronormativity' or 'benevolent sexism' and deconstructed two arguments, which were circulating, as they were based on essentialist visions of boys and girls. Apart from that, I decided to take a rather soft position in terms of gender theories, opposed to an active one, in regards to the organization and the animation. This way, I felt right concerning my participation and I could observe without excessively impacting the content of my observations.

Finally, on a more personal level, this internship has enabled me to imagine a concrete application of my education in gender theories by giving me a perspective from a day to day, on the field point of view, which has been a rare opportunity during my academical path.

2. Theoretical analysis

3.1. Introduction

How do conceptions of gender govern³ identities and experiences? For the purpose of this essay the question concerns more specifically adolescents⁴, whose bodies are transforming and marking their entry into an age category but moreover, establishing their belonging to a gender category (Diasio, 2015: 600) and how one can account for the ways in which gender identities shape one's social relations and perceptions of the world?

Following a presentation of three important contributions to the understanding of social sexual differentiation and gender identities in social sciences (anthropology/philosophy), I will introduce the shift in paradigms advocated by poststructuralist scholars when (re)thinking the self, the body and the social world. This will be done by drawing on examples from my fieldwork in the *Collectif Mixité* and theories of embodiment, identification and subjectification, to argue that an approach through the 'lived bodily experience' has an undoubted potential to be used when exploring the formation of gender identities among adolescents.

3.2. Gender identities in anthropology

Anthropologists have always been interested in the ways in which characteristics of the human life are socially constructed. What we now know under the concept of 'gender' has been conceptualized by anthropologists way before the realm of medicine coined the term in 1955 (Handman, 2015: 1). Although the term 'gender' was not directly employed many authors it has operated a distinction between the 'anatomical sex' and the 'social sex', implying the socially constructed nature of the latter. The American anthropologist Margaret Mead (1935) made comparisons of 'sex temperaments' in three different Melanesian societies as she revealed a classic example for the social construction of 'gender relations' (or 'sex relations' as she would have phrased it at the time).

More recently, the French structuralist anthropologist Françoise Héritier (1996), while drawing on her fieldwork with the Samo (on land that is now the country of

³ Government is here used in the Foucauldian sense of the term, meaning the ways by which conducts might be directed, in other words, governance structures the possible field of action (Foucault, 1994: 341).

⁴ The term adolescence refers here to a biological change, surrounding the period of entering into puberty. As opposed to terms such as youth, late childhood or teenager which refer to age categories that are defined by the social, cultural, political and institutional context, and is therefore quite ambiguous as a conceptual category.

Burkina Faso), has deducted that a social division based on sex is put in practice everywhere and has been since the beginning of time (p.21). She argues that the intellectual comprehension of sexual differences which is apparent on bodies and the differentiated roles at play in sexual reproduction, have been concomitant to the very expression of all thoughts (p.16). Thus, demonstrating how all dual categories (hot/cold, dry/wet etc...) have been built on that identical/different model. Contrastingly, feminist critiques of the dualistic paradigm in social sciences, on which I will elaborate below as I introduce poststructuralist theories of embodiment, attribute the heritage of these dichotomies to the French philosopher and meta-physicist René Descartes. Nevertheless, both Françoise Héritier and feminist scholars have shown, as we will see later, that such dichotomies are far from neutral, but rather, imply a hierarchical order.

The ongoing debate about the supposed nature of gender (whether by essence or socially constructed) and its role in individual perceptions and modes of existence, attest to the everlasting interest and need of humans to 'know who they are'. This strongly relates to the anecdotal origins of the renowned book "The second sex" (1949) written by the French author and philosopher Simone de Beauvoir. Originally intending to embark on writing a biography, which would reflect on her life and who she had become, her partner, the French philosopher and well-known figure of essentialism⁵ Jean-Paul Sartre, posed the question of what did being a woman signify to her. At first response Beauvoir answered that it had made no difference, but Sartre responded that it would be interesting to take a better look at it since she had not been brought up the same as a boy and thus, leading her to begin exploring this unravelling ball of wool and eventually uncovering an epiphany (de Beauvoir, 1963: 135-136).

The second tome of Beauvoir's book, titled "the lived experience" (1949), starts with her most famous quote: "*one is not born a woman, one becomes a woman*" (p.13). Based on her own social context (French upper-class of the time), she retraces every stage of the human life cycle, to demonstrate through a tremendous amount of observations and analysis, how the supposedly 'natural' feminine and masculine 'attributes' are constructed through socialization. Throughout the book, she links the biological aspects of sexual differences to their social aspects. Further highlighted in the chapter on sexual initiation (p.145-190), she demonstrates how the physical characteristic of having a penis and the necessity of male orgasm for procreation translates into a social and moral valorisation of male sexual drives. Whether ingrained in vocabulary (e.g. speaking of a man's conquests), in social practices (e.g. men taking the role of the initiator in courtship relations) or in psychological

⁵ Essentialism is a literary and philosophical school of thought which considers that it is existence that shapes individuals, rejecting the idea of an essence preceding one's existence.

conceptions (e.g. men considered predatory, active, in force), she demonstrates how material aspects of the body have tremendous implications on the social regulations of the sexes. These social regulations, in return, shape the individual's lived experience, hence rendering socially incorporated dispositions as 'natural' and ultimately reproducing the sexual order throughout and despite the various historical evolutions⁶.

Until only recently, there has been a significant lack of ethnographies that articulate discourses and lived experiences of gender identities among adolescents (Coffey, upcoming). The topic, which had been left to developmental psychologists and education specialists, is now being reinvested in and revisited by poststructuralist scholars, not only in anthropology (Nayak & Kehily, 1996) but also in sociology (Budgeon, 2003), philosophy (Butler, 1993), gender (Coleman, 2008), education- (Davies, 1994) and youth studies (Coffey, 2012) or psychology (Malson, 2003).

The term 'poststructuralism' refers to the philosophical school of thought which evolved in the 60s and 70s as a reaction to structuralism spreading throughout other disciplines such as sociology and anthropology⁷. One major theme of poststructuralism is the idea that the instability in human sciences materializes as a result of the complexity of humans themselves. Aspiring to account for the complexities connecting humans and social life, various concepts and theories inspired by sociopsychology, Deleuzian philosophy and new-materialism are employed and mobilized to (re)think the complex interlacing between the living, and the social, regarding the processes associated with the embodying of gender identities (mostly) among Westernized European, American and Oceanian semi-urban or urban adolescents.

In the following sections, once a theoretical frame for poststructuralist theories of identity and subjectification is conveyed, I will then proceed to return to the feminist critiques of the Cartesian dualistic paradigm within social sciences as the concept of embodiment will be introduced and more precisely the conceptualizations of the body and the self. Following this an overview of the benefits and possibilities to be gained from adopting an approach that utilises the perspective of the 'lived body experience' (Coffey &

⁶ Pierre Bourdieu himself, almost 50 years later (1998) wrote a book called "The Masculine Domination" which accounts for the incorporation of a sexual habitus. Based on an ethnography of the Kabyle society in Algeria, he shows founding dichotomies of the social world (inside/outside, strong/weak etc.) and their association with the primary dichotomy of the social world; the feminine and the masculine (cf. H  ritier 1996; Bordo, 1993). After having described the symbolical associations of such dichotomies and their implications in the social life of the Kabyle men and women, the second part of the book tries to account for the incorporation of a feminine and a masculine habitus in western and particularly French society(ies).

⁷ Interestingly the school of thought, though it originated from the 'French Theory' in which deconstruction is a central notion with authors such as Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Lacan, Simone de Beauvoir and Julia Kristeva, spread its influence mostly in the Anglo-Saxon academical world and did not develop as significantly in the French speaking academical scene (Angemuller, 2015 :20-25).

Watson, 2014: 2) will be examined in order to further explore the formation of *gendered embodied identities* during adolescence. This will be based on the fieldwork constituted in my participation in the *Collectif Mixité's* activities.

3.3. Identification and subjectification in post-structuralism

According to the American philosopher and gender theorist Judith Butler (1993), the ego emerges from processes of personal and social identification (p.13). Consequently, in order to form an ego or to 'become someone'; the primary form of identification is sexually divided, and hence that what is qualified as 'human' is delimited and sustained by fields of discourse and power, produced partly by the reiteration of attributions and interpellations (p.8). For example, when a newborn is brought into existing kinship and language structures, the 'interpellation of gender' makes the 'it' become a 'he' or a 'she'. This will be reiterated at various intervals of time by various authorities so that, as a result, the naturalized effects are reinforced through discourse. "*The naming is at once, [the] setting of a boundary, and also the repeated inclusion of a norm* (p.7)". The difficulties that lie here can be speaking about a person who does not want to be associated with the feminine or the masculine, which in turn reveals how the limits of language impact on the limits of our mental conceptions.

The Australian education researcher Bronwyn Davies (2006) draws on Butler's work to further investigate processes of subjectification (on which I will come back to in the following section) in school environments in Westernized Australia. She describes how subject formation depends on external forces (p.426). Ergo, arguing that there is no existence prior to these acts of formation (cf. existentialism) and progressing to convey that the impossibility to construct an identity outside these conditions reiterates these very conditions in becoming a subject (p.426). To put it bluntly, a binary vision of sex and gender produces binary bodies which cannot be conceived outside this duality and thus ultimately reproduce it. At this point it is important to stress that this conception does not dismiss individuals' agency, but rather frames and sustains it. This normative frame is noticeable when, for instance, individuals or groups willing to subvert regulatory practices can only do so by (re)appropriating structures of meaning already available (p.435). "*The available meaning structures are deeply inscribed in our bodies, in our emotions and in desire* (Davies, 2006: 435)".

This became particularly notable while conducting my field observation, as I was working with young people on gender stereotypes with an end goal to break these prevalent gender stereotypes. Below are a number of quotes that I recorded in the theatre

workshop while on my field work, the participants and animators partook in a discussion on how to denounce or subvert stereotypes and a further brainstorming session for creating a short skit around that topic. It consisted of two animators (Aymerick, 23 years old and Valeria, 32 years old) and a total of 6 kids (Mosi & Ayad, 11 years old, Kelly, Donald & Lisa, 15 years old & Melek, 22 years old).

The question that investigated the exchange came from Valeria who said:

"Ok guys, we need to do something about stereotypes, all right. For example, that girls love make-up and boys love cars, you see? Ok, so who has an idea?"

"We could show girls playing football and guys dancing" (Melek)

"What about we do a scene where it is a boy walking down the street and some girls look at him and whistle at him [...]." (Aymerick)

"We can do that there is a big fight in the [school] yard and someone is really strong [...] and has a hoodie on so we can't see the hair [...] and then, in the end, she takes down the hoodie and we can see that it was a girl and she is stronger than the boys." (Mosi)

(Field notes, 05/04/18, my translation)

These selected examples show the difficulties in conceiving 'what boys can or cannot do' or 'what girls can or cannot do' outside their normative frames. All the ideas given to override stereotypes were 'necessarily presupposing and reinvoking them' (Davies, 2006: 428). Moreover, by constantly resorting to 'boy/girl' categories, these categories become increasingly fixed and furthermore, discursively associated with standardized practices.

To further demonstrate my point, Foucault's (1980) conceptualization of identity as enacted is rather significant. According to the French philosopher, internalized definitions and norms that pre-exist one's existence surround and engulf individuals who are in turn established in discourse, practices and/or ideas (p.34). Drawing on those developments, Butler (1999) theorized identity as a performative act, located in 'doing' rather than in 'being' (p. 95). This is well illustrated by the above quotes, as many of them relate to 'things people do' (sports, get in a fight, whistle at someone in the street) showing that the general conception of (though stereotypical) gender identities is rooted in the 'doing'. Moreover, other propositions ('wearing make-up', 'having [supposedly long] hair' and 'being strong'), after closer examination, relate to body management, which is thus equally located in the 'doing'.

Additionally, within the poststructuralist paradigm, 'will' and 'agency' are conceived as being shaped, to some extent, by discourses and the available subject positions within them. Resulting in identity being understood to form itself through the ongoing '*taking up and/or resisting of the various subject positions available within the discourses or organizing set of ideas and practices of society*' (Cahill & Wyn, 2015: 305). Davies (1994) argues that rather than merely being socialized, people go through processes of subjectification, which means that they actively produce the sense of who they are (p.12). Hence, individuals are thought to internalize such desires as to be a certain way and accordingly experience the 'complex conditions of mutual formation' (Davies, 2006: 426). Davies decomposes processes of subjectification into four mechanisms through which she believes we learn who we are; First, the *learning of binary categories* (e.g. male/female, but not exclusively, she actually means by all that which include/exclude); Second, *the participation in discursive practices through which categories acquire meaning* (e.g. what is a man, what is a woman); Third, *the self-positioning into these categories and narratives* (e.g. I am a woman); and fourthly *the developing of a sense of fit and membership* (e.g. I feel like a woman) (p232-238).

Based on these above authors' conceptions of identity formation or subjectification, it appears that the mere enunciation of stereotypes participates in the adolescents' processes of subjectification, who, as shown above, 'produce the sense of who they are' through 'pre-existing available subject positions', irrespective of whether it is through 'taking up' (I get into fights because I am a boy or I am a boy because I get into fights / I do not get into fights because I am a girl or I am a girl because I do not get into fights) or 'resisting to' (It is not because I am a boy that I have to get into fights or I am a boy but I do not get into fights / It is not because I am a girl that I cannot get into fights or I am a girl but I get into fights) these available positions. In more definitive terms, whether accepted or challenged, these normative discursive associations find themselves reiterated. Again, as a result the very existence of a strict boy/girl dichotomy is reaffirmed and those subjects that find themselves outside intelligibility face the constitutive force of 'a language that grants them no intelligible space' (Davies, 2006: 434).

Furthermore, it is compelling to notice that most stereotypes are associated with physicality, body management and what a (gendered) body can do. In turn, Sports (dance & football), being looked at, whistling at someone and fighting are all practices rooted in corporeality, these statements and ideas are further reiterated and expanded upon in the following section. Where instances such as wearing make-up, not being recognized as a girl because one 'can't see her hair' or 'being strong' are all conceptions that refer to gendered management of the body.

3.4. Understandings of the body and feminist critiques of the Cartesian paradigm in social sciences

In Western academic productions of knowledge, the body has been consistently conceptualized as separated from the mind (Bordo, 1993: 5). Hence, in a vast majority of works spanning across anthropology, sociology, history and philosophy, the body is conceived within a conceptual framework that articulates individual agency and social structures, considering that however, there has been little attention given to the materiality aspect of the body⁸. This material dimension of the body is left aside as the social or symbolic analyses take the spotlight. Giddens' (1991) conception of the body as a 'project' (p.7) clearly illustrates this interplay of agency/social structure theorization. His greatly influential work theorizes the body as vested by the 'reflexive self' who monitors and regularizes it, in accordance to broader systems of meaning produced by one's socio-cultural context (p.8). This theory accounts for a rational and choosing self but in turn, fails to conceive the complexity of the 'lived experience' of the body as the 'sensitive and sensual self' (Shilling & Mellor, 1996: 2) eludes a focus on the reflexive and knowledgeable self.

Feminist critiques (Bulter, 1993; Budgeon, 2003; Coleman; 2008) of Giddens and other similar models of understanding of the body have claimed for the necessity to go beyond such dual conceptions. The 'reflexive self' which supervises the body as a 'project' implies not only a binary body/mind vision but furthermore, a domination of the mind over the body (Budgeon, 2003: 37). The word 'domination' here is not chosen lightly. Indeed, feminist works (Bordo, 1993; Butler, 1993; Budgeon, 2003; Coleman, 2008) have shown in detail the heritage of Cartesian binaries (such as body/mind, object/subject, rational/emotional) in academic conceptions of the body and the self. Furthermore, they have shown the gendered nature of this binary vision. "[...] *a critique of this binary has been central to a feminist challenge to Western metaphysics, the foundation of which is the*

⁸ Inevitable major exceptions include the early ideas of the French anthropologist Marcel Mauss, who some consider as the founder of the discipline in France. His works on body techniques (1934), the obligatory expression of feelings (1921) and the notion of self (1938), have accounted for the importance of interactions (always anchored in a specific socio-cultural context) in the constitution of the self, including the expressions of feelings and the management of the body. The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, inspired by his work, went beyond Mauss' somewhat dualistic vision and theorized the incorporation of habitus by individuals. The concept of habitus refers to a set of socially acquired dispositions such as habits, perceptions, feeling or body 'hexis'. In his book called "the distinction" (1979) Bourdieu shows how habitus [of social classes here] are physically incorporated by individuals who hence behave and think in a certain way, resulting in the constant reproduction of the social order [of class]. The model, even considering its sustained current influence, has been criticized for its deterministic vision of the social world, failing to account for individual liberty, thus reactivating the old and ongoing quarrel between social determinism and individual liberty in social sciences (de Montlibert, 2005: 131). Drawing on Bourdieu's notion of habitus and the French philosopher Merleau-Ponty's (1945) work on the phenomenology of perception, the American anthropologist Csordas (1990) proposed embodiment as a new paradigm for anthropology, putting in dialogue individual perceptual processes with social constraints and cultural meanings (p.6).

equivalence of the mind with the masculine and the privileging of the mind over the body – the devalued realm associated with the feminine (Budgeon, 2003: 37)".

Hence, there has been a will to surpass dualistic conceptions of the body and the self (Shilling & Mellor, 1996; Davies, 2006; Nayak & Kehily, 2006; Coffey & Watson, 2014) and take the perspective of the 'lived bodily experience' to explore the 'imprinting of sociocultural signifiers on material bodies' (Coffey & Watson, 2014: 2). In other words, the body is the self and the self is the body, the mind and the body are not distinct separable entities. In an effort to better understand the complex intertwinement of the living and the social, poststructuralist theorizations of embodiment base their analysis on the body and the embodied experience of individuals. Thus, the body is conceived not as an object or a passive surface on which symbols are applied via the mind, but rather as a process, constantly being acted upon and acting on structural and societal forces (*ibid*: 1,8), continually constituting the self-identity (Budgeon, 2003: 36). A result neither pure object nor pure subject, the body is understood as a threshold of physical, symbolic and sociological coalesce (McNay 1999; Budgeon 2003; Coleman 2008) that forms a site through which experiences are understood and integrated (McNay, 1999). This focus on embodiment or conceiving bodies as sites of experience through which we embody and actively respond to our historic-socio-cultural context, is rather relevant to the physical changes associated with adolescence (Coffey & Watson, 2014: 2; Julien, 2015: 678).

Supplementary to the above, gender in poststructuralist theories is conceived not as a static condition but as a 'system of social relations' (Connell, 2008: 131), a process materialized through the constant repetition of 'highly regulated practices' (Butler, 1993: 1,2). However, one must be aware gender has 'real, material and embodied effects' (Coffey & Watson, 2014: 3) and as a result it must be understood as "*both inscribed on the body through social and cultural discourses and [as] having a material presence in embodied dispositions and practices (ibid)*". In turn positioning adolescence and puberty as touchstones of naturalization for 'category-based inscriptions' such as gender (e.g. sexual orientation) (Diasio, 2015: 603). The biological and social transformations that this particular time of life encapsulates, makes it an ideal field to interrogate modes of production and regulation of gendered bodily experiences.

According to Butler (1993), the 'normative category of sex'⁹ is one of the norms by which one becomes 'viable at all' (p.2). This results in not only the gender or sex function as a norm, but additionally, through regulatory practices, it produces the bodies that which it

⁹ The concept of 'normative category of sex' is used in the Butlerian sense of 'gender'. Meaning, for example, the concurrence of male genitals, a presentation of the self, perceived as 'masculine' and the sexual desires for girls/women (and vice versa).

governs (p.1). Gender differentiates, demarcates and, as mentioned above, constitutes the primary means of identification (p.8). That being so, gender is central to those adolescent experiences associated with bodily changes (Kehily, 2014). Volery's (2015) ethnographic research on teachers' views regarding students' bodies in French secondary schools, shows how teachers' conceptions influence students' differentiated experiences of their bodies. Most interviewed teachers conceived bodily and social experiences of boys and girls as distinguished and even as opposed to one another in both their nature and their effects (p.647). Concrete application of this can be seen in sports for example, where teachers provoke a competitive spirit amongst boys to motivate their performances or tell girls off because of their 'provocative' outfits (p. 647,650). As a result, valorising competition amongst boys and corporeal modesty amongst girls. Here, repeated differentiated normative discourses and practices participate to produce differentiated norms to which individuals conform for recognition, thus producing a differentiated 'lived experience of the body' and reinforcing Butler's (and others, e.g.: Derrida, 1968: 8-9) statement that 'discourse produces the effects that it names' (Butler, 1993: 2).

3.5. Embodied identities and adolescence

What are the modes of subjectification and embodiment of gender identities around adolescence? How does an approach through the body enable an exploration of gendered identities? Here these questions are posed in the context of my internship undertaken with participants between 10 and 18 years old, all participants were inhabitants of the semi-urban area of Liège (Belgium) while they also self-identified with various origins, spanning from Europe (including Belgium) to Northern Africa to the Middle-East.

Puberty is a central time in the formation of identity. It is a time during which young people are revealed to themselves through their encounters with the 'different other' (Marty, 2015: 12). Furthermore, 'the forming of a subject requires an identification with the normative phantasm of 'sex'' (Butler, 1993: 3). Subjectification is constituted through 'mutual acts of recognition' by which individuals accord with each other the 'status of viable subjecthood' (Davies, 2006: 427). This recognition is constitutive of one's existence through the 'terms in which recognition takes place' (*ibid*). This implies the recognition of a 'good' and a 'bad' way to be a girl or a boy. According to Davies (*ibid*), individuals struggle to accomplish a position in which one is recognized and accepted (p.434). Instead, she argues, we all strive for recognition in different ways (p.435). This in turn may be particularly true during the period of life that is adolescence, as it is strongly marked by identification/subjectification processes (Coffey, upcoming). Foucault (1997) claims that

the existence of models found in one's culture are 'proposed, suggested [and] imposed upon, by culture, society and social groups' (p.291; cited by Davies, 2006: 247). This is well shown in Julien's (2015) research on bodily hair negotiations amongst young boys in French high schools. She demonstrates that there is a 'good' way to grow up that will generate admiration and integration within peer groups and also conversely, a 'bad' way to grow up that will engender mockeries and bullying (p.680).

Similarly, during the debate (mentioned in the section above describing my participation in the *Collectif Mixité*) concerning boys' inclusion in the project, one of the coordinators was reminiscing upon the previous year when two boys had participated in the play, which was performed at the festival.

"Yeah okay, but those boys they're not really ... You know, they have particular profiles, one is really short and wears thick glasses and the other one stutters, ... they can't really find their place with the boys"

(Corinne, 50 years old, coordinator)

The descriptive term 'particular' used to refer to these boys' 'profiles' as boys, implies the existence of a 'normal' or at least 'usual' profile. The divergence with the 'usual profile' is here used to justify that the two boys 'can't find their place with the [other] boys' and hence justifies their participation in the supposedly 'girls only' project. Furthermore, this divergence is defined in their physical terms, which emphasizes the role of the body in the formation of a gendered identity. Derived from Corinne's statement, it appears that, based on their corporeality the two boys are not fully recognized and accepted as accomplishing the 'good way' to 'be a boy'.

3.6. The perspective of the lived body experience

In this section, as I draw on my fieldwork, I will attempt to demonstrate the relevance of an embodied approach when exploring the formation of gendered embodied identities. Demonstrated through the perspective that the 'lived bodily experience' can help us understand how gendered identities are embodied among adolescents and as a result how this (re)direction of focus on the 'lived body' can have various applications in the field. As mentioned in the first part of this essay, my time with the adolescents during my internship was rather short (four days). An extensive field including participative observation and interviews would be required in order to realize a more complete analysis. Nevertheless, that short immersion amongst them, coupled with my time amid the preparation team, enabled me to initiate various avenues of discussion and potential further investigation. Some of which are elaborated below.

3.6.1. 'Being a girl' vs 'being a boy'

In the arts & craft workshop, the activities commenced by asking the girls of the group to write on a poster the 'pros' of 'being a boy' and inversely, the boys were asked to list all the 'pros' of 'being a girl'. It is to be noted that the following will only be based on the girls' listings; this is done for reasons of succinctness. Six girls, aged between 12 and 16 participated in the exercise. Interestingly, out of the 10 entries the girls wrote, 8 were related to the 'embodied experience of being a boy'. Below I have transcribed¹⁰ the entries, the bracketed entries do not directly concern corporeality and again for reasons of succinctness I will not be elaborating on them specifically.

The 'pros' of 'being a boy'

- [They are better paid than us]
- They can't carry a child (labour)
- They don't get their period
- It's easier for them to get dressed
- They can pee standing up
- They are stronger physically
- They don't have to shave
- They don't wear high heels
- They feel safe at any time of the day
- [They rarely do household chores]¹¹

List written in Liège, by a group of 6 girls aged between 12 and 16 years old,
at a workshop organized by the *Collectif Mixité*. (3rd April 2018)

From the above, it is rather salient that according to this list, what makes 'being a girl' and being a boy' different is primarily corporeal. If giving birth and having periods are strictly reserved to female individuals, the other entries are not as strictly divided between boys and girls in the social world as is depicted in this list.

¹⁰ Extracted from my field notes on the 3rd April 2018, my translation. Photos of the lists are included in the appendix.

¹¹ 'Doing household chores' is here not comprised as a corporeal dimension of the boy/girl differences for comprehensibility reasons, though it is nevertheless a practice inscribed in bodies.

Biological dispositions inherent to female individuals were noted in the second and third position of the list, illustrating that female corporeal abilities around reproduction (periods, pregnancy, labour, breastfeed) are central to sexual differentiation (Héritier, 2002: 12). I have no information about the participants' menstrual state or whether they have or have not yet had their periods and I can also only assume that none of them have given birth. Nevertheless, the participants reported 'having their periods', being able to 'carry a child' and 'going through labour' as the 'cons' of 'being' a girl.

'Having to shave', 'wear high heels' and 'get [well] dressed' is here conceived as inherently feminine, and not having to engage in those practices expressed the 'pros' of 'being a boy'. Hence it appears that regulatory bodily practices are here conceived as an infliction on female bodies and selves, which actively differentiates them from male bodies and selves. All the entries analysed so far do not consist of intrinsic 'pros' of 'being a boy' *per se*, but rather they are 'cons' of 'being a girl' which are inversely attributed to boys as 'pros' for not having to experience them (both biological dispositions and regulatory embodied practices).

To 'pee standing up', 'be stronger physically' and 'feel safe at any time of the day' are the three entries written by the participants that directly relate to 'boys characteristics'. Interestingly, the three of the above examples concern 'the lived bodily experience of boys'. Simone de Beauvoir (1949) describes how the fashion in which children urinate has an impact on their perceptions of their bodies, since it is to them the most striking sexual differentiation (p.24). The female child, bound to urinate in a squatting position, finds herself in a 'shameful, servile and uncomfortable posture' while the standing boy experiences 'a feeling of omnipotence' (p.25, my translation). In light of this, Interestingly, the ability and the experience of 'pee[ing] standing up' was labelled by the participants in the 'pros' of being a boy.

Additionally, on a whole, to be 'stronger physically' and 'feel safe at any time of the day' were noted as criteria that differentiates girls from boys. Implying a vision or understanding that 'all the boys' or at least 'most of the boys' are 'stronger physically' than 'all the girls' or at least 'most of the girls' and 'feel safe at any time of the day'. Hence, physical strength and feelings of safety are here conceptually associated with the biological sex rather than other biological criteria such as age, size or general health (able or disabled bodies). It is intriguing to point out that the group of boys¹² that participated in the exercise was composed of those whom were all younger, shorter and smaller than all the girls in the group.

¹² 5 boys aged 10 to 12 years old.

These later entries illustrate female participants' interpretations of what 'it feels like' to 'be a boy'. Furthermore, the other entries analysed above concern the 'lived bodily experience' of 'being a girl'. In the above case, listing 'pros' and 'cons' of the other sex or gender implies a focus on what makes the two different, an idea well encapsulated in the definition by the American cultural anthropologist, Gayle Rubin (1975), of gender as 'the suppression of natural similarities' (p.48).

Furthermore, a vast majority of entries in the list revolved around the body and its lived experiences by individuals. This illustrates how the participants understand sex and gender primarily as a 'lived bodily experience'. Therefore, I argue the relevance of exploring the formation of 'embodied gender identities' in order to better grasp the operating modalities of such embodied identity formation.

3.6.2. Gender relations

That which is to follow addresses the experiences of 'embodied gender relations' through three examples; the pooling of all the focus groups' results; results from one of the groups in particular; and some selected examples from the 'emergence frescos'.

On the first day of the Easter camp, the kids were divided by age groups and asked to talk about their experiences with gender relationships. They were instructed to identify positive and negative aspects of their relationships with boys and girls, several of these answers, which were given during the pooling, revolved around the body.

"Girls are allowed to hit us but we are not allowed to hit them." (Nurullah, 10 years old)

"They [boys] stare at us with a perverse gaze." (Nina, 15 years old)

"They [boys] always judge the physique [of girls]." (Melek, 22 years old)

(Field notes, 03/04/18, my translation)

I myself took part in one of the focus groups. There were 11 girls and 1 boy, all aged between 12 and 15 years old. The animators gave each participant a piece of paper on which they were required to write one positive aspect and one negative aspect of their relationship with the other sex/gender. Regarding the negative aspects, I counted a total of 6 references to the 'male gaze', 2 references to a physical judgment, 1 on violence, 1 on 'mean comments', 1 on stereotypes and 1 on the fact that 'boys can't show their sensibility'. In regards to the positive aspects, most of the answers mentioned inter-gender friendships or attributed social qualities to boys, such as their humour, confidence or sympathy¹³.

¹³ Extracted from my field note on the 3rd April 2018, my translation.

Finally, on the emergence frescos that all the Youth Houses brought to the second preparation meeting, three different entries mentioned feeling "awkward", "anxious" or "scared" when boys were around, two others mentioned the looks: "they look bad at us", "they always stare" while another one stated "[I or we] don't like to be close to them [the boys].

In all these examples, the bodily experience at play within gender relationships is clearly significant. Bourdieu (1998) has theorized this experience of the 'male gaze' for women as that of a 'body for others' (p.50). He describes (in a rather deterministic fashion) the different impacts such an experience can have on women and on their conceptions of their own bodies (p.54). Thus, by taking the perspective of 'lived bodily experiences' it may enable a broader understanding of the stakes at play in gender relations and assist in facilitating the production of concrete recommendations for the embodiment of positive and open gender -identities and -relations among adolescents in a certain context.

3.6.3. Presence and attitudes

During my fieldwork I collected several observations concerning the participants' presence, behaviours and attitudes, which are further described below. In relation to these recordings Featherstone (2010) defines 'presence' as "*an unstructured non-conscious experience transmitted between bodies, which has the capacity to create affective resonances below the threshold of articulated meaning*" (p.199).

During several occasions, I noted that the boys were taking a lot of space in the group:

'As we are pooling all the answers from the focus groups sitting in a big circle with everyone, three little boys (aged 11 and 12) after having told what had been said in their focus group to the animator who is taking notes on a board, keep coming up with new answers, they interrupt the animator when she is talking to the next focus group and after all the focus groups have answered, they keep raising their hands and indicate that they want to say one more thing. After listening to a few more comments from them, the animator tells them she does not need more answers and that it is important to leave space for everyone to express themselves'

(Field notes, 03/04/2018)

'We are playing a name/ice breaking game. We are all standing in a big circle and I am holding a ball of wool. The aim of the game is to create a 'spider web' by calling someone's name and throw the ball to that person while still holding the end of the string. After a while, everyone has been called up and a big web of wool has been created within the circle. [...] I tell them that

the wool strings are lasers and that the ones who want can go in the circle and try to avoid them while the rest of the group is moving the strings. [...] 5 boys and 1 girl go in the middle of the circle to play with the 'lasers'. [...] In total there are 8 boys and 22 girls.'

(Field notes, 03/04/2018)

Additionally, the following observations were collected from the dance workshop in which the participants walked from one side of the room to the other, during a warm-up exercise, while the animator called out different attitudes to them.

'The 2 boys [aged 12] are 'fooling about', they exaggerate the movements, make faces to each other, laugh out loud, bump into each other, mimic a fight [...] One girl [aged 15] moves with confidence, it seems like she has had dance lessons before, her movements are fluid and controlled. [...] The 3 other girls [aged 10, 12 and 13] body language is slackly, they perform the movements in a weakly fashion and their faces falter between what I describe and interpret as 'embarrassed smiles' and 'closed faces'.'

(Field notes, 04/04/2018)

The next observation was collected during the general rehearsal.

'The 2 boys seem to try and make the audience laugh, they over-exaggerate each movement and often glance over to a group of boys in the public, one mimics to strangle the other, they don't follow the choreography properly, they make faces, talk to each other, joke and laugh during the dance. [I had later also attended the last rehearsal with only the dance workshop group. At this rehearsal the boys seemed more focused, they were following the choreography properly and did not talk during the whole 'show'] [...] On the other hand, the 3 younger girls' body language transmit what I describe and interpret a 'feeling of embarrassment', the steps they are taking are smaller than on the last rehearsal and their movements limper, they look at each other, make mistakes and one of them rolled her eyes when the group formation [standing in a block, posing] turns out a bit clumsy.'

(Field notes, 07/04/2018)

In filigree, throughout these field notes appear potential embodied effects of gender identities, which are inscribed in the body through discourse and having a material presence in embodied dispositions and practices. Unfortunately, the conditions of the field

research did not allow me to draw general conclusions from my observations (resulting from not enough time spent on the field, no possibility to organize interviews or focus groups etc.) although it does appear that gender is a significant category in the analysis of bodily uses. Nevertheless, I hope to have shown the potential of this approach encapsulated by a focus on the 'lived experience of the body' while exploring the formation of 'embodied gendered identities' amongst young people.

Moreover, poststructuralist theories of an enacted, performative identity and subjectification have great potential to explore formations of gendered identities. Considering this, I argue that the articulation of a thorough analysis of 'what bodies do' and a meticulous examination of the surrounding discourses in order to deconstruct conceptions around gendered bodies would provide a platform for further exploring the 'becoming'¹⁴ of bodies. In other words, reconnecting the 'lived body' to the 'conceptual body' encompasses and makes apparent new ways of understanding gendered subjectification.

3.7. Potential for change

Before to conclude this essay, I would like to draw on the American sociologist and philosopher Donna Haraway's (1991) statement that "*(n)either our personal bodies nor our social bodies may be seen as natural, in the sense of existing outside the self-creating process called human labour.*" (p.10). This re-emphasises the recreating and reproducing of society that is enclosed in this 'human labour' (body management, body work, body maintenance) and creates a potential for change (Coffey & Watson, 2014: 8). This is reiterated, by Davies (2006) who also shares this argument as she claims that those very processes of recapitulation that 'continuously constitute subjects' opens a space whereby one can 'rework these constituting forces' (p.428).

During my fieldwork in the dance and theatre workshops, I witnessed a potential to impact upon the lived experiences of adolescents by simply enacting positive and open roles. One example was during the little scene (described in the first part of this essay) where the boys whistled at and insulted the girl passing by, which ingeminated sexist behaviours rather than surpassing them and resulted in the boys and the public laughing, thus presenting validation and a positive experience towards the interaction. A more productive example in my opinion is the scene described below which took place during the final rehearsal.

¹⁴ 'Becoming' is here used in the Deleuzian sense of the term, referring to all the connections and relations that form the dynamic interconnection of norms, discourses, ideas and practices (Deleuze, 1992: 256).

A boy and a girl play together get interrupted by a third person who calls them 'in love'. Another boy then entered the scene to take to their defence and told the aggressor that such assumptions are so stereotypical and that it is really old-fashion to think that a boy and a girl by merely being together are necessarily involved in courtship. More people gradually entered the stage and backed the boy up in a brouhaha of anti-sexist remarks until the person left the stage acting in a shameful manner.

(Field notes, 06/04/18)

In this setting, anti-sexism and anti-heteronormativity attitudes are valued and glorified. Similarly, it resulted in the public laughing and a big smile of validation across the actors faces accounting for their positive experience. However contrastingly, promoting these anti-sexism and anti-heteronormativity attitudes, further reinstating that my belief of an approach through the 'lived bodily experience' could enable researchers to make recommendations to achieve positive experiences, not only concerning gender identities but also relating to well being in a broader sense.

3.8. Conclusion

In the social sciences, both feminist and poststructuralist scholars have contributed to critiques of a (Cartesian) dualist paradigm, who, claim that the instability of social sciences is due to the complexity of humans. The scholars of that school of thought willingly surpass agency/social structure models of understanding and in turn enlarge their theoretical frameworks, which better encapsulates the intricacy of humans and social life. In using the example of the body and the self, I have shown the potential of adopting theories of embodiment, identification and subjectification to achieve a more holistic apprehension when regarding the formation of gender identities. By drawing on my fieldwork at the *Collectif Mixité*, a Youth House association that works on gender issues such as sexism, I have shown in a parallel argument with poststructuralist concepts of identification and subjectification, how normative conceptions of gender (e.g. on behalf of the organisers) govern the possibilities of identification (e.g. for the participants) in terms of gender identities. Additionally, I have used examples of how participants define 'being a boy' and 'being a girl', as well as their experiences of gender relations and my field observations concerning the bodily use through the conceptual frame of gender. In doing so, presenting the merits and possibilities of adopting the approach of 'materiality of the body' to further investigate embodied experiences of gender identities among adolescents. Finally, I argue that the very ingemination of practices encloses the reproduction of the social order but furthermore, opens a potential for change.

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5. Appendix:

5.1. Pros and cons

Figure 1: being a girl (left side) & the girls' answers (right side)

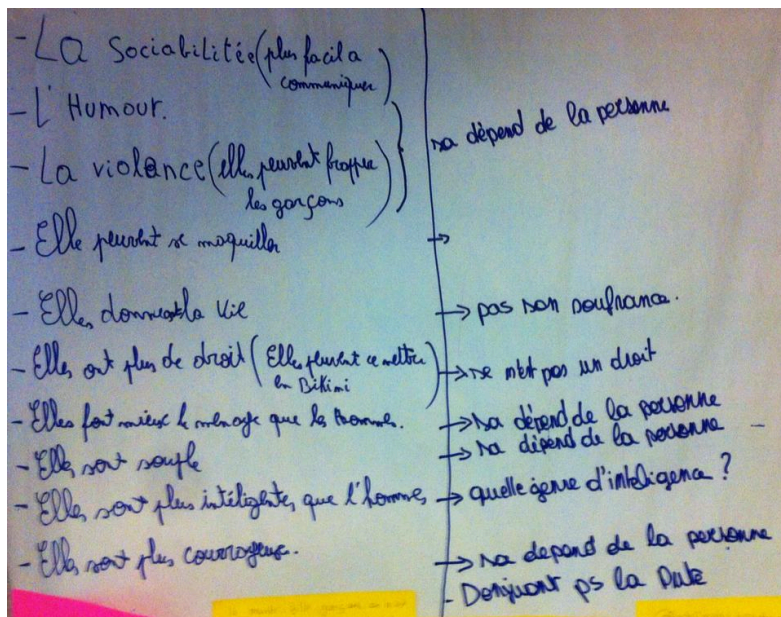
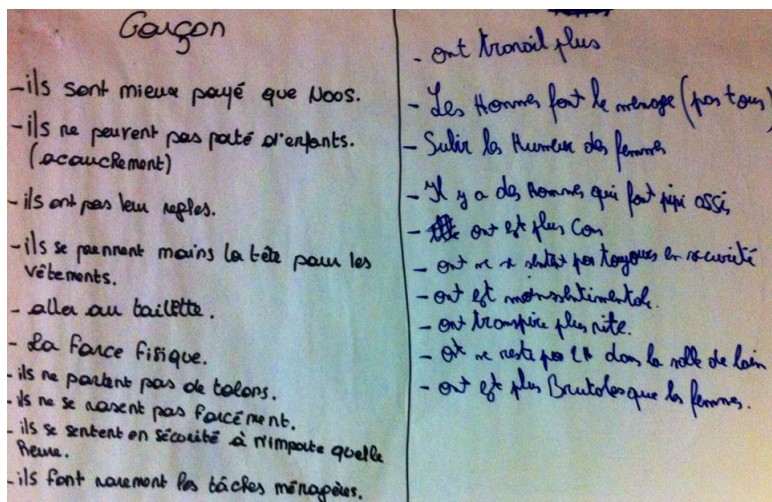


Figure 2: being a boy (left) & the boys' answers (right)



5.2. The Collectif Mixité's missions:

- Facilitate the emergence of an active collective parole on behalf of these young girls and boys around the question of gender mixite in Youth Houses and an internal work with the boys in each Youth House in order to place them in a process of acceptance and of respect of the feminine public.
- Network young girls and boys from the 9 youth Houses of different neighbourhoods.

- Facilitate girls' access to Youth Houses, that they find a place so that, later, they find a place in their neighbourhood and society.

-A Youth House has to be a tool of emancipation and we want the girls to benefit from it. Through workshops, artistic, cultural, playful projects. An important place is devoted to reflexion on themselves, as girls, as future women, on their future, on their experience, their families, boys etc. We want them to acquire tools so that can they can, firstly to express themselves and then defend themselves (work on argumentation in 2014) and with all this, that they become actress of their lives

(sent by my internship supervisor, my translation. Notes taken from the *mise au vert* on the 19th January 2018)

Back cover:

In the social sciences, both feminist and poststructuralist scholars have contributed to critiques of a (Cartesian) dualist paradigm, who, claim that the instability of social sciences is due to the complexity of humans. The scholars of that school of thought willingly surpass agency/social structure models of understanding and in turn enlarge their theoretical frameworks, which better encapsulates the intricacy of humans and social life. In using the example of the body and the self, I have shown the potential of adopting theories of embodiment, identification and subjectification to achieve a more holistic apprehension when regarding the formation of gender identities. By drawing on my fieldwork at the *Collectif Mixité*, a Youth House association that works on gender issues such as sexism, I have shown in a parallel argument with poststructuralist concepts of identification and subjectification, how normative conceptions of gender (e.g. on behalf of the organisers) govern the possibilities of identification (e.g. for the participants) in terms of gender identities. Additionally, I have used examples of how participants define 'being a boy' and 'being a girl', as well as their experiences of gender relations and my field observations concerning the bodily use through the conceptual frame of gender. In doing so, presenting the merits and possibilities of adopting the approach of 'materiality of the body' to further investigate embodied experiences of gender identities among adolescents. Finally, I argue that the very ingemination of practices encloses the reproduction of the social order but furthermore, opens a potential for change.

Keywords: poststructuralism, embodiment, identification, subjectification, adolescence, body, gender.

Dans le domaine des sciences sociales, des auteur.e.s féministes ainsi que poststructuralistes ont contribué à la critique d'un paradigme dualiste (Cartésien) et soutiennent que l'instabilité des sciences sociales est due à la complexité des humains. Les auteur.e.s de ce courant de pensée font preuve d'une volonté de dépasser les modèles explicatifs de type agencivité/structures sociales et d'élargir leur cadre théorique afin de mieux saisir les complexités des humains et de la vie sociale. En utilisant l'exemple du corps et du soi, j'ai montré l'intérêt d'utiliser les théories d'*embodiment*, d'identification et de subjectification afin d'atteindre une appréhension plus holiste concernant la formation des identités de genre à l'adolescence. Me basant sur mon terrain au sein du Collectif Mixité, un collectif de Maison des Jeunes travaillant sur des questions liées au genre telle que le sexisme, j'ai montré, dans un argument parallèle aux concepts poststructuralistes d'identification et de subjectification, comment des conceptions normatives du genre (ex: de la part de organisateurs) gouvernent les possibilités d'identification (ex: pour les participants) en termes d'identités de genre. De plus, j'ai utilisé des exemples décrivant comment les participants définissent 'être une fille' et 'être un garçon', ainsi que leurs expériences des relations de genre et des observations concernant l'utilisation du corps, au prisme du genre. J'ai ainsi présenté les mérites et possibilités de l'adoption d'une approche à travers 'la matérialité du corps' afin d'explorer les expériences incorporées des identités de genre parmi les adolescents. Enfin, je plaide que la répétition même des pratiques, contient la reproduction de l'ordre social mais, également, ouvre un espace pour le changement.

Mots clefs: poststructuralisme, incorporation, subjectification, adolescence, corps, genre