"TOO MUCH TOLERANCE": HANG-AROUND YOUTH, PUBLIC SPACE, AND THE PROBLEM OF FREEDOM IN THE NETHERLANDS

by

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Abstract

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by

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This study examines current concerns about *hangjongeren*, or hang-around youth, in Amsterdam, and demonstrates that such concerns are inflected by other anxieties about ethnic difference, authority, social cohesion, parenting, and safety. Hang-around youth, aged 12-25, spend time together in neighborhood public spaces, often after school or work. Some adults complain about noise, litter, vandalism, or feeling unsafe; to address these concerns, policy makers, social workers, citizen activists, and police officers design new municipal projects and hold community meetings. Through their efforts, the *hangjongeren* problematic becomes intertwined with wider issues: an emphasis on "prevention" in youth policy and policing, a discourse about integration and Dutch "norms and values," and local projects to regulate public behavior through conduct rules.

In addition to contextualizing present-day anxieties within a long history of adult worries about youth, this study examines the policies, discourses and interactions between residents and officials that together construct this social problem. Ethnographic research shows that adults' interpretations of "the *hangjongeren* problem" are varied, complex, and contradictory. Rather than demonstrating a broad moral panic, neighborhood-based interviews with parents, other adult residents, social workers, policy

makers and police officers evidence competing responses to youth. The noticeable anger- and fear-based reactions to the presence of youth in public space, this study argues, arise out of three ideological developments since 1960: a highly individualized notion of personal freedom, a desire for the social welfare state to solve social problems, and the spread of an idealized suburban aesthetic into other residential environments.

Pulling together these layers of context helps clarify seemingly contradictory manifestations of a discourse that blames today's social problems on "too much tolerance." Using this discourse, parents condemn the over-individualization of complaining adults; authorities indicate the difficulty they face in regulating an unruly populace; and complaining adults express their desire to have others set limits on youth, and restore their freedom to live without disturbance. Social scientists studying (in)tolerance today must recognize the multiplicity of meanings underlying the seeming rejection of tolerance: the frustration with freedom and its limits is an outcome of, rather than a backlash against, the social changes of the 1960s.

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Table of Contents

Chapter One – Introduction 1
Looking at the "Problem of Hang-around Youth" 1
Doing Research in the Netherlands 12
The Organization of the Dissertation 28

Chapter Two – Confronting Stereotypes: The Netherlands in Perspective 35
Consensus and Conformity: "Just act normal!" 36
Pillarization: A history of separateness 43
De-Pillarization and the 1960s 48
Postcolonial Migration, "Guest workers," and "*Allochtonen*" 54
Demographic Changes 65
Amsterdam North 72
Conclusion: Frustrated freedom 80

Chapter Three – "The Trouble with Kids these Days": Hang-around youth in history, in context, and in the news 82
"The Youth of Today": Deconstructing "problem youth" 85
Histories of "the Youth of Today" in the Netherlands 93
Situating Adult-youth Conflicts 104
Representations of *Hangjongeren* 111
Conclusion: Youth as a site of struggle 124

Chapter Four – Youth Policy 128
A Brief History of Youth Policy 132
Prevention, Safety and Public Space: 1993-present 144
Youth Policy in Amsterdam North 157
Conclusion: Assuaging the fears of adults 169

Chapter Five – Interpreting "Feelings of Being Unsafe" 172
Onveiligheidsgevoelens, Neighborhood Problems and Victimization 174
Reading Crime Statistics 187
Fearfulness 195
Feeling Safe and Unsafe in Amsterdam North 209
Conclusion: Presence and absence 220

Chapter Six – The Politics of Ethnic Difference 224
Situating Incidents 226
On Politicians and Rap Musicians 232
The "Failure of Multiculturalism" and the Death of "Political Correctness" 238
Integration Policies and the Blok Commission 255
Conclusion: Linking "problem," "youth," and "ethnic difference" 266

Chapter Seven – The Need for "Norms and Values" 270
Jan Peter Balkenende, the "Norms and Values" Premier 275
The Loss of *Sociale Controle* 282
Norms in the Neighborhood..... 290
Interventions: The "Golden Rules," the Respect Project, and Greeting Zones .. 298
Conclusion: Norms and values, Whiteness and Dutchness 308

Chapter Eight – Establishing "Rules for Living" 311
Conflict on "Smith Street": An overview 313
Beginnings: Situating the Smith Street conflict..... 321
Actions and Counteractions 330
"Drawing the Line": The limits of conflict resolution through consensus 342
Conclusion: The writing on the wall..... 354

Chapter Nine – Conclusion: "Too much tolerance" and the problem of freedom..... 358
The Substance of Emotions 358
A Loss of Tolerance? 361
The Multiple Contexts of the Hangjongeren Problematic 371
The Roles of Ethnicity, Gender and Class 379
"The Messengers, but not yet the Authors of the Message"..... 386

Works Cited.....387

Table of Figures

Figure 1. The ferry to Central Station from Amsterdam North 1

Figure 2. Amsterdam North residential street 2

Figure 3. Street games in Amsterdam North. 3

Figure 4. Population pyramids, 1950-2050..... 68

Figure 5. Table of Dutch population growth, since 1950 69

Figure 6. Average disposable household income in euros, 2000..... 77

Figure 7. Ethnicity in researched neighborhoods. 79

Figure 8. *Onveiligheidsgevoelens*, in percent of population, 1993-2003 178

Figure 9. Situational *onveiligheidsgevoelens*, in percent of population, 2003 179

Figure 10. Neighborhood problems, perception of frequency, 1993 and 2003 180

Figure 11. Comparison of perceptions of frequency of problems 186

Figure 12. Playground sign: Dog walking prohibited..... 187

Figure 13. Crime rate, as percentage of population, aged 15 and older, 1980-1998 188

Figure 14. Tolerance Unlimited street sign, "Violence-free Zone," Spui, Amsterdam.. 199

Figure 15. Anti-racism poster: "Together against racism. Islam is not the enemy." 265

Figure 16. Norms and values in pop culture 273

Figure 17. Green-Left Party Street Sign: "You can say hello!"..... 306

Figure 18. Smith Street "Rules for Living" 311

Figure 19. Netted soccer court near Smith Street 322

Figure 20. Narrow and crowded streets near Smith Street. 324

Figure 21. Smith Street tunnel 325

Figure 22. Interior courtyard and green space……325

Chapter One – Introduction

Looking at the "Problem of Hang-around Youth"

Behind Amsterdam's Central Station, as you head away from the famous city center with its picturesque canals and brick houses tilted askew, there wait a couple of small passenger ferries that shuttle every few minutes to Amsterdam North and back. You can walk on and grab a seat, or ride your bike up the ramp right onto the ferry, and, in a few minutes, cross the IJ River. Although the trip is quite short, crossing the river takes you to a different kind of Amsterdam.

Figure 1. The ferry to Central Station from Amsterdam North.

Amsterdam North is mostly residential, and although densely populated, more like a quiet suburb than a bustling urban area. There are hardly any tourists here, few nightlife options, and only scattered neighborhood businesses; commerce is concentrated into a couple of open-air markets, a large chain grocery store, and a covered shopping mall. Biking into Amsterdam North, one is struck by the quietness of the car-lined streets.

Figure 2. Amsterdam North residential street.

Apartment buildings, mainly two and three stories tall and made of brick, are often arranged to create small, plain courtyards. Few adults linger in the public spaces, instead spending their time indoors, on their own small balconies, or if they are lucky to live on the ground floor, in their fenced-in private gardens. You might see a couple of adults walking or biking to and from the grocery store, and walking their dogs, but unlike the children, adults tend to traverse through the public spaces, rather than spend time in them. Older kids, aged about 10-15, play soccer on multi-use asphalt courts, which are enclosed by netting, and hang around in various spots, such as the unused outbuilding near the local public school. Adolescent girls walk through the neighborhood in twos and threes, laughing and talking. And by the slightly hilly road by the grocery story, a group of younger teens practice skateboarding tricks, until they are chased away by the store's staff. The smaller children, 5-10 years old, play on the sidewalks and on the public playgrounds.

Figure 3. Street games in Amsterdam North.

On most any afternoon in the IJplein neighborhood, as in most neighborhoods, you can find older boys, some young men, really, in their late teens and early twenties, after school hours and after the end of the workday, hanging around in small groups of three, four or five. Dressed in jeans, cotton t-shirts and light jackets, and sneakers or work boots, they often lean against a railing in the middle of an apartment courtyard, smoking shag tobacco cigarettes, sometimes rolled with marijuana, and talking and joking with each other. One might be drinking a soda; another might play soccer against the walls of the building. The noise from the ball sometimes disturbs the residents within, who complain and call the police to intervene. The boys like to kick the ball around at the soccer court, too, but would rather not force the little kids out, or fight for the space with youths from nearby streets. A friend rides up on his motorbike, and gasses it a few times before parking. His arrival, or the sound of the soccer ball, provokes movement in the above second-storey window, as lace curtains are drawn back, and the woman inside looks down, frowning, and shaking her head. The youths meet here every

day, usually, in the late afternoon and often after dinner, or before they hop the ferry into to the city for a night out; their voices and sometimes the scent of marijuana can waft up from the courtyard, sometimes late into the evening. The neighborhood police officer occasionally passes by, and asks them to quiet down, or move on, or head over to the nearby soccer court. Such requests frustrate the boys, for they've hung out in this very spot for years, ever since they were little kids. But now they are a problem: they have become *hangjongeren*, or "hang-around youth."

When I first started to notice the "*hangjongeren* problem," as chronicled in the daily newspapers in the summer of 2001, I was puzzled. My language skills were just sufficient to allow me to pore over the papers each morning, and begin to steep myself in Dutch current affairs. One headline surprised and intrigued me: "Youths terrorize residents along the beach roads." Coming before the events of September 11, and the now-near pervasive use of the word "terror," the headline's phrasing struck me as a bit unusual. More than just a bit, actually: once I read the full story, it seemed overblown, even sensationalistic. It seems there were teenagers who liked to drive their cars through the neighborhoods in a beach town, playing loud music; they sometimes threw empty beverage containers out of their cars, creating litter. Clearly, cruising, playing loud music and littering can be irritating behaviors, but are they "terrorizing"? The hyperbolic use of language struck me quite forcefully, as it contrasted with my impression about Dutch communicative styles. Most national daily papers, excepting the splashy *Telegraaf*, tend to prize clarity, straightforwardness and dispassion. I had noticed that most of the Dutch people I had met valued those characteristics in their everyday speech, as well. Of course, my experience at that time was rather limited, but the anecdotes of others generally bore

out my impression. For example, an American friend of mine told me of an interaction he had with his host mother, when he spent a year of high school in the Netherlands. One day, having just been caught in a downpour, he complained of being soaked through, to which his host mother simply responded: "You'll dry off." Similarly, I once witnessed an adult bicyclist run into a toddler who had strayed onto the bike path. The bicyclist had braked hard, and the toddler was not hurt. Strange to me, however, was the fact that neither the cyclist nor the mother responsible for the child apologized, inquired to make sure the other was all right, or spoke at all. Also surprising was the comment made by a passerby, who was walking alongside me: "Well, that's what happens." At the risk of generalizing, it is a communicative style characterized by understatement: few politenesses, not much fluff, not a lot of exaggeration.

So I became curious. What was it about these "*hangjongeren*" that sent people into a tizzy? Who were they? What did they do to upset people? Did they break the law? Were they dangerous? Reflecting on my past two summers in Amsterdam, and my visits to Amersfoort, Haarlem, Leiden, Nijmegen, Rotterdam, and Utrecht, I could not recall ever seeing groups of youths causing a disturbance, or looking threatening. There were, of course, people who try to sell drugs on the street, people who appear to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol, and others who appear to be homeless, and who beg for money. And I knew people who had been pick-pocketed and even mugged, but those acts were always committed by lone individuals, not roving groups of youths. Here was a seemingly serious social problem, but one that I had no recollection of ever seeing. This may have been, in part, due to the fact that I have lived in New York City since 1995, and have been exposed to many different people and many different behaviors—

maybe my "radar" didn't notice these youth, because they didn't fit my image of a potential threat. But perhaps, I thought, there was a "moral panic"[1] occurring around "the *hangjongeren* problem" that might serve as a focal point for my research. A question began to form: what was it that these youth were doing that was considered so intolerable, and why were adults reacting so strongly? As I began to research potential sites where I might study this problem—places where there were a lot of *hangjongeren* and a history of conflicts over public space—I found that the category of *hangjongeren* was much more porous than I ever imagined.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, "*hangjongeren*" means different things to different people. The term is used to talk about youth of all different ages, ranging from about 12 to 25 years old. While it is usually assumed that *hangjongeren* are a nuisance to adults, many report that the *hangjongeren* in their neighborhood don't cause any problems at all. In some cases, people use *hangjongeren* to mean youth who hang around all day, unemployed and out of school, causing problems and misbehaving, while others simply use the term to describe any youth who is hanging around for any period of time. In other cases, the term calls to mind youths who engage in theft and harassment, though such youth are more widely described as "criminal youth," "problem youth," and even "repeat offenders."

Hangjongeren can be ethnically White, Moroccan, Turkish, Surinamese, Antillean; they can be citizens, immigrants, refugees. In common parlance, members of

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[1] The term is most widely associated with Stanley Cohen's work, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The creation of the Mods and the Rockers* (1972) which examined how incidents that may be anomalous, infrequent or small-scale can grow, particularly through media coverage and the attention of experts, into issues of widespread public concern. In the United States, recent anxiety over child abductions could be characterized as a moral panic. This concept will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter Three.

ethnic minority groups are called by the name of their non-Dutch ethnic background, i.e., Moroccans, Turks, Surinamese. There is only very rarely any hyphenation of ethnic labels, or other mention of both. My use of the term Moroccan or Turk in this study reflects this Dutch language use; I feel it disingenuous to apply a hyphenated label when that is not the common practice. Still, I would like to draw attention to the fact that this naming practice does, at least at the discursive level, appear to deny immigrants and their descendants full—or even partial, hyphenated—membership in the conceptual category of "Dutch." I also capitalize "White" when talking about ethnically White Dutch; this capitalization is intentional, to emphasize that being White is as much of an ethnic category as is being Moroccan, for example.

Hangjongeren are commonly assumed to come from lower-income families, but I was told a few anecdotes about upper- and middle-class *hangjongeren*, as well.[2] Sometimes, *hangjongeren* groups are made up of only boys, and sometimes the groups are mixed. Neighborhood public spaces are sometimes the hang-out spot; other times, it is the local playground, shopping center, schoolyard, or bridge underpass. In some cases, the police are called to move the kids along, although they mostly give warnings, rather than tickets. The word is applied to "good" kids who hang around after school in the schoolyard, before going home for dinner and homework, and to designate drop-outs or unemployed youths. Some *hangjongeren* drink beer and smoke pot in public view, while others keep such activities out of sight, or don't engage in them at all.

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[2] Common wisdom among many social work professionals is that youth from working-class families are more likely to spend time outside the home for various reasons: small houses allow little room for kids to entertain their friends inside; lower levels of education, therefore less homework and extracurricular activities; and fewer available funds to pay for soccer club dues and other activities.

Two weeks after forming an exploratory research question, the category "*hangjongeren*" seemed to fall apart before my eyes. With such a range in age, class, gender, ethnic background, and behavior, there seemed to be little that these youth had in common. And the reactions to the question "Why are *hangjongeren* a problem?" were just as diverse. I asked this question of academic acquaintances, friends, and random people I met on public transportation. Some launched immediately into emotional descriptions of how youth were "privatizing," or taking over public space. Others laughed, saying that Dutch people just like to complain, and always need something to grumble about. Criminologists assured me that *hangjongeren* were, in fact, a serious problem, resulting from a decline in social cohesion. People have become extremely individualistic, and in so doing have lost their ability to discipline and control youth, they explained. Friends of mine, parents themselves, countered that most adults just overreact to youth out of fear and suspicion, even though the vast majority of youth aren't doing anything wrong. A childhood education specialist posited that while hanging around was "nothing new," the tolerance level was declining, due to both the crowdedness of housing developments and the fact that more and more adults think that youth may be dangerous, and are too afraid to talk to them directly. Some newspaper articles depicted young people as being out of control, forcing adults to call the police and even to flee their homes. Not only was there no clearly defined group of youth to study, but there was little coherence in adults' reactions. Without such clarity or coherence, the potential for research seemed limited.

What continued to hold my interest, however, was the way in which conversations about *hangjongeren* seemed to slide into discussions of other social problems. To talk

about *hangjongeren* meant to talk—variously, in overlapping and even contradictory ways—about seemingly incompatible forms of ethnic difference; widespread feelings of irritation, exhaustion, and fear in "the modern world"; frustration with the social welfare state and its limits; and the excessive individualization of contemporary society. The "*hangjongeren* problem"—rather than being a clearly defined conflict between two easily identifiable groups of people, over behavior widely held to be out of the ordinary—appeared to be, instead, a rich site for the interaction and coalescence of a number of diverse social anxieties. These anxieties and the projects they inspire are, at their root, as I will try to show, motivated by a common concern with the role of the social welfare state in ordering the social world, with ideas about personal freedom, and with the notion that people are entitled to quiet, clean, and orderly public spaces.[3] As I have delved deeper, it has become more and more difficult to explain "the *hangjongeren* problem" without simultaneously sketching out a complicated context. Both the interpretation of certain youth behavior as intolerable, and the types of interventions invented in response, are shaped by a number of much broader issues: increasing ethnic difference and a charged political climate, changing work patterns for mothers and the loss of social cohesion, the increasing emphasis on "prevention" in youth policy and policing, a perceived rise in so-called "senseless violence" and aggression, and movements to articulate "norms and values" and conduct rules.

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[3] Most of the research here was conducted in residential neighborhoods, but problems with *hangjongeren* are also often situated in public transportation and shopping areas. In each of these sites, adults who complain about youth share an expectation that the authorities are responsible for solving the problem. The expectation for "liveable" (*leefbaar*) public spaces is found in neighborhoods particularly, but this expectation about the role of the social welfare state is easily extended to all public spaces. The notion of "*leefbaar*," an idea that came to the fore in the 1990s, as did *hangjongeren*, was taken up as in the name for a new political party, the Leefbaar Nederland party, which originated in 1999. Pim Fortuyn belonged to Leefbaar Nederland until he strayed from its official platform; he was asked to leave, and he formed his own party in 2001. Pim Fortuyn will be discussed in greater depth in Chapters Two and Six.

This study attempts to describe and analyze "the *hangjongeren* problem" by weaving together three analytical levels. At one level, there is the particular conflict between a group of youths and some adults, which, in a neighborhood in Amsterdam North where I conducted fieldwork, endured, and greatly escalated, over the course of several months. Civic authorities and social work professionals[4] were enlisted as mediators, and during several community meetings a set of publicly posted "Rules to Live By" were established to guide the youths' behavior. Although many other residents, including parents, did not find the youths' behavior irritating, a small group of those with complaints expected, and were able, to command the intervention of the social welfare state. Abstracted from this immediate conflict is the second analytical level: an extensive social welfare apparatus engaged in youth policy and programs, including solving "the *hangjongeren* problem." This apparatus ranges in terms of sites, from local youth centers to municipal government offices to national youth policy committees, and engages authorities from disparate fields, including policing, youth work, social work, psychology, anthropology, criminology, and government. The work done by the social welfare state apparatus is shaped not only by the expectations of its citizens, specific disciplinary histories, ways of seeing and patterns of practice, but, at the third level of analysis, by broader, trans-disciplinary political and social discourses. In this study, I examine two discourses that impact and give form to "the *hangjongeren* problem" and the related interventions: "the need for norms and values," and "feelings of being

[4] I use "social work" to indicate all variety of agencies and projects, some of which are "private" although they are subsidized through the government, and some of which are directly overseen by government ministries. This usage would include the employees of a community center, an educational program for mothers, an organization that works with at-risk youth, and an agency that assigns case-workers to individuals or families.

unsafe." At this larger level, it becomes clear that many Dutch people have come to believe that they are entitled to live without disturbance from others, and that this personal freedom should be protected by the social welfare state through its interventions.

Unraveling what can be learned from close observation of the mundane, this study attempts to show how our everyday interactions are colored by layers and layers of context and meaning. What at first appears unremarkable—irritating youth behavior and the complaints of tired and fearful adults—turns out to be emblematic of much larger social processes in the Netherlands: a frustrated reliance on the social welfare state to intervene in and solve individual problems, a high level of individualization that shapes how people conceive their personal freedoms and the ways in which they relate to others, and the growing expectation that residential environments be orderly, quiet and clean, even in densely populated areas. The growth of the social welfare state and the rise of individualization should be seen in tandem: social welfare frees individuals to develop themselves (*zelfontplooing*) by providing elder care, child care, educational stipends, unemployment, and other benefits. It is not illogical, then, to find that some adults call upon this apparatus to ensure their quality of life (talked about in terms of *leefbaarheid*, or liveableness, and *woongenot*, or living-pleasure) by addressing residential conflicts, freeing them from interacting with neighborhood youth. This growing demand that government ensure personal freedoms resolves the seeming contradiction between increasing individualization and an expansive social welfare state. Similarly, the current coalition of the Christian Democrats and the Liberal Party, although espousing a philosophy about individual and family responsibility, has only intervened in deeper and

more expansive ways. Through this study of the commonplace, I hope to provide an analysis of these larger, rather extraordinary changes in Dutch politics and society.

Doing Research in the Netherlands

Confronting my own stereotypes about fieldwork

The research for this study was conducted between September 2002 and August 2003, in a city borough just north of the central district of Amsterdam, called Amsterdam North. Conducting fieldwork in an urban environment can present a number of particular difficulties, from determining an appropriate research design and scale for analysis to finding housing in one's field site area. Even though I was familiar with these issues, and the wealth of critiques about ethnographic writing and the anthropological enterprise, I realized time and again that I still had a deeply held idealization of fieldwork, one which was continually challenged by my actual experience. Unknowingly, I had continued to imagine my fieldwork as if it were to take place in a small town filled with lively streets, welcoming people, and conviviality. But, instead of informally socializing with people, I had to schedule appointments; generally speaking, just "dropping in" on someone is frowned upon. Instead of being constantly surrounded by people and struggling to find private moments, I found myself alone most of the time, except when I sought out interviews, committee meetings, and public gatherings. Instead of being able to integrate myself into daily neighborhood life, becoming inconspicuous over time, I found I was often the only person lingering around outside, with no one to observe. In fact, when I went to photograph the neighborhood, I rarely found people occupying public spaces. The officials I encountered and interviewed—police officers, social workers and policy

makers—saw me as a professional and held to a rather strict professional/personal boundary, rarely inquiring into my personal life or inviting me to socialize with them.

The neighborhood residents I interviewed maintained a distance with me, as well. While people happily invited me to their homes when they agreed to my request for an interview, and offered me a cup of coffee and a cookie while we talked, I was only twice invited to dinner during the year. Even at the university at which I was affiliated, the Amsterdam School of Social Research of the University of Amsterdam, the graduate students and faculty socialized infrequently; doctoral students are salaried employees in Dutch academia, and many tend to treat their work as a nine-to-five job, leaving promptly for home at the end of the day. I found friendship only among other "strangers"—international students from Germany, India, Canada, Portugal, Mexico and the United States, and Dutch anthropologists and other scholars who have lived outside the country. Fieldwork was more isolating than I ever imagined, not only because of the nature of a year-long inquiry that is self-directed, in which the researcher alone fully understands her research question, but also because, at least in my experience, most of Dutch society does not really reach out to foreigners.

At the same time, the people I met were incredibly helpful in providing me information and making themselves available to me. Almost everyone I met held science and research in high regard, and was happy to help out a junior scholar. Only one person, out of more than 60 asked, declined to be interviewed, and some gave me two or three interviews, one to two hours each. I had expected to have to take time to "establish rapport" with the people I was interviewing and observing; instead, I found almost every person to be very open and straightforward with me from the first moment. I was

prepared for some to be cautious about allowing me access or giving me information, as I expected them to be protective or territorial, and hesitant about an outsider inquiring into their lives or their professional work. But, after briefly explaining my research to one youth worker, for example, I was invited to visit the youth center as often as I wished, and was promised assistance from the staff there. And, he continued, they were just about to race go-carts, and would I care to join them? Similarly, the first group of youths I approached, instead of eyeing me suspiciously, talked with me quite happily for about half an hour about their neighborhood and how they spent their time, and then, having to go home for dinner, invited me to come hang out at the youth center later that evening. Such friendliness, however, was limited to the professional realm of my research, and typically did not develop into friendship.

I was also surprised when, about ten minutes into a casual conversation with two White Dutch ladies in their seventies, one of them commented pejoratively on the "goat fucking music" (*geitenneuken muziek*) that she hears in the neighborhood. We had been discussing how the neighborhood had changed, and she used this term to indicate that Muslim and Moroccan immigrants and their descendants (called "goat fuckers" or *geitenneukers*[5] by some) were taking over the area. I am sure I looked surprised to hear her use an ethnic slur so openly; my wide eyes may have signaled to her a lack of comprehension, because she then stopped, and asked me if I understood what she had said. I thought she might rephrase her statement, or soften it, but, instead, she wanted to

[5] The use of the verb "*neuken*" is slightly less shocking than the English "fuck," and is used more readily; for example, while I was in the Netherlands, there was a television program produced by the BNN television company targeted toward teenagers called "This is how you fuck." (*Neuken doe je zo*!) The word might be better understood as the shock equivalent of "screw." No matter how shocking the verb used, the reference to bestiality, however, remains outrageous.

make sure I understood the word, and said it again, breaking down the phrase for me. I continued to feel surprise throughout the year, as the people I interviewed were exceedingly open about their attitudes and experiences; my expectation that it would take time to "build rapport" turned out to be ill-founded.[6] I promised anonymity to those I interviewed at the outset of each interview, but most people asserted that, while remaining anonymous was fine with them, they didn't need the cover of a pseudonym. "I'm not afraid to say what I think," was a common refrain. As isolating as my fieldwork was at times, the openness I encountered in interviews and conversations was just as remarkable.

Locating a Research Site

As noted already, the research was conducted in the city borough just north of the city center, called Amsterdam North. The institution with which I was affiliated, the Amsterdam School for Social Research of the University of Amsterdam, had helped me find housing in the Old West section of Amsterdam; given the long-standing housing crunch, I was lucky to find a reasonable rent. The areas closest to my apartment, however, were less than ideal for my research plan, which relied on studying Dutch youth from a variety of backgrounds, both in terms of ethnicity and class. My residence was, instead, near both the center city (unusually cosmopolitan, wealthier, and heavily populated by international residents and tourists), and on the border of Amsterdam West (unusually disadvantaged, heavily populated by ethnic minorities). After consulting with

[6] Other anthropologists who have worked in the Netherlands confirmed to me that such openness is not unusual, and allayed my fear that I was being naïve, that perhaps people were being more guarded with me than I could perceive.

local academics and the newspaper archives, I decided to conduct the research in Amsterdam North, which had a population more diverse in terms of class and ethnicity, and which had had recently publicized problems with youth.

This meant, however, that I did not live in the city borough where I had decided to do my research. Instead, I biked about 10 minutes and then took the short ferry ride to my research area; while the distance was not great, I am certain that I would have been able to observe more had I lived in one of the neighborhoods I ended up studying. But as the research quickly shifted from my original plan—primarily hanging around with youths—to primarily studying adults' opinions about and interventions into youth behavior, I was able to redesign my research activities in a way that did not rely on my constant presence in the residential neighborhoods. Within a few weeks into the research period, I realized that if I wanted to understand the concerns of many adults about *hangjongeren*, I should spend my time with adults. While I still spent some time hanging around with and observing youth on the street, I focused most of my energy on visiting youth centers, attending a wide range of community, organizational and policy meetings, and interviewing residents in their homes.

At the beginning of the research, I identified three potential sites in Amsterdam North, which, while all working-class neighborhoods, were each very different from the other.[7] Over the first few months, I observed and interviewed youths and adults in all three neighborhoods. In the Bloemenbuurt, I met mostly White boys and girls, young men and women, ranging from 15-20 years old, who hung around in a large group,

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[7] I use "working class" here loosely to indicate an intersection of a number of factors: residents tend to have lower than average income levels, vocational-level educations, and a higher reliance on social welfare subsidies. This is a tendency, however; families and individuals who had higher incomes and education levels also resided in the neighborhoods.

sometimes including up to 25 people, by the public pool and the local youth center. They grew up in a tight-knit community, in the same few square blocks where their parents were raised. A short distance south, in the Van der Pekbuurt, I encountered Moroccan boys and young men, ages 12-22, who together hung out at the local youth center, played soccer outdoors at the nearby school, and, in smaller groups, congregated on a set of benches by the public library. There were also meetings of the "Girls Club" on certain afternoons in the local youth center. In the third neighborhood, IJplein, about a mile away, I was introduced to a group of about 10 boys and young men, mostly White and aged 18-22, who hung out in the courtyard of their apartment complex, and often played soccer against one of the walls of a large covered passageway.

In the first few weeks of the research period, I found myself lingering over the question: which of these neighborhoods was the best example of *hangjongeren* conflicts? The Bloemenbuurt had quite a history of conflicts with *hangjongeren* in the mid- and late-1990s, but most of those youth had grown up and settled down; today's youth reported that few adults complain to them about their behavior, since they tend to hang out in sanctioned spaces now. Even more recently, when some teens were hanging out in the entranceways to some of the apartment building, the problem had been addressed by physically changing the buildings, by remodeling their fronts, replacing the sheltering, recessed entrances with flat-walled exteriors. Alternately, I wondered whether the Van der Pekbuurt area would be a better choice, since there was so much general public concern about the behavior of Moroccan youth. I resisted, however, directing my research entirely toward the problem of ethnicity, as White youths are considered *hangjongeren* too.

Continuing to visit each neighborhood, its youth center and the organizations that worked there, I tried to discern which neighborhood would be best for my research. Eventually I realized, a little later than I would like to admit, that I had become hung up on an impossible problem: finding the "typical" *hangjongeren* situation. Each of the neighborhoods had its particular history, demographics, and spatial arrangements.[8] I realized that each neighborhood had something to teach me, by virtue of its being non-typical, and not because any one of them could be taken as representative for the Netherlands as a whole. In the end, I did focus on one neighborhood, IJplein, more than the others, although I continued to stay in contact with the social workers, youth workers, police officers and civic officials responsible for the other two. I focused on IJplein because the conflict between the adults and youths there had endured many months, and some of the adult residents of IJplein had instigated a series of community meetings to deal with the local *hangjongeren*. I was fortunate to be invited to attend these meetings when I was, by chance, introduced to a local police officer. With that entrée to the meetings and into this conflict, I was able to encounter, observe and interview an entire network of people: adult residents with complaints, parents of youths, the youths themselves, local police officers, social workers, and municipal officials. As in much ethnographic research, I had the luck to stumble onto a fruitful research site by virtue of chance meetings and the kindness of strangers.

As I delved deeper into the neighborhood dynamics and the municipal interventions into the conflict in IJplein, I was able to put the question of representative-

[8] See Chapter Two for more discussion of the research sites.

ness to rest. I realized that just as there was no clear category of *hangjongeren*, and no coherent set of adult reactions, nor was there a typical neighborhood. In every place, there were only particular youths and adults, specific neighborhood contexts and histories, and, therefore, each conflict was unique. Although there might be similarities, the constellation of these elements would appear different in each situation; in fact, as I was soon to learn all too well, even within a particular place, various parties often perceive and experience a situation in a vastly different way from one another. Finding a "typical" neighborhood was not the real problem for this study; instead, a great challenge was learning how to live with the tangled webs of gossip such conflicts inevitably produce, and trying to maintain congenial relationships with people who disdain, even despise, each other. I should make clear at the outset that this study does not seek to determine who is to blame or who is the victim, nor does it attempt to get at "what really happened" in any given conflict. Instead, I hope to demonstrate that these rather mundane conflicts are like windows, through which we can observe much larger social changes that are in the process of unfolding.

In addition to my work on particular neighborhood conflicts, I also sought to understand how the "youth problem" was represented at the social scientific and policy level. The amount of government-sponsored, social scientific research, reports and policy papers relevant to my study was simply overwhelming. Reading the literature on *hangjongeren*, for example, led me to research on the recently developed "youth and safety" policy, studies about "at-risk" youth,[9] reports on the use and regulation of public space, papers on problems of and with ethnic minority youth, theories about "criminal

[9] The Dutch word is "*risicojongeren*," which literally translates to "risky youth." This word has a level of ambivalence, in that youth can be both "at risk" and "the risk," in the sense of creating a risk for others.

careers," and arguments about the relationship between social marginalization and potential criminal behavior. An enormous research apparatus developed during the expansion of the social welfare state, and a great deal of research is paid for, through one funding stream or another, by the government. Universities are supported by government funding, and governmental ministries and their committees put prominent scholars to work on the problems they identify, conducting research and producing reports on particular issues. Also funded by the government are national research institutions, such as the Central Bureau for Statistics (CBS), and the Social and Cultural Planning Office (SCP). In addition, there are independent research organizations, such as the Dutch Institute for Care and Welfare (NIZW) and the Dutch Institute for Public Opinion and Market Research (TNS NIPO); these are sometimes commissioned to carry out studies for government bodies and government-funded organizations.

Research has grown into a kind of industry, developing logically out of the availability of government funds for such projects. In many ways, the government's ability to commission research to make recommendations for policy is quite beneficial: policy makers are able to easily marshal resources to tackle the problems they identify. However, whoever is in charge of a policy area has a great deal of power to define what constitutes a problem, without leaving much room for debate. At times, the path that researchers take tends to resemble that of a school of fish: all moving in this direction, then shifting together, into a different current. It can be difficult, in this context, to find scholars who are doing research outside of government-sponsored parameters, without

practical policy ends, and against the grain of current political discourses and concerns.[10] While it is beyond the scope of this study to fully analyze the different strains and the many tangential areas of policy and research that address the "*hangjongeren* problem," I do provide an overview of the major changes in youth policy in Chapter Four, and discuss the intersection of research that adopts a culturally fundamentalist perspective with other contemporary ethnic politics in Chapter Six.

Seeing Myself through other People's Eyes

My idealized image of fieldwork was repeatedly challenged, as well, by the complexity of language politics. I had assumed that all good anthropologists would, whenever possible, try to become fluent in the language of the people they were studying, so I learned Dutch, taking two semesters' worth of classes at Columbia University, and participating in intensive courses in the Netherlands during the summers of 2000 and 2001. My skills were never close to perfect; I used awkward phraseology, stumbled over the lack of a future tense, and my accent was distinctly American. Fortunately for me, that accent is considered to be charming by many (unlike Arabic, Turkish, and Berber accents, which are sometimes ridiculed). In almost every single introductory conversation I had, the person would remark on my Dutch, and how clever I was to have learned it. And then, time and time again, if the person to whom I was speaking was White, he or she would say, sometimes disgustedly, something to the effect of: "There are people here who have lived here 20 years, and who *still* don't know the language."

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[10] This problem was noted by J.E. Ellemers, a Dutch sociologist, more than two decades ago: "If this intermeshing of universities and governments continues . . . one wonders where a continuous stream of criticism, new ideas, and enduring public discussions, at least in the universities, will come from" (1981, 132).

Such condemnations were issued most frequently about ethnic minorities, but Americans and other immigrants were sometimes characterized in similar terms.

I never learned how to accept this compliment without being complicit in the prejudice underlying it. I tried to explain that I had access to good schools, intensive language courses, and that I had a strong reason for wanting to learn the language that others may not have. But my attempts at explanation fell short; I became "proof" that Dutch could be learned quickly, I was justification for their prejudice. This is, in part, a methodological issue: I was dependent on the good will of those whom I encountered, and it would have been too awkward to fully reject their compliment or to sternly correct them. Even though my experience of living in New York City has convinced me that many immigrants do not necessarily need to learn the dominant language of the country in which they live, to suggest as much in the Netherlands was quite controversial.[11] The need for (some) immigrants to learn Dutch is nearly incontestable common wisdom; many other English speaking immigrants never learn Dutch, but that seems to cause less consternation. My speaking Dutch, for many of those with whom I spoke, worked to automatically enter me into the "us" category in the conflict between "us" (White, Western) and "them" (non-White, non-Western). I had imagined that my speaking Dutch would be an unadulterated good, a boon in my research efforts, allowing me to connect with people and communicate. In fact, it did appear to help me in the estimation of some people, and probably affected their willingness to confide in me. But as the months wore on, I noticed that I started to downplay my language skills, and even feel embarrassed at

[11] The politics of language and the subject of integration policy is taken up in Chapter Six in greater depth.

times, as I came to deeply understand how little control I had over how people interpreted those skills, within their way of seeing the world.

Some people also thought that my research would wind up helping solve their problems with local youth, or at least give insight into these problems, thus sparing other people in the future what they were experiencing. I tried to explain that my research was not going to be directed toward making policy recommendations, but they still encouraged me to make sure the local policy makers and municipal officials received a copy of my study, once it was completed. I recognized that I had begun the research with an initial bias in favor of "the youth," for I tend to think that youth in the United States and in the Netherlands, and, I suspect, in many other places, are subjected to excessive scrutiny and surveillance. Mary Douglas' insight that "dirt is simply matter out of place" (2001) has deeply affected my anthropological vision, and supported my tendency to investigate how "problems" are social constructs, even as they also have social consequences. When I looked about, on my many walks and bike rides through Amsterdam North, the streets looked quiet to me, and the kids seemed pretty well behaved; I truly didn't see what the fuss was about. But, when I told people that I wanted to study the problems with the youth in the neighborhood, the *hangjongeren*, many immediately assumed that I, too, condemned the youths' behavior. Even though I explained that I would also be talking to the youths and their parents, to get their perspective, some still assumed that I would, in the end, come to see the "reality" of the problem. In their view, any rational person would have to conclude that the youth were in the wrong, and I was not able to steer them clear of that expectation. I did come to fully realize that some youth cause serious disturbances, act aggressively, and try to

intimidate adults, but I continue to believe that these acts, and what they come to symbolize to adults, cannot be separated from the context in which they take place. The problem with categories like "*hangjongeren*" is that they separate people from the specific circumstances in which they exist, and allow for their objectification and criminalization. Of course, such categories are essential for government, as Michel Foucault showed (2003), for they allow officials, parents, police, and neighbors to take action upon, to intervene in, groups and populations, through surveillance, research, disciplining, policing, and, in the case of youth gone bad, the "*harde kern*" or hard core, even "re-socializing" in work-detention facilities.

As a White person, as a social scientist, many never doubted that I would agree with them in their language politics or their interpretation of local conflicts; in fact, it sometimes became difficult to get some people to understand particular questions I was trying to ask. Seeing the extensive attention paid to Moroccan youth behavior, I wondered about the practice of racial profiling among the police. I had heard, anecdotally, about one White senior police officer who lies in wait in an unmarked car for the youth center to close at night. When the boys, predominantly Moroccan, make their way home, he swoops in at the first sign of rowdy behavior, catching, for example, boys walking on the bumpers of cars parked along the road. In interviews, I suggested that this youth behavior was not so unusual; many young people can be playful, rambunctious and even irresponsible with other people's property. Even adults, one could certainly argue, can be irresponsible with other people's property. But when I expressed doubt about the seriousness of this kind of infraction, and suggested that many of the boys had had contact with the police partly because some police officers watched them like hawks, my

skepticism was brushed aside. I simply didn't understand, I was told. We've been dealing with this problem (meaning Moroccan youth) for years, they said. You'll see, they assured me, if you stay here long enough. My questions fell on deaf ears; it was as if they couldn't be asked, as if they couldn't be heard. In the minds of so many, the truth of the situation was apparent enough, and, I, as a scholar, was charged with simply reporting the facts.

Of course, facts appear differently under different lights, from different perspectives. What seems unquestionable to the elderly widow, peering from her upstairs window—that the neighbor boys are undisciplined, rude, and always doing drugs—appears to be the truth, from her perspective. That the boys she watches say that she spies on them because she is paranoid and has nothing else to do is no less truthful, from their viewpoint. My task was not to untangle conflicting stories in order to discern the truth, or get enmeshed in the "he said-she said" gossip game, but rather to document how small interactions could be differently interpreted by the various parties, and how they could escalate into quite significant conflicts. My protestations to Mrs. X or Mr. Y about the limited value of my work in solving their particular problem fell on deaf ears, just as did my "naïve" questions about racial profiling.

The experience of fieldwork was more surprising than I could have imagined; I had expected, of course, to be challenged and startled, but rarely in the ways that I was. My expectations and my surprise revealed that, even though I began my training in anthropology in 1990, during the critical turn regarding writing ethnography, and even though I thought I had torn down my internal stereotypes of what "real ethnography" is, I still held onto an idealized image of fieldwork. I expected to form close relationships

with my informants, spending hours talking, sharing ideas and stories. I expected, after some initial hardships, to fall in love with my field site, and to hold, eternally, a warm place for it in my heart. I expected my relationships with my informants to become more mutual, they wanting to know about me, about life in the U.S., and about my opinions and thoughts about their country. Perhaps these were silly expectations, given that I was living in a large cosmopolitan city in a northwestern European country, where my presence was not particularly interesting to most, and where keeping to oneself is generally a virtue.

A friend of mine suggested to me that because I was seen primarily as a researcher, it would never have occurred to those I interviewed that I would enjoy speaking with them or socializing in more casual situations. In any case, the fieldwork was far more transactional than I ever imagined. Or perhaps charitable is a better word. The fact that so many people gave me their time and their honest opinions, with little to no return for them, speaks a great deal about Dutch hospitality and admiration for scholarship. There was no meta-frame of relationship around our interactions; there was no cushion of sociality. People did not give me interviews because we became friends, or because they felt social pressure to do so. I was there to get information, and they agreed to provide it to me. The fact that they gave me their time so freely made it difficult, in places, to write about the racism that I encountered, to disagree with some people's perceptions of their neighbors, to counter individuals' narratives about local conflicts. I felt, and continue to feel, extremely conscious of the fact that some of those who assisted me want to read this study, that they expect it to be helpful to them, and that they gave

me their time without question. This is the obligation of "the gift," as Marcel Mauss so skillfully showed us: I am bound to reciprocate.

I try in this study to do just that, to the best of my ability, to represent the different points of view present in the local conflicts, and to demonstrate why people respond the way they do to the specter of *hangjongeren*—even though I personally see the youth behavior as largely harmless. What is not harmless, however, is the way in which youths and adults, and in particular Moroccan youths and White adults, are becoming more and more polarized. This kind of polarization, as well, is being writ large in Dutch society—and stimulated by extremism in the political realm—and has been manifested in the firebombing of Islamic schools, mosques, and churches in the weeks following the murder of filmmaker Theo van Gogh, in November of 2004, by a young Moroccan man.[12] In the wake of the murder, politicians called for adherence to Dutch "norms and values" and anonymous bloggers worried about Islam "taking over" the Netherlands, fearful that their daughters will be forced to wear headscarves. I also see growing political extremism in other developments: calls for more re-socialization schools and work camps for youthful (often ethnic minority) criminals; proposals to create a peaceful, *hangjongeren*-free, senior citizens-only town; and plans by the Minister of Education to institutionalize courses on Dutch identity in the schools. These changes and movements make clear that Dutchness—as a social identity and as a way of life—is felt by many to be vulnerable, to be under attack. Youth are often fearfully described as "on the wrong track"; this study posits that the fear about youth is representative of a larger fear about

[12] Van Gogh was a well known filmmaker, columnist, talking head and iconoclast. He frequently made extremely provocative, discriminatory remarks, such as calling Moroccan "goat fuckers" (*geitenneukers*). In Chapters Two and Six, I discuss in greater depth his influence and the circumstances of his death.

society, as a whole, being "on the wrong track," a fear that is often voiced with the claim that the Netherlands has suffered from the past decades of "too much tolerance." I hope to show, in the end, that this discourse about "too much tolerance" is more complex than it first appears, variously serving—depending on the speaker—not only as a criticism of social policy, but as an indictment of individualization, a desire for clear limits and self-discipline, and a longing for more interaction among neighbors.[13] The task, in the following chapters, is to try to show how these large social questions and anxieties come to be reflected, intertwined, and exemplified in everyday, mundane interactions, such as the ways in which people try to deal with hang-around youth.

The Organization of the Dissertation

Following this introduction, Chapter Two provides an overview of some aspects of the Netherlands that are perhaps less well known. I discuss the general value placed on "acting normal," or not standing out; the history of pillarization, or the separation of society into religious and ideological groups; and the large-scale changes to Dutch society since the 1960s. I review some of the more important demographic changes, specifically in terms of the recent waves of immigration and the continuing "aging" of the population. I then discuss the Amsterdam North in greater depth, situating the researched neighborhoods within the larger context of a changing Netherlands.

Chapters Three and Four examine "the youth problem" more closely, specifically in relation to the idea of "hang-around youth" and to the historical development of youth policy. Beginning with a discussion of some of the literature on the cultural construction

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[13] Similarly, in academia, the value of "tolerance" has come to be an item for debate; the collection of essays in *De Lege Tolerantie: Over vrijheid en vrijblijvenheid in Nederland* (*The Empty Tolerance: Concerning freedom and permissiveness in the Netherlands*) displays the range of scholarly positions on this matter (Hooven 2001).

of youth as a difficult group, Chapter Three takes up the question of language, and questions the way in which the category of "*hangjongeren*" is employed. The concept of "*overlast*," or excessive nuisance, is also introduced; I show how this word plays an important role in the articulation of adults' complaints about youth. In particular, the use of *overlast* suggests that the problem of youth today is a problem of adult suffering, a sense that one has been harmed and that one is unable to resolve the situation alone. After presenting a brief history of "hanging around" as an activity throughout much of Dutch history, I analyze some of the recent news reporting on youth in the Netherlands in which the topic of youth hanging around is presented as if it were a new problem, without historical precedent. In particular, I examine one news story from 2003 about the "train terrorists," or youth who were misbehaving on the public trains, as an example of sensationalistic reporting that does little to clarify the actual incidents being reported.

Whereas Chapter Three looks at the use of the term *hangjongeren*, Chapter Four is dedicated to a broader examination of official youth policy in general. This chapter traces the emergence of four present-day themes in youth policy: a focus on "prevention," a concern with "at-risk" youth, a movement to collect and share information about youthful individuals and groups, and an effort to make public space "safe." This section provides a brief overview of the last 100 years of youth policy, with an eye to showing how the definition of "the problem" to be solved changed over time. After an overview of some of the theories that had a strong influence on youth policy in the 1990s, I turn to an examination of how youth work has changed in recent years. I discuss two of the newer projects currently in operation in Amsterdam North, "At Home on the Street" and "Safe Meeting Places," and argue that these projects show that youth work has become

focused on alleviating adults' complaints about *overlast*, and that adults expect the social welfare state to ensure their freedom to live without disturbance. These projects also demonstrate a general lack of interaction between neighborhood adults and neighborhood youth; instead, professionals are hired to play with and build relationships with youth.

Many of the youth policy changes undertaken since 1990 are related to a growing discourse about "feelings of being unsafe," or "*onveiligheidsgevoelens*," particularly in connection with the presence of young people in public spaces. Chapter Five focuses on the emergence of this discourse, the practice of measuring these feelings, and the crime statistics thought to be related to such feelings. I discuss some of the recent social scientific arguments about fearfulness, particularly in the context of a more general economic insecurity in late-industrial society. In this chapter, I examine recent work on the social act of talking about crime, which together show that talk about "feeling unsafe" is an indication not only of larger insecurities but of a kind of popular wisdom about what "most other people" think and fear, which shows that talk about feeling unsafe does not necessarily relate to actually feeling unsafe. The presence of youth in public space may have little relation to actual crime statistics, but fear of such youth does make manifest larger anxieties about the state of society, in terms of increased anonymity, heightened class division, and growing ethnic difference. While current fears about terrorism clearly affect feelings of insecurity, I suggest that the discourse of *onveiligheidsgevoelens*—generally focused on the presence of young people and physical disorder rather than terrorism—is a way of talking about the limits of the social welfare state's ability to ensure the livability of public spaces. The discursive development of *onveiligheidsgevoelens* is then placed within the context of Amsterdam North; I argue

that many of those who feel unsafe are those adults who are least connected to others in the neighborhood, and those who hold high expectations of the social welfare state to regulate public spaces, whereas those who are parents or who regularly interact with youth do not report such feelings.

This dissertation would not be complete without providing some analysis of the current politicization of ethnic difference, the role of Pim Fortuyn and the criticism of Islam, and a discussion of how these together affect the overall perception of the problem of youth. While most of my research focused on White adults and White youth, a dominant public and political concern during my time in the Netherlands centered on the behavior of ethnic minority youth. Chapter Six examines the widespread concerns about ethnic minority youth in relation to political discourses about the failure of "multiculturalist" politics and the need for ethnic minorities to be "integrated." I argue that this development must be seen as a political project that capitalizes on long-standing cultural chauvinism, which has made it more acceptable to publicly voice racist sentiments. Importantly, many conservative groups position themselves against "political correctness" and valorize "naming the problem"; rarely, however, is widespread discrimination or political grandstanding "named" as part of the problem. At the neighborhood level, most people expressed much more nuanced ideas about ethnic difference and the degree to which ethnic minorities should conform to Dutch culture. The discrepancy between official rhetoric about integration and the attitudes at the neighborhood level suggests that ethnic difference is another location where criticisms with and disappointments in the social welfare state are voiced.

In Chapter Seven, I engage with another relatively recent discourse, that of "norms and values." In this section, I examine the way in which Premier Jan Peter Balkenende has employed this discourse to argue that ethnic minorities need to integrate and adjust to the fundamental values of Dutch society. The themes of this discourse are refracted in neighborhood-level talk about the loss of social cohesion in society, the rise of individualization and anonymity, and current efforts to establish boundaries about what is permissible. Problems with youth are spoken about in terms such as "*aanpassen*" (adjust or fit in) and "*aanspreken*" (speak to someone, admonish), which resonate with—but are distinct from—the political rhetoric of norms and values. This framework does allow, however, for both youth and ethnic minorities to be characterized as insufficiently socialized. In response, behavior rules are established, as seen in two projects examined here: the "Golden Rules" of Gouda and the Respect Project of Amsterdam North. I posit that such rules demonstrate adults' desire to have public places be orderly and regulated, and their desire to have someone else oversee such efforts, most preferably the youths themselves.

The preceding chapters can, in a way, be seen as providing multiple levels of context for Chapter Eight. In this chapter, I examine in detail one particular conflict between some adults and youths in one neighborhood, "Smith Street," in Amsterdam North. In this neighborhood, conflict over "hanging around" escalated to the point that some of the youth were picked up by the police in a paddy wagon, taken to the station, and given fines; the adult around whom the conflict centered was harassed and her property damaged, in apparent retaliation for complaining. Adult residents entreated the municipality to intervene, and organized a series of neighborhood meetings. These

meetings were moderated by civil servants, and eventually led to the creation of a set of behavior rules, *leefregels*, or "rules for living," for the youth. The rules were printed on a large plaque and hung up next to the youths' hang-out spot; after being slightly defaced, they were removed, repaired, hung up again, and then stolen that same night. This chapter presents the range of perspectives expressed over this matter by youth, adults, parents, youth workers, social workers, civil servants and police officers. I argue that the attempt of a few residents to enlist the help of the social welfare state in resolving the problem, and the sustained and ultimately unsuccessful efforts of those authorities, exemplifies how such situations can lead to deep frustration with the state among some adults. In addition, this example shows that the process worked to exclude or implicitly criticize other residents, including, most pointedly, the parents of the youth. Creating these rules attempted to paper over existing conflicts over what kinds of behavior were desirable in that neighborhood, and how complaints should be handled. Solving the problem through community meetings did not "bring everyone together" as was claimed; rather, the meetings created more division in an already fragmented environment.

In the final chapter, I attempt to bring together the multiple threads from the preceding chapters to argue that, in addition to the many layers of context that inflect the *hangjongeren* problematic, three developments in Dutch society since 1960 best account for the deep frustration felt by some adults. These adult-youth conflicts could be seen as an expression of a reaction against the liberalism of the 1960s, I believe that even more complicated dynamics are at work. I suggest, instead, that a particular constellation of ideas about individualization and personal freedoms, the support and the role of the state in social life, and an idealized residential environment work together to shape these

adults' reactions to youth hanging around in public spaces. While I did not set out to study notions of selfhood or people's relationship to the state—and asked no direct questions about individualization or the state—these themes became increasingly clearer as I worked to understand these many layers of context and meaning. A pattern emerged about some adults' reluctance to interact with others in the public realm; they wish to be free to pursue their own interests, without having anyone interfere, without being forced to engage. They claim a right to a peaceful and ordered neighborhood, and experience these youth as an imposition on their personal freedom. This pattern intersects with a reconfiguration of authority through individualization, where neither church, state, teacher nor parent is to be obeyed without question. Within this context, it is clear that youth have not simply developed, *sui generis*, their wish to be left alone; their sometimes aggressive response to those who would tell them what to do has not originated solely within some youth psychological, biological or developmental phase, or ethnic subculture. The freedom to live as one chooses is a dominant, mainstream principle in Dutch society, as are the values of challenging authority and developing one's own self (*zelfontplooing*). If anything, youth have subscribed to their elders' values only too well. Compounding these developments is the expectation that the social welfare state should be able to create order and respond to the needs of its citizens; today, civil servants are employed to solve interpersonal conflicts, to manage neighborhoods, to play games with children. In its efforts to create the conditions for full personal realization, the state has come to insert itself in almost every aspect of the lives of its citizens, and those citizens are profoundly disappointed by the limitations of the state to meet its promise.

Chapter Two – Confronting Stereotypes: The Netherlands in perspective

Confronting Stereotypes

When I mention to people in the United States that I do research in the Netherlands, they almost invariably respond with comments about tulips and windmills, or marijuana and prostitution. These comments reflect enduring stereotypes about the Netherlands: that the countryside is a patchwork of well-ordered farming spaces, that most people are tulip growers or cheese makers or clog wearers, that there are canals everywhere, that Dutch people are exceptionally tolerant, or progressive. In most cases, there is a sense of wonderment and envy when people learn that my research is based in the Netherlands, although occasionally people express consternation about Dutch drug and prostitution policies. Often, I find myself responding to all these different stereotypes by trying to create countervailing images, by trying to balance out common misunderstandings. I tell people that the Netherlands is actually quite densely populated, that most people live in cities and towns, that even in villages, most people live near their neighbors. I explain that most parents discourage their children from using drugs, that "drug tourists" are often ridiculed, and that visiting sex workers—or being one—is generally just as frowned upon as it is in the U.S.

In the same way, when I tell people that my work was based in Amsterdam, people often respond by talking about canals, and Anne Frank, and pretty tilted houses, and the Van Gogh museum. I begin my reply: "Well, yes, Amsterdam is very beautiful. But I did my research in a different part of the city, away from the center. . ." Often I leave these conversations frustrated, because merely contesting stereotypes does not

actually tell people very much about what is really interesting about the Netherlands in general or my research site in particular. More remarkable, perhaps, is the reaction I commonly get when I tell someone that I'm studying adults' irritation with and fear of teenagers who hang around in public spaces. Surprised, many people respond, "But I thought the Dutch were so tolerant!" And again, I find myself in that balancing posture: "Well, yes, there is a history of tolerance in the Netherlands, but . . ."

The line between simply repeating stereotypes and describing cultural patterns is a tricky one to negotiate. I would argue that the difference between the two is that the stereotype has the function of actually limiting our understanding, while good descriptions of cultural patterns have the potential to illuminate worldviews and behaviors. For example, the stereotype "Americans are obsessed with cars," does not tell us much about what different sorts of Americans think about cars, why they think those things, and how they behave in relation to cars. There may be a kernel of truth in some stereotypes, but they are not very useful in engendering understanding. This chapter attempts to provide a brief introduction to some of the aspects of Dutch society that fall outside of the frame of common stereotypes. I attempt here to also provide an historical context, so that present-day anxieties about hang-around youth and about the future of the Netherlands can be read in relation to the changes of the last decades.

Consensus and Conformity: "Just act normal!"

Many Americans imagine the Netherlands—and Amsterdam in particular—to be a rather wild place, an image certainly not disputed by Dutch tourism campaigns. One can openly buy and smoke marijuana and hashish, and visit a "Red Light" district where sex workers publicly solicit customers, standing in their little rooms, behind glass windows. The

possibilities for engaging in these activities, however, do not necessarily translate into an "anything goes" atmosphere. In my first visit to Amsterdam, in fact, I was struck by how calm and "normal" the city was. I suppose I had näively expected a kind of *Mardi Gras* celebration in the streets, and was surprised to see that most people just kept to themselves and quietly went about their business. The only people who were really noticeable were some of the tourists, as they whooped and hollered, drunken and stoned, along the canals.

As I have come to know the Netherlands better, I have learned that there is a certain amount of social pressure against "standing out." This attitude is reflected in a number of sayings: "Just act normal, that's already crazy enough!" (*Doe maar normaal, dan doe je gek genoeg*!); "Tall trees catch the most wind" (*Hoge bomen vangen veel wind*); "Don't stick your head out above the ground (otherwise you will lose it to the thresher)" (*Je moet je kop niet boven de maaiveld uitsteken*). The pressure here is toward egalitarianism; generally speaking, one should not expect or desire special treatment, behave flamboyantly or outrageously, or act superior to others. Until very recently, many politicians rode their bikes or drove themselves to work, even to national government buildings; to have a driver or bodyguard was seen as "putting on airs."[14] An anecdote told to me by an acquaintance is illustrative: new to the Netherlands from the U.S., he was teaching a class of undergraduates, and one day was handing back graded papers. As he handed an outstanding paper to one student, he commented aloud, "This was an excellent paper. Nice work." Later that day the student came to his office, and asked him, a bit angrily, to never recognize her publicly like that again, for after class she had

[14] Of course, this can be seen as "putting on" a different kind of "air," as an assertion that such politicians—typically from elite backgrounds—are "just regular people."

been mercilessly teased by her peers, who insinuated that she was trying to be better than them. This egalitarian posture may be interpreted, at least in part, in relation to a well-developed pattern of muting or avoiding conflict.

The "Polder Model"

The social value placed on conflict-free relations intersects with a broader political practice of consensus building and compromise. This political culture is commonly traced back hundreds of years to the decentralized character of the Dutch republic (approximately 1580-1800), where representative bodies existed at the level of the city, the province and the republic, as well as to the extensive cooperation exerted in draining lakes and sea water to create useable land (called *polders*).[15] Domestic political conflicts have tended to be solved through compromise and committees, rather than through force or power struggles. The Dutch have prided themselves on this political tradition, often referred to as the "*poldermodel*," in which interested parties come together and jointly work out solutions to benefit the collective. In national elections, for example, the three or four parties with the highest percentages of votes come together and negotiate at length, sometimes over months, to create a compromise agenda for the governing coalition. Tellingly, in approaching the economic recession of the mid-1980s, this model was employed in negotiating compromises between unions, business owners, and government, with the idea that neither strikes nor layoffs were in the best interest of the collective. The extent to which such compromises actually represent consensus or conformity to existing power structures is an interesting question.

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[15] See, for example, Shetter (1997). For an in-depth examination of the historical development of the Dutch Republic, see Israel (1995).

Addressing conflicts in the Netherlands often involves recourse to the "*overleg*," or discussion-meeting, in which participants gather around the table and seek out compromises and solutions. This practice was easily observable throughout my research, as adults, youths and municipal officials frequently met together to talk about youth behavior, as did police officers, social workers and policy makers, as well, in a variety of group formations. Of course, as shall become evident in Chapter Eight, simply meeting to discuss a problem is not equivalent to reaching actual consensus. In fact, as the example of the Smith Street meetings suggests, the *overleg* may work to create the appearance of consensus when none actually exists.[16] Many adults and civic officials evinced a strong belief in the possibility of "being in conversation," claiming that "as long as we keep talking to each other, it will turn out OK." The *overleg*, however, is a socially structured event, and, as such, is not a truly mutual conversation; authorities or self-appointed leaders direct the flow of the discussion, and, at least in the Smith Street example, not all voices are equally weighted, and emotional outbursts and strongly critical remarks are discouraged.

From Egalitarianism to Extremism: Fortuyn, Van Gogh and Hirsi Ali

I take the time here to describe these cultural patterns of (apparent) consensus forging and egalitarianism because the political sphere has undergone some seismic changes of late. In the last few years, there has been a surge in extremism in the public political realm, perhaps best exemplified by the late Pim Fortuyn's xenophobic populism, the late Theo

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[16] See also, for another example, Becker (2000), in which he argues that the culture of "consensualism" does not mean actually achieving consensus; it is rather a social "ritual" of participation and conversation that is a "mechanism of sustaining hegemony." He writes: "Participants have to argue carefully, not to take a clear cut point of view. Not adhering to these rules and being distinctively critical means to disturb the atmosphere of consensualism and results in excommunication . . . The most suitable way to adjust to these conditions is to conform to the dominant opinion. . . ." (Becker 2000, 26-7).

van Gogh's incendiary comments against ethnic minorities, and Ayaan Hirsi Ali's campaign against Islam. I have found the popularity of these figures difficult to interpret against the general appreciation for "not standing out," egalitarianism and consensus. For example, Fortuyn was spectacularly flamboyant in his lifestyle and in flouting his homosexuality—having a butler, dressing extravagantly, and talking about his sexual life on prime time television—all of which would seem to transgress the value of "just acting normal." He established his own political party, named the "Pim Fortuyn Party," after being forced to leave the "Livable Netherlands Party" (Leefbaar Nederland). Calling Islam "backwards," and arguing that intolerance cannot be permitted in a tolerant land (and employing his homosexuality as a badge of his understanding of tolerance), Fortuyn gave voice and momentum to anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim sentiment already present in the Netherlands. Saying that the Netherlands was "full," Fortuyn also proposed to radically limit immigration, and was compared to Austria's Jörg Haider by some on the Dutch Left.[17] Shortly before the May 2002 election, Fortuyn was assassinated by a White Dutch man who was a member of a radical animal rights group; the murderer has said that he believed Fortuyn to be a grave danger to the country. The third-ever assassination of a prominent political figure in Dutch history, Fortuyn's death was preceded only by that of Willem van Oranje in 1584 and Johan de Witt in 1672.

Fortuyn's life and death have been a significant factor in changing the political landscape of the Netherlands, and his impact continues to be felt in other, more recent events. In November, 2004, the filmmaker and iconoclast Theo van Gogh, distant

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[17] Haider's anti-immigrant and anti-EU positions led him to be characterized by many as a populist and extreme-right politician; the rise of his Freedom Party was seen as a troubling development by many across Europe, and as linked to the rise of the extreme right in France (Le Pen's Front National) and Belgium (Dewinter's Vlaamse Blok).

relative to Vincent van Gogh, was murdered in the street by a 26 year old Dutch citizen of Moroccan descent, who left a note on the body explaining that his act was committed in the name of Islam. Van Gogh had not been one for making subtle criticisms; publicly calling Muslims "goat fuckers" (*geitenneukers*), claiming that a female Jewish historian had "wet dreams about Dr. Mengele," and saying that looked forward to "pissing on the grave" of a Green-Left (GroenLinks) leader, Van Gogh had drawn the ire of many. More recently, he had teamed up with the controversial Liberal Party (VVD) politician and former Somali refugee, Ayaan Hirsi Ali, to direct her provocative movie, "Submission." Linking domestic abuse to the Koran, the film shows a naked woman, wearing a semi-transparent veil, speaking in English about her husband and abuser.[18] In later images, an unclothed female back is shown with Koranic verses written in black paint on it, and what appear to be whiplashes.

This film drew wide condemnation from Muslim groups, and was seen as a precipitating event in Theo van Gogh's murder. Hirsi Ali was the more desired target, according to the assassin's note, written in Dutch verse and street slang, but she was too heavily protected by bodyguards. Hirsi Ali has long been criticized by Muslim groups for her condemnation of Islam, and her call to restrict immigration from Muslim countries; at the same time, she has been treated as an icon by some feminists and by members of the Liberal party. Similarly, since his death, Van Gogh has been lionized as a "martyr for free speech"; a public memorial and demonstration was held on Dam Square, during which people banged on pots and pans—making noise to protest the "silencing" of Van Gogh.

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[18] The ten minute film is available for download at http://www.ifilm.com.

Political rhetoric over immigrants, Islam, and the future of "Dutchness" is shrill. In the name of free speech, it appears to be becoming more acceptable to make polarizing, outrageous, even racist statements. For example, in response to the murder of Van Gogh, one politician publicly called on the King of Morocco to "stop exporting murderers," even though Van Gogh's killer was born and raised in the Netherlands. Charismatic figures taking controversial positions have become heroes to many; today, one tends to hear less about compromise or equality, and more about "setting limits" and the need for "norms and values." As I will try to show, however, there is quite a bit of distance between public political rhetoric and neighborhood-level attitudes about ethnic difference; talk about "setting limits" and "too much tolerance" should be seen, at least in part, as reflecting a deep dissatisfaction with the limits of the social welfare state, rather than as simply as racist or nationalist sentiment. At the same time, recent events resonate beyond their specificity into all sorts of other issues, including discussions about the *hangjongeren* problem. Extremism in the larger political sphere is reflected in more extreme approaches and responses to *hangjongeren*: housing developers have brought forward plans to create a whole city only for elderly people; the Amsterdam mayor has cleared the way to allow police to issue temporary prohibitions to stop individual youths from hanging around on specific streets; and the news media have seized on stories about teenage "train terrorists" and youths who have "forced out" residents from their neighborhood. Hanging around, once seen as a rather normal behavior for most young people, is now indicative of potential societal pathology.

Pillarization: A History of Separateness

One of the more interesting, and less widely known, aspects of Dutch society is its history of "pillarization" (*verzuiling*), a socio-political arrangement that emerged in the late 1800s and lasted until the late 1960s. The term refers to the so-called vertical organization of society into discrete, separate pillars, or columns (*zuilen*): Protestant, Catholic, Socialist and Liberal. The notion of "pillars" suggests that people were not divided into economic classes; instead, people from all social and economic statuses were together members of one or another ideological pillar, which were together strong enough to hold up the "roof" of Dutch society; this discursive move is belied by the fact that most of the Socialist pillar was working class.

This form of socio-political organization emerged in part in response to political crises of the 19th century, which came to a head in the late 1800s over the issue of the educational system.[19] The Dutch Kingdom, established in 1815, was based in part on building a public church, the Protestant (*Hervormde*, or Reformed) Church, and a public educational system. This project became fractured in the theological debates of the 1860s between the liberal (*hervormde*) and neo-orthodox (*gereformeerde*, also "reformed"; the prefix "*ge*" is a linguistic reference to the orthodox Calvinism under the earlier Dutch Republic) strains. Over the following decades, the neo-orthodox faction was led by Abraham Kuyper, who brought this theological debate into the political realm. Kuyper worked to extend religious influence outside of the churches, campaigning for religious educational institutions as well as public schools. Forming an alliance between the

[19] I am indebted to Peter van Rooden, a friend and a Dutch religious historian, for his many communications with me, in which he helped clarify the development and the politics of pillarization.

Orthodox Protestants and the Catholics proved successful: religious schools were established through and funded by the state.

Peter van Rooden argues that it is important to distinguish between the large-scale growth in political mobilization (1870-1920) that occurred as a result of the work of Kuyper and his allies, and the later socio political division into ideological pillars that began after 1920.[20] Arend Lijphart, focusing on formal politics, has written about the stability of these divisions, arguing that pillarization should be understood as consociationalism, or power-sharing among elites within segmented societies (1975). This delineation between the hard-fought political battles that resulted in state-funded religious schools and the development of a practice of elite compromise is an important one, for it situates this pattern of rule as emerging in reaction to social division and ideological conflict. This period was one of serious contestation for hegemony, as competing political movements sought to set up institutions—including the youth organizations that will be discussed in the following chapter—to help them achieve their vision of society. E.H. Bax traces the emergence of pillarization from a long history of struggle between religious and secular authorities, including conflicts over poverty legislation in the early 1800s, the schools conflict in the late 1800s, and the turn-of-the-century emergence of socialism (1995). Henk Daalder argues that pillarization was the result of a long-term "learning process" among elites about governance:

> . . . there was a widespread awareness that at most power might be shared rather than conquered . . . one might speak of an effect of accumulating experience, a learning process suggesting that a recognition of claims for autonomy need not conflict with practical cooperation among groups (Daalder 1984, cited in Bax 1995, 7).

[20] Personal electronic communication, February 2, 2006.

Politically, pillarization built on a long pattern of rule by internally heterogeneous committees, traceable back to the patterns of representation and negotiation in the early Dutch Republic.

This pattern of compromise can also be read as the consolidation of power among the political and cultural elites, which socialism and Catholic subcultures were feared to threaten. Peter van Rooden writes:

> The Netherlands entered the second half of the nineteenth century as a homogeneous nation-state, with a surprisingly modern constitution, but a stagnant economy and stable society, in which the cleavage between the political and cultural elite and the common people was by far the most important social distinction. . . .
>
> When the Netherlands entered its period of industrialization and societal differentiation in the 1870s and 1880s the country seemed posed to follow a course which would see the broad consensus of the elite on national identity challenged by the emergence of socialism and the building of a Catholic sub-culture (1999, 103-4).

Van Rooden argues, however, that socialism could not have been a serious challenge to the existing elite power structure given the "permanent minority position" of the Catholics, as well as European socialism's "failure to provide a working alternative to the concept of the nation as the ultimate moral community" (1999, 104).

The social cleavages of pillarization worked to limit the possibility for class-based struggles outside the Socialist pillar, as it was difficult to build mass movements. Van Rooden may be correct in positing that this movement may have not ultimately posed much challenge to the Protestant hegemony for the reasons above; at any rate, we will never know what socialism would have looked like outside the political structure of pillarization. It is imaginable, however, that a swell in the number of Socialists would have appeared threatening to traditional, religious, and conservative elites. But as a part of the system, the Socialists' ability to appeal to all laborers was limited; working class

Catholics and Protestants had to choose between their political, economic and religious identifications. William Z. Shetter, in his overview of Dutch society, writes that "the system had the effect of minimizing radicalism and withdrawal from the political process, and it prevented a strong left-right polarization"; some Catholic bishops even "warn[ed] Catholics that they would be refused the sacraments if they joined Socialist organizations or even so much as listened to Socialist radio programs" (1997, 115).[21] All of these factors do not mean, however, that Socialists were necessarily bereft of power, or completely isolated, as they had a great impact after World War II when they worked with Catholics "to create a welfare State acceptable to both parties" (Kennedy 2002, 50). What this overview of pillarization does suggest, on the other hand, is that the pillars operated discursively, as well as socially, as political and religious leaders sought not only to represent but to shape their desired constituencies.

Given today's increasingly turbulent and polarized political climate, and widespread secularism, what remains interesting is the former pervasiveness of pillarization. The height of this social arrangement is associated with the immediate years after World War II, in the "*wederopbouw*" or reconstruction period. There was a strong impulse to move beyond the conflicts of the war period, during which some had cooperated with the Nazis and others had resisted, and to attain a measure of normalcy. While many longed to create national unity, between 1945 and 1960, most aspects of one's daily life were organized around the social and ideological pillar to which one belonged. For example, if you were a Catholic, you would attend Catholic schools, belong to the Catholic union, subscribe to the Catholic newspaper and radio station (and

[21] See also the chapter by Kennedy (1999) entitled "Exodus," for an in-depth examination of the efforts of various religious pillars in trying to fight against a growing secularization.

later the Catholic television station), vote for politicians within the Catholic party, and even patronize the Catholic butcher and produce vendor. The separateness of these pillars should be considered as one manifestation of "tolerance," in which ideological and cultural difference was approached by "living-apart-together." Such tolerance did not imply approval. One could well disapprove of others' ideologies, but not interfere with them. Social pressure to conform within one's pillar was extremely strong; it is still common to refer back to that kind of almost oppressive social cohesion with the term "*spruitjeslucht*," or the smell of Brussels sprouts. This word conjures a negative image of a close, typically financially stretched, family kitchen, perfumed by the odor of overcooked vegetables.

The history of pillarization works to complicate the stereotype of Dutch tolerance as openness and acceptance of difference, and suggests, instead, a long pattern of managing conflict through negotiation, and social pressure to conform. Under this political arrangement, class differences were muted, class struggles were incorporated into mainstream institutions, and elite power consolidation was legitimated and framed as part of the "common good." Dutch tolerance has long worked to manage and contain potential conflict; in the late 1500s, the Dutch achieved independence from Spain, and, in part, that war was waged for freedom of religious conscience. Tolerance of religious difference, however, was limited to one's internal beliefs; one was not permitted to publicly display one's belief in any religion other than Calvinism. While there was certainly a higher level of forbearance when it came to religious difference, which drew religious exiles from many places, this forbearance should not be confused with openness. Pillarization similarly quelled the potential for certain kinds of conflict, by

incorporating different ideological movements rather than fighting them, and by limiting avenues for anti-establishment mobilization. In both cases, tolerance as a form of conflict management and as a pattern of conflict avoidance worked to re-consolidate elite power, even if unintentionally.

De-Pillarization and the 1960s

Discarding the Past

The 1960s were a watershed for the Netherlands: the economy grew explosively and the standard of living rose; people fell away from their churches and other pillarized institutions; social mores concerning sexuality, birth control, and marriage were transformed; the divorce rate grew rapidly; more mothers began working; and broad-based social movements, such as the one against nuclear missiles, gained strong traction. James C. Kennedy, a prominent scholar of 20th century Dutch history, has argued that the radical changes undergone in the Netherlands in the 1960s had a great deal to do with the widespread perception, both within the country and abroad, that the Netherlands had been "old-fashioned" and was in need of "renewal" to face the challenges of the future (1999). We can see in these changes a movement against the strong social pressure to conform that was the hallmark of the height of social pillarization. There was a "collective longing to become 'modern,' to convince themselves and the world that the Netherlands was not a backwards area"[22] (Kennedy 1999, 25). This impulse toward social change was taken up by the elites, who tried to marshal its force while maintaining their status. Kennedy describes how this desire led religious and political elites to "lead the way" in radically transforming society:

[22] The words Kennedy uses for "backwards area" are "*achtergebleven gebied.*"

> In the 1950s many Dutch politicians, spiritual leaders, newspaper editors and other prominent people believed that they were moving away from an older past (namely the world before 1940) to a modern future . . . For many elites, only a pragmatic, forward-looking and conscious 'modern' policy could steer the small, vulnerable and changing land in the right direction (1999, 25).

In contrast to the United States, where social movements and political agitation were often denounced by political and religious elites, the authorities of the Netherlands largely tried to pave the way for a new future.[23] Churches opened up in terms of dogma and doctrine; a new, active foreign policy rejected the past (and widely criticized) position of neutrality; domestic policies became more progressive; the authority of adults was de-emphasized, as youth became permitted to address adults with the informal "you" (*je*), and to use their parents' and teachers' first names.

The Economic Boom and Widespread Social Change

Economic and social changes played a role in these developments; as the economy boomed, so did the social welfare state, leading to a large increase in the number of educated professionals—young people often just graduated from the degree programs in social and cultural work, as well as journalism and broadcasting—who fully embraced the idea of creating a modern welfare state (Kennedy 1999, 97-101).[24] And in terms of people's everyday lives, the growth of the economy was most directly experienced in the form of rapidly increasing salaries:

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[23] The above discussion regarding pillarization and elite power suggests that religious and political leaders may also have sought to re-assert their power in a rapidly changing milieu by adopting such a stance.

[24] The Dutch welfare state funds many private initiatives through subsidies, a sector of the economy collectively termed the *maatschappelijk middenveld*, and perhaps best translated as "non-profit sector." A study conducted in 2000 found that the non-profit sector provides about 669,000 jobs, or about 13% (excluding agricultural jobs) of all employment; the average for this sector in Western Europe is 7%. (Burger and Dekker 2001). The complexity of social policy and the variety of government-funded initiatives are taken up again in Chapter Four.

> Between 1959 and 1962 salaries had already grown by 21 percent, but after 1963 the Dutch labor market witnessed a salary explosion: in 1964 salaries increased by 17 percent . . . followed by a period in which salaries rose ten percent each year . . . Suddenly the old virtues lost their relevance, and the world appeared freer and brighter than ever before (Kennedy 1999, 46).

This new freedom was particularly manifested in the social realm. Decisions concerning sexuality and birth control pills (widely available in 1963) were increasingly left up to the individual—even some of the Catholic bishops agreed that this was a matter of individual conscience—and many began to see marriage as just one more "old-fashioned" institution (Kennedy 1999, 82). More women began to work outside the home—from 16 percent in 1960 to 23 percent in 1966—which, although a significant increase, was still a lower percentage than in the United States and other industrialized countries (Kennedy 1999, 107). Alongside these social developments, the earlier anti-establishment, performance-oriented provocations of groups of young people (*Provos*) had the effect of teaching authorities to permit such demonstrations, rather than fight against them; after the first "happenings," authorities learned that when they sought to subdue such events, the situation would quickly deteriorate, increasing the conflict and making them appear foolish. By tolerating the *Provos*, authorities both defused tensions and positioned themselves in a more favorable light (Kennedy 1999, 136-45).

De-pillarization and Secularization

While church membership had suffered slightly with the rise of socialism, it declined much more so with the changes that came about in the 1960s; interestingly, the changes made by religious leaders to keep the church "relevant" in these new, "modern" times led, instead, to a further loss in membership. The movement toward ecumenicalism and humanistic solidarity had the unintended consequence of a further decline in churchgoing:

> The strength of the Dutch churches was based, to a great extent, on their pillarized isolation and their strict principles. The 'open' churches of the 1960s were respected by those outside the churches, but delivered little increase in numbers. In a time of strong ecumenical sensibilities, when goodness and truth were no longer exclusively to be found in one belief system, there was *less*, not more, reason to join a church or remain a member (Kennedy 1999, 15-6).

In the mid-1960s, only 18% of the population stated that they did not belong to a church, in contrast to more than 50% today (Van Rooden 1998).

The religious and other ideological leanings of most individuals are now separate from the larger social organization of society; one's social interactions and political engagements, as well as one's overall identity, are no longer tied to pillarized organizations. People may still vote for political parties characterized by religious or social philosophies (Christian Democrats, Socialists, Christian Union, Labor Party), but social life is rarely contained within such tight networks.[25] The newspapers and television stations that formerly held strong affiliations with one or another philosophy now have only faint echoes of those connections. The *Volkskrant*, (literally "the people's paper"), was formerly a Roman Catholic newspaper; in the mid-sixties it changed its target group to a progressive audience, and is today one of the major dailies and retains a slightly liberal leaning (Shetter 1997, 122-3). The concern with "being modern" appears to persist; in my research, I found that mentioning pillarization—even religion in general—was often met disparagingly, as a relic from the past.[26]

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[25] A slight exception may be found in the conservative religious communities of the Gereformeerden (reformed), who send their children to confessional schools, and who operate within close professional and political networks. They are subject to criticism from mainstream Dutch society for disallowing women an equal role in political life by forbidding them to run for political office. In 2003, the Central Bureau for Statistics reported that there were almost an equal number of Muslims (five percent) as there were Gereformeerden (seven percent) in the Netherlands (Tas 2003).

[26] The reaction against those who would evangelize is perhaps best demonstrated by the red blinking neon-lighted sign facing the famous Saint Nicholas Church, just across from Amsterdam's Central Station, that reads: "God Doesn't Exist" (*God Bestaat Niet*).

Islamic Schools

Kuyper's campaign resulted in state-funding for both confessional and secular primary schools, and today, still, groups can organize and petition the government for funding for religious schools. Confessional schools originally required membership in the particular sect associated with a school, but that requirement is rare today. Religious education classes may be part of the curriculum, but one is not required to follow the precepts of the religion. Today, one might be Catholic, for example, and attend a Protestant elementary school. In recent years, however, the establishment of Islamic schools has become a controversial subject. As more and more Muslim immigrants settled in the Netherlands, the possibility of creating their own religious schools was realized.[27] Anti-Islamic sentiment and the widespread secularization of mainstream Dutch society are together related to anxieties about the curriculum of Islamic schools, the training of imams, and the wearing of religious garments such as veils and headscarves. As will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Seven, one of the biggest topics in Dutch politics is the lack of "integration" of some ethnic minority groups, particularly Moroccans and Turks. Islamic schools today are perhaps the most visible manifestation of sustained religious difference. While pillars were once seen as a means of keeping the peace between competing religious and political philosophies, in recent years the presence of Islamic schools is disparagingly characterized by some as evidence of an "Islamic pillar," and as a threat to the solidity of the now-modern Dutch nation-state. In the 1990s, debates began to form between those who supported a multiculturalist approach of "maintenance of ethnic

[27] One might also argue that setting up religious schools was encouraged under the "multiculturalist" approach toward integration of the minority policies of the 1980s and 1990s, which provided funding to ethnic minority groups for community centers, social welfare oriented organizations, and religious centers. For more on the issue of integration, see Chapter Six.

identity" and those who pushed for an assimilationist policy of "integration," which would include the banning of Islamic schools. Part of the reasoning behind the idea of integration is that ethnic minorities must learn about Dutch culture and its norms and values, a discourse that is taken up in greater depth again in Chapters Six and Seven. What this ideology around integration reveals is a long-standing notion of cultural difference as deep, essential difference, an idea that is linked to the idea of tolerance.

Isabel Hoving, a Dutch literary and cultural studies scholar at the University of Leiden, argues that tolerance is part of an historical strategy of using "non-intervention to regulate the differences between its large minorities" (2005, 2).[28] Cultural differences are seen as fixed, and institutionally elaborated in seemingly distinct approaches to cultural difference: pillarization, multiculturalism, and integration. Importantly, the attention to cultural differences may obscure a frank analysis and understanding of power-based inequalities. Even though there is a desire for openness, Hoving writes that tolerance is "based on the radical differentiation between self and other . . . a strong sense of superiority, from which stems the authority to tolerate or evade others" (2005, 3). Her work helps shed light on the difficulty of talking about racism in Dutch society:

> Because issues of race, colonization, and slavery remain the as of yet unreflected heritage of the Dutch multicultural society, [the Dutch values of tolerance and openness] become nothing but a strategy to maintain exploitative power hierarchies, and to silence all critical counter-discourses . . . Knowledge [among ethnic minorities] of Dutch cultural habits and values will not bring the knowledge of these political differences any closer" (Hoving 2005, 6).

[28] For an insightful examination of the ways in which multiculturalism and tolerance similarly work to support dominant national identities in Canada, see Mackey (2002); also, Mehta's (1999) work on the ways in which liberal thought shaped and supported the British colonial empire in India is instructive on the contradictory consequences of liberalism.

Changing Populace: Postcolonial migration, "guest workers," and "*allochtonen*"

The Netherlands today is characterized by significant ethnic diversity, with about three million inhabitants categorized as being born outside the country, or as the children of those born outside the country. The ethnic composition of the Netherlands has been heavily shaped by its histories of colonialism and its more recent recruitment of temporary workers.[29] Colonialism created ties and dual migration most prominently between the Netherlands and Indonesia,[30] between the Netherlands and Suriname, and between the Netherlands and the Antillean islands and Aruba. These colonial relationships endured over hundreds of years, originally principally organized through the United East Indies Company (founded 1602) and the West Indies Company (founded 1621). The presence of the colonizers varied, depending on the trade and plantation industries in specific areas. Dutch workers were assigned to garrisons to protect assets in some ports, while others oversaw plantations. The height of the Dutch colonial empire in the East Indies was reached in the late 1600s, when the United East Indies Company had 11,500 employees stationed throughout the East Indies (Israel 1995, 939). In the West Indies, Dutch interests in sugar and coffee reached their peak in the late 1700s; western Guyana, in 1782, had 387 plantations and 34,000 slaves (Israel p 940).

Migration *to* the Netherlands, however, was particularly strong in the 15 years after Indonesia's independence (1946), just prior to Suriname's independence (1975), and

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[29] This section provides only a brief overview of post-colonial immigration to the Netherlands; a more complete discussion of immigration from the establishment of the Dutch Republic onward can be found in Lucassen and Penninx (1997).

[30] See Stoler (1989) and Cooper and Stoler (1997); these works demonstrate clearly how important the establishment of boundaries was to the colonial vision, yet the very colonial enterprise depended on at least some interchange between groups. The establishment of intermediate groups such as administrative and military staff from the colonized group, perhaps in an attempt to distance the colonizer from directly dealing with the colonized, often served only to blur the boundaries further.

after the oil industries closed and left Aruba and Curaçao (1985). The recruitment of temporary "guest workers" in the economic boom period from 1960 to 1973 brought to the country Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Greek, (former) Yugoslavian, Turkish and Moroccan manual laborers, many of whose families later joined them. In addition, the Netherlands admitted a great many asylum seekers during the 1990s; since 2001, however, its policies have become some of the strictest in Europe, and the number of those gaining asylum has drastically declined.[31]

Today there is a widespread concern about the level of "integration" of certain ethnic minority groups; and, while discrimination in the labor market has been clearly demonstrated, the "integration" problem is discursively linked more often to the cultural attributes of ethnic minorities than to their socio-economic disadvantage.[32] In addition, growing anti-immigrant sentiment and eruptions of hate crimes have created a tense inter-ethnic atmosphere. Since the early 1990s, extreme right groups have also become more vocal and visible. Within this context, it is important to note that only some non-White residents are typically considered "problem groups" by large segments of the population, including official policy makers and anti-immigrant populists. This section examines the immigration history of the most populous ethnic minority groups, and demonstrates how the prior relationship of the group to the Netherlands, the timeframe in which they entered the Netherlands, and the way in which they were received have shaped each groups' status today. Lucassen and Penninx have produced a thorough review of the last

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[31] In the 1990s, the number of asylum seekers ranged between 20,350 and 52,580 per year; in 2002, the number was 18,670; in 2003, 13,400; and in 2004, 9,780. For the remainder of this chapter and inclusive of this footnote, all statistics given, unless otherwise noted, are drawn from the Dutch Central Bureau of Statistics interactive database, found at: http://statline.cbs.nl.

[32] The discourse about "integration" is taken up in further detail in Chapter Six.

four hundred years of immigration to the Netherlands, and convincingly demonstrated that multiple factors affect the way in which the immigrant group is received, including the size and visibility of the group, their ability to function within the Dutch economy, and the general economic situation (1997).

East Indies Migration

While most people are familiar with the status of the Netherlands as a world power in the 16th and 17th centuries, due to the trade empire established by the United East Indies and West Indies Companies, the history of decolonization is less well known. During the colonial period, many Indonesians worked for the colonial administration and established communities within the Netherlands; after independence in 1946, those with combined Indonesian and Dutch parentage ("*Indo's*") were given the choice of settling in the Netherlands as Dutch citizens, or remaining in Indonesia. Between 1946 and 1962, approximately 300,000 people immigrated to the Netherlands; this was, generally, a well educated, middle class population (Vermeulen and Penninx 2000, 6-7). In addition to the benefit of their class status (and mixed "race" identification), the assistance of the government in settlement programs and a growing labor market are thought to have facilitated the assimilation of these immigrants into the Netherlands; today, people of Indonesian descent are not considered to be ethnic minorities, either in the public imagination or in terms of the formation of ethnic minority policy.

In contrast, the difficulties of the 12,500 Moluccans who immigrated to the Netherlands in 1951 show how government settlement policy has a strong influence on the way in which migrating groups are received. This group was made up of former soldiers for the Dutch colonial army and their families; both the immigrants and the

government believed that their stay in the Netherlands would be short-lived, as the soldiers wished to help establish an independent Republic of the South Moluccas on the island of Ambon (Smeets and Veenman 2000, 38). The soldiers and their families were brought to the Netherlands in 1951, set up in isolated housing camps, and not allowed into the job market; in addition, the soldiers were dismissed from the military upon their arrival in the Netherlands, which "caused them to lose both their profession and their prestige" (Smeets and Veenman 2000, 39). When Ambon was then re-conquered by Indonesia, the soldiers no longer had a place to which to return. Beginning in 1970, groups of radicalized Moluccan youth engaged in a series of terrorist actions—hijacking trains, occupying the Indonesian ambassador's home, and taking and even killing hostages—in order to force the Dutch government to help them take back Ambon, but these did not succeed in achieving their goal (Smeets and Veenman 2000, 40-1). In fact, the Dutch state responded with violence, killing many of the hostage takers in return. In 1978, the government formulated a special Memorandum for Moluccans (*Molukkersnota*) in an effort to integrate the group into society; today they are no longer regularly counted separately in statistical compilations, and are not commonly considered a "problem group," although it is possible that they may still be faced with higher than normal unemployment and other social problems.

West Indies Migration

The history of postcolonial immigration from Suriname illustrates how the circumstances of the era in which people immigrate also plays an important role. Suriname gained its independence in 1975, but there had been a history of migration to the Netherlands before that point, particularly in the 1960s among better educated professionals and students

(Van Niekerk 2000). As it became clear that independence was on the horizon, as fears of ethnic violence grew, and facing an economic downturn, more lower class Surinamese began arriving after 1973. The Surinamese immigrant population, then, is not only internally diverse, but the two main waves arrived in very different historical conditions. In the 1960s, the economy was rapidly expanding, while in the early 1970s there was an oil crisis, a rapid contraction of the economy, and skyrocketing unemployment (up to 14 percent in 1983); in 1985, among ethnic minorities unemployment was at 30 percent (Vermeulen and Penninx 2000, 12). Vermeulen and Penninx note that this later wave affected the granting of independence: "The increasing immigration and the will of the Dutch government to end it were the most important factors contributing to the Dutch government's decision to realize the independence of Suriname in 1975" (2000, 7). While there is today a Surinamese middle-class presence in Holland, there is also a large working-class and less educated population; in 1998, 13 percent of all unemployed people were Surinamese, more than twice the percent of White Dutch, at six percent (Vermeulen and Penninx 2000, 13).[33] Today, the total Surinamese population numbers approximately 330,000 people.

Like the second wave of immigrants from Suriname, the larger immigration wave from the Antilles also arrived in less than ideal circumstances. The Antilles were a colony until 1954, when they were incorporated as an autonomous part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. There had been a slow but steady stream of students (called *bursalen* who were mainly the children of colonial elites) to the Netherlands (Van Hulst 2000, 92). This changed, however, in 1985, when the Lago refinery in Aruba closed and Shell left

[33] Unemployed is defined as "registered unemployment and/or those actively looking for a job (i.e. reporting to do so)."

Curaçao. In this changed economic climate, a much greater number of largely unschooled immigrants from the lower class, who had little command over the Dutch language, began to arrive (Vermeulen and Penninx 2000, 7). The immigrant population from the Antilles grew during this time from 34,000 in 1985 to more than 90,000 in 1992. Van Hulst notes, however, that in addition to entering the Netherlands during the height of the economic depression of the 1980s with its high unemployment, the colonial history of the Antilles was also a disadvantage for this later wave of immigrants. Colonialism created a labor migration between the islands that often fragmented families, a population internally and spatially divided by race and class, and persistent long-term poverty (Van Hulst 2000, 93-100). Many immigrants came to the Netherlands to find work and to receive social benefits, both of which were largely unavailable on the islands. The problem of Antillean youth criminality is currently a much discussed topic; Van Hulst argues that the Dutch government failed to identify such youth as a "risk group" in their 1988 Minority Youth policy, and states that a 1993 investigation into this problem revealed that 4.1 percent of all youth criminality was attributable to Antilleans (2000, 107). Like the Surinamese, the unemployment level among today's current population of 130,000 Antilleans is currently two to three times higher than that of White Dutch; while high, this figure is still significantly less than among Turks and Moroccans, whose unemployment is about four times higher than that of White Dutch (Vermeulen and Penninx 2000, 12).

Guest Workers

During the post-war reconstruction of the 1950s, and especially during the economic boom of the 1960s, thousands of manual laborers—called *gastarbeiders*, or guest

workers—were recruited by the Dutch government and by private corporations to work in the Netherlands.[34] Instead of returning after a few years, many guest workers stayed on, eventually marrying or bringing over wives and raising families. These *gastarbeider* populations can be roughly divided into two groups, on the basis of the timing of their arrival and the level of segregation experienced: the "Southern Europeans," and the Turks and Moroccans. The first group of guest workers was mostly from Italy and Spain, with smaller numbers from Portugal, Greece and the former Yugoslavia; the majority of these immigrants came in the 1960s, and brought over their wives and families within one year (many Italians, however, married Dutch women) (Lindo 2000, 129).

The reception of these immigrants varied—even within ethnic groups—depending on the labor they performed, their educational and class backgrounds, the region to which they immigrated, and the prevalent attitudes toward their home countries. In addition, the Catholic pillar worked to provide support for those from Italy, Spain and Portugal (Lindo 2000, 131). While prejudice against these immigrants, and particularly against Italians, was documented as late as the 1970s, these attitudes have largely dissipated: according to Lindo, "[t]he arrival of large groups of Turks and Moroccans probably distracted away from the Italians, and the Southern Europeans in general" (2000, 32). In addition, during the oil crisis of the early 1970s, immigration to the Netherlands from these countries stabilized, and many workers returned to their homelands. As of 1999, there were approximately 145,000 people counted as Southern European (including former Yugoslavians) residing in the Netherlands (Vermeulen and Penninx 2000, 12).

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[34] There were also pre-war guest workers, principally from Italy and Slovenia, who were employed in Limburg coal mines; these migrants returned to their countries before and during the war (Lindo 2000, 126-7).

The course of events for the second group has been quite different. Turks and Moroccans came to the Netherlands in much smaller numbers for most of the 1960s; their peak migration occurred just before the economic slowdown that caused the government to put a halt to the guest worker program in 1973. However, unlike the Southern Europeans, most of these migrants did not bring over their wives or children right away but later on; therefore, their numbers continued to increase even after the guest worker programs ended, as they were still able to participate in the family reunification program. As many of the children of these guest workers attained marrying age themselves, in the 1980s, there was a second spike in immigration, as they brought over spouses from their home countries (Böcker 2000, 155). In 1971, there were 30,000 Turks and 22,000 Moroccans in the Netherlands (Vermeulen and Penninx 2000, 12); today there are approximately 400,000 Turks and 315,000 Moroccans.

Moroccan guest workers, however, differed somewhat from the migrating Turks, in terms of social background. In the 1970s, workers from Turkey were primarily from larger cities, were literate even if they had attended little school, and were sent by families to bring extra income back to Turkey; only later did emigration from rural areas begin to happen (Böcker 2000, 156). Recruitment of Moroccans, at the direction of the Moroccan government, took place primarily among the Berber speaking population of the Rif, a mountainous area in the northern part of Morocco; like many of the Southern Europeans, the education level of these migrants was quite low, and more than a third of them had never attended any school (Nelissen and Buijs 2000, 178-9). As can be imagined, the combination of minimal education in a rapidly de-industrializing and shrinking economy proved difficult for many of these guest workers. As the economy

shifted to be more service-based, these workers had few skills that could translate to that environment. Unemployment remains strikingly high twenty years later, as insufficient educational programs, social disadvantage, and discrimination together affect the employment chances of the former guest workers and their descendants.

"Allochtonen"

In the Netherlands, population statistics are used to measure at least two different aspects of nationality. Some record those who simply do not have Dutch legal citizenship (non-nationals). Others measure the number of "*allochtonen*"[35]—residents who were themselves born elsewhere, or who were born in the Netherlands to a parent who was born elsewhere. Although the term *allochtoon* (singular) literally means "foreign born," it is a bit misleading, for some *allochtonen* are born in the Netherlands and have Dutch nationality.[36] Today, the Central Bureau for Statistics calculates that *allochtonen* constitute about 20% of the total population, approximately 3.1 million out of 16.3 million inhabitants. A great deal of public policy has been framed around the problem of integrating *allochtonen*. It is important to note, however, that *allochtonen* are divided

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[35] I have some difficulty with this category, in that it highlights the difference of some residents more than others, and allows for this broad, diverse group to be discussed and governed without reference to the particular histories and internal divisions within the group. There is currently a discussion in Dutch government and policy circles to use the phrase "ethnic minority groups" rather than "*allochtonen*," in recognition that *allochtonen* is terminologically inaccurate, and with some awareness that the word generally carries a negative connotation. I continue to use the term "*allochtonen*" when discussing the population category being measured or governed, and "ethnic minority group" when I wish to indicate groups that are not White Dutch. For the purposes of this study, I will be using the phrase "ethnic minority groups" primarily in reference to Moroccans, Turks, Surinamese, and Antilleans.

[36] A child born to parents who were born elsewhere can petition for citizenship when they turn 18, and any child born to parents who were born in the Netherlands automatically is a Dutch citizen (Vermeulen and Penninx 2000, 22).

into "Western"[37] and "non-Western" categories, with non-Westerners receiving much more attention. In everyday conversation, it is common to hear that "foreigners" number about 10% of the total population; this figure most likely refers to "non-Western" *allochtonen*, who constitute little more than half of all *allochtonen*. In this way, it becomes clear that "Western" *allochtonen* are not thought to be ethnic minorities.[38]

No matter how the numbers are reckoned, there has been a substantial increase in both non-nationals and *allochtonen* over the last 50 years. In 1960, out of a total population of 11.5 million there were only 107,000 residents without Dutch nationality. That number nearly doubled by 1970, and then doubled again by 1980, to 473,400. In the last 20 years, the pace seems to have abated a bit; in 2000 there were 651,500 registered without Dutch nationality. In the measurement of *allochtonen*, the numbers tell the same story. In 1972, the total of all *allochtonen* numbered 1.2 million. By 1980, that number grew to 1.6 million; in 1990, there were about 2 million inhabitants categorized as *allochtoon*, and in 2000, 2.7 million. Between 1971 and 2004, the growth in "Western *allochtonen*" has not changed a great deal, increasing from about 1 to 1.4 million, but there has been a substantial increase in "non-Western *allochtonen*," from about 150,000 in 1971 to almost 1.7 million in 2004. Although this is a substantial increase in 35 years,

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[37] An interesting anomaly in this categorization is the inclusion of Japanese and Indonesian immigrants in the "western" category; on the website for the Central Bureau of Statistics defines "western *allochtonen*" this explanation is given: "On grounds of their social-economic and social-cultural position, *allochtonen* from [Indonesia and Japan] are categorized as western *allochtonen*. These are mostly people who were born in the former Dutch Indies and those who are employees of Japanese companies, and their families." This categorization is related to the fact that the during the 1980s, minority policies became "directed at a number of 'target groups' which were considered in danger of becoming minorities," that is to say, were perceived as economically and/or socially disadvantaged (Vermeulen and Penninx 2000, 20-1).

[38] Within Dutch policy and academic circles, "ethnic minority" is commonly used to indicate only those ethnic groups that are poorly integrated into economic, housing, and educational structures, and which are therefore at a social and economic disadvantage (Lucassen and Penninx 1997). I am using it in a larger sense, to mean an ethnic group that is in the minority; White Dutch are the majority ethnic group.

it is still only about 10 percent of the total population. For the purposes of this dissertation, what is important is the widespread perception that the makeup of the Netherlands has dramatically changed. It matters less that in 2000, almost half of the 3 million *allochtonen* so often referred to were from "Western" countries; the perception of increasing (and unmanageable) ethnic diversity is largely equated with the presence of Surinamese, Moroccans, Turks, and Antilleans.

The Problem of Integration

In some ways, concentrations of ethnic minorities have perhaps made recent demographic shifts in the Netherlands more visible; whole neighborhoods can now be categorized as "*zwaartwijken*" ("black" neighborhoods) or "*achterstandswijken*" (disadvantaged neighborhoods),[39] on the basis of ethnic minority concentration, unemployment, income, or education level statistics. In interviews, many people tried to get me to understand that the Netherlands has only recently become a multiethnic society. One social worker, in her fifties, described to me how much the Netherlands has changed since her childhood: "We're in a multicultural society now, that wasn't the way before, or [at least it was] a lot less—if you saw a black person you were *very* surprised. What that means is that norms and values, and cultural backgrounds play a role [in why people react negatively to *hangjongeren*]." The "newness" of ethnic difference in the Netherlands could be contested by examining the long history of immigration into the country (Lucassen and Penninx 1997), for example by Sephardic Jews, French Huguenots, and people escaping

[39] This is a complicated term to define. Literally, "*achter*" means "behind," and "stand" means "situation." The main difficulty is that some uses of the word "*achter*," as in "*achterlijk*," can be used to indicate someone is "backwards" or "retarded," either mentally or socially. For example, Pim Fortuyn infamously said "Islam is *achterlijk*." In this way, *achterstandswijk* can carry a very negative connotation; at the same time, the phrase can be used to mean "neglected" or "marginalized," which carries a connotation that the "backwardness" of the neighborhood is not caused by the inherent qualities of the inhabitants.

religious persecution from many other places. But reviewing such history largely remains tangential to people's current perceptions about ethnic difference, which is usually thought of in terms of darker skin color and Islam. The problem, for many people, is that today the "newcomers" to Dutch society seem qualitatively more different than those who came before. Furthermore, this difference—in particular the close social ties within ethnic minority groups—is seen as an obstacle to integration. It is true that the last forty years of immigration have brought migrants from many new places, and it is important to recognize that there are now many more dark-skinned people and Muslims in the Netherlands than there ever were in the past. The fact that past waves of immigrants were also seen as extremely different at the time is not, however, part of most people's historical imagination or part of the larger social memory. For many, this recent immigration is comparable to an earthquake that has destabilized the nation.

Demographic Changes

"Full Is Full!" Living in a Crowded Country

Many Dutch people feel that their country is "full," and this sentiment has been voiced by anti-immigrant politicians in the public realm. There is a palpable sense among many that the country is overcrowded, and that life has become less pleasurable due to this fact. I believe it is important to distinguish, however, between people's sense of frustration with their unfulfilled expectations for peaceful and orderly residential environments and expressions of solely racist or nationalist sentiment. In terms of the long arc of population growth, the Dutch population more than tripled between 1850 and 1950, from approximately 3 million to 9.5 million (Selten 1991, 88). The population has grown

since 1950 by almost 7 million more, to 16.3 million; the population is expected to begin to decrease in 2030, and to number 18 million in 2050.

The Netherlands is one of the more densely populated countries in the world, with 391 inhabitants per square kilometer (UNECE 2004). In comparison, France measures at 112, Denmark 125, and Germany 231 inhabitants per square kilometer. Belgium comes quite close to the Netherlands, with 340 people per square kilometer, while the United States has only 30 inhabitants, on average, in the same area. According to Demographia, an urban planning and pro-growth organization, Amsterdam in 2000 had a population density of 3,018 and Rotterdam had 2,496 people per square kilometer.[40] While crowded, many metropolitan areas are much denser: London measured in at 5,100, Tokyo at 5,258, and New York City at 11, 518.

It is important to remember that while other places may be more or less densely populated, it is this felt sense (and discourse) of excessive crowdedness among many Dutch people that has impact on and resonance with problems both with immigrants and with hang-around youth. A recent article in *The New York Times* reported that increasing numbers of White Dutch are seeking to emigrate; "The Dutch are living in a kind of pressure cooker atmosphere," the owner of an emigration agency was quoted as saying (2005b). A resident of the town of Hilvarenbeek has decided to move his family to Australia: "When I grew up, this place was spontaneous and free, but my kids cannot safely cycle home at night. . . . [My kids] are afraid of being roughed up by gangs of foreign kids" (NYT 2005b). Another man, also moving his family to Australia, said "We found people are more polite, less stressed, less aggressive there. . . Perhaps stress has a

[40] Demographia website, urban density data from 2000: http://www.demographia.com/db-worldua.pdf.

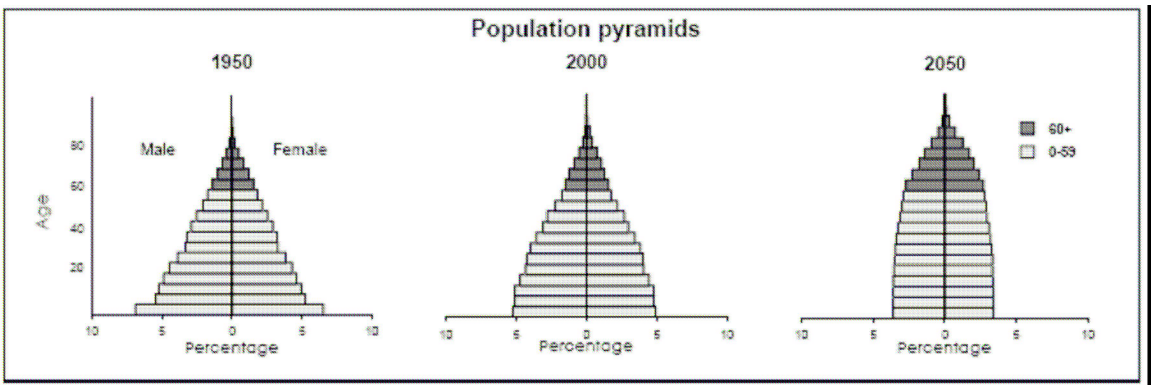
lot to do with the lack of living space. Here we are full up." Such sentiments were oft repeated in my interviews, as many spoke about how people get easily angered at *hangjongeren* because "everyone is all on top of one another," and "there's no space for young people to go to." It would appear that, at least for many, a strong thread in these reactions is the fact that people feel stressed and put upon, rather simply rejecting ethnic difference. Such feelings are exacerbated, to be sure, by the experience of traffic jams and crowded roadways, crowded trains and busses, and long waiting lists for housing.

The "Graying" of the Netherlands

Demographic changes have not been limited to increasing crowdedness and ethnic diversity. Both the "graying" (*vergrijzing*) of the Netherlands and the relatively recent "emancipation" (*emancipatie*) of women are two trends that also impact the way in which the problem of *hangjongeren* is understood. The "graying" of the Netherlands refers to an increase in the percentage of people over the age of 55, which is interpreted as an increase in the number of people reliant on social welfare benefits but no longer contributing to economic growth. In the year 2005, approximately 14% of the population was over 65; by 2030, it is estimated that that number will rise to 25% (MinVWS 2005).

Comparing population pyramids, the distribution of population by age group, demonstrates how the population makeup has changed over time:

Figure 4. Population pyramids, 1950-2050



Source: UN, World Population Ageing report (2002).

Gauged by the frequency of newspaper articles and talk shows devoted to the impact of this demographic trend, the graying of the Netherlands is a source of concern both in official and everyday arenas. Measurements are made of the "green impact" (the amount of young people working) and the "gray impact" (the amount of older people not working), and it is clear that the "gray impact" has grown steadily, and in inverse proportion to the "green impact," since the beginning of the 20th century. However, that steady increase is projected to change into a rapid spurt in the first third of the 21st century. The reason for this upward trend is two-fold: the retiring of the "baby boomer" population, and the overall decline in the birthrate, as found in most industrialized nations, since about 1960. Most industrialized societies are experiencing some level of "graying," as the proportion of elderly increases in relation to the younger population when the birth rate falls.

Declining Birth Rate

After a decline in the average births between 1930 and 1945, the fertility rate increased to between 3 and 4 children per woman until 1965, when the large-scale social changes of the 1960s were underway. Since that time, the fertility rate has declined significantly,

dropping to its lowest point of 1.47 in 1983; it has now increased to 1.75 children per woman in 2004. Some ethnic minority women have significantly higher fertility rates than White Dutch women, though these too have declined in the last decade (Moroccan women: 4.9 in 1990 to 3.3 in 1999; Turkish women 3.1 to 2.5; compared to 1.5 among White Dutch women, constant from 1990 to 1999) (Alders 2000). The fear about the low birth rate is accompanied by a concurrent concern with crowdedness, a contradiction that suggests that the underlying anxiety has more to do with the changing face of the population rather than with absolute numbers.

The table below lays out these demographic changes, taking the absolute growth from births (excluding deaths) and the absolute growth from immigration (excluding emigration):

Figure 5. Table of Dutch population growth since 1950.

Year	Total Birth Growth (excluding deaths, in thousands)	Total Immigration Growth (excluding emigration, in thousands)	Total Growth (in thousands)	% Growth
1950[41]	154	20	174	1.7
1960	151	-13	139	1.2
1970	129	57	162	1.2
1980	67	53	118	0.8
1990	69	60	118	0.8
2000	66	72	123	0.8

Source: Central Bureau for Statistics, http://statline.cbs.nl

Clearly, the overall growth of the Dutch population has seen a significant decline, reduced by approximately half over the last 50 years. The decline in the birth rate has been matched, since 1970, with an increase in immigration. The Netherlands now is seeing a growth in ethnic minority populations, particularly in cities, at the same time that

[41] This year is a bit anomalous in comparison to the rest of the decade: the 1950s saw significant emigration (a trend dating back to 1935), with yearly losses ranging from -5,000 to -48,000. The growth percentage for that year is therefore also unusual, as most years in the 1950s saw a growth from 1.0 to 1.3 percent, except 1958, which had a growth rate of 1.6.

it is experiencing the prolonged effects of the dramatic decline of the birth rate, principally among White women, since 1965.

Although there was little overt discussion about the relationship between the *vergrijzing*, the declining birth rate, and *hangjongeren* in my field interviews, I would argue that the general recognition of a taxed social welfare state and the looming growth in *vergrijzing* has placed more attention on young people's employment status and prospects. Just recently, for example, the government has been discussing the possibility of reducing unemployment benefits for youth, in an effort to get youth into the workforce or vocational training. *Hangjongeren*—although often incorrectly—are often assumed to be unemployed or underemployed, and may for that reason engender more worry and irritation among their older neighbors.

Women's "Emancipation"[42]

Changes in women's participation in the workforce also impact the way the problem of *hangjongeren* is discussed and approached. In the last few decades, more women have begun working outside the home; in interviews, many people spoke about how mothers are no longer able to be home to watch their kids. In general, women's participation in the workforce grew slowly from about 30% in 1970 to 44% in 1990 (De Vries 2000, 28); after that time the growth increased more rapidly, and today 55% of women work outside the home (Portegijs, Boelens, and Olsthoorn 2004, 66). While it is true that women's overall participation in the workforce has increased, most women still are engaged in part-time labor. In fact, 75% of all part time labor is performed by women (Eurofound

[42] The Dutch use the term "emancipation" (*emancipatie*) to refer to the policy measures implemented to achieve equality or social and economic self-sufficiency; this term is frequently applied to women, ethnic minorities, and youth.

2005). Claims to gender equality notwithstanding, women are not equally represented in positions of higher authority and responsibility; in academia, women hold only 9% of all full professorships, and for all of the three highest managerial level positions found in the country's 250 largest corporations, women hold only 13.1% of the positions (Portegijs, Boelens, and Olsthoorn 2004: 187-9) Interestingly, a great deal of women's policy is focused on the emancipation of *allochtoon* women, as it is thought that their emancipation will lead to their integration. There is little parallel recognition that the fight for equality for White Dutch women has not been completely won. Most women are still expected to carry the brunt of responsibility for childrearing, and many schools still carry on the practice of allowing extended lunch recesses so that children can return home for their midday meal. Spots in childcare centers are limited, and many parents are forced to put their names on waiting lists. This issue of the role of women in parenting, and their presumed responsibility for the disciplining of *hangjongeren*, is discussed further in Chapter Seven.

* * *

The Netherlands have clearly experienced extensive social changes in the last forty years. The population makeup has changed due to the decrease in the White Dutch birth rate and longer life-spans. The nation now includes more ethnic minorities through post-colonial and *gastarbeider* migration, and their descendants, and these groups tend to suffer from higher levels of unemployment and lower levels of education. Marriage has become largely a matter of individual choice; increasing numbers of women have entered the workplace in the form of part-time labor; and more and more youth now spend time in daycare and pre- and after-school programs. Socio-religious identity formation under

pillarization has given way to individualization, and parents and teachers (and police officers)—often on a first-name basis with their juniors—are figures with whom youth expect to negotiate, rather than obey. In general, there has been a movement away from the consensus and conformity of decades ago to a society which treasures the notion of equal individuals, who free to make choices and able to keep to themselves. Alongside this intensification of individualization expanded the social welfare state, and its many, many organs for preventing and solving social problems. Finally, and importantly, the expansion of the economy was intertwined with the development of a new middle-class residential aesthetic, as people followed their "suburban dreams" to new towns, where they expected to find peace, order, and rest (Van Ginkel, Deben, and Lupi 2002). Amsterdam North, the site of my field research, has clearly experienced this transition, changing from tight-knit neighborhoods where men worked full time in shipyard and other industries to an area that is mixed in terms of class, ethnicity, and household makeup, where both men and women work, where few adults know one another, and where many—no matter the crowdedness—expect tranquility.

Amsterdam North

Separated from the rest of Amsterdam by the IJ River, Amsterdam North is rather different from the rest of the city—with its tourists and heavy foot/bike/tram/car traffic, and shops and entertainments and pubs—in many ways. One must take a short ferry ride over the IJ or drive through the IJ Tunnel to get there, and this distance seems to create both a physical and a symbolic separation from the rest of the city. With 87,000 residents, Amsterdam North is the least densely populated borough, and has a great deal of green space, more than most parts of the city. Although residences are situated close

to one another, the neighborhoods do not appear urban, and the streets are noticeably quieter than in the center of the city, both in terms of traffic and ambient noise. In contrast to central Amsterdam, land use is mostly mono-functional; stores and businesses tend to be grouped together and are slightly separated from residential areas. While they may patronize a few basic shops in their neighborhood, most residents travel by bus or bicycle to a large grocery chain store, a shopping mall, and two open-air daily markets for their daily shopping.

Amsterdam North also has a very particular history, which continues to have some traces to this day. While Amsterdam gained some authority over the land that would become Amsterdam North in 1393, it was not until the early twentieth century that the city purchased land for the purpose of building housing stock. The area was originally designed to provide inexpensive housing for manual laborers in the shipping industry, and others in the industrial working class. The neighborhoods where I conducted research were only built beginning around 1915, and were specifically designed to provide workers' families with fresh air and green space (SDAN 2005). Among civil servants and urban planners, it was thought that fresh air and "proper" homes could help train irregular laborers and "anti-social" families toward established working- and middle-class norms (De Regt 1982).

From the early 1900s until the Second World War, the Dutch government targeted "unacceptable families" for programs designed to "educate" them into a more disciplined lifestyle. These people were, principally, casual or irregularly employed workers who were not a part of the nascent industrial working class, as a division had arisen between the artisans, craftsman and urban proletariat, and those who were engaged in casual,

temporary, and irregular labor. Those outside the industrial working class were enjoined to follow regular work hours, display "proper" public behavior (i.e. no public drunkenness, fistfights, or loud verbal altercations), and make timely rent payments. Families that were deemed unable to conform to these standards were refused housing by landlords; the Dutch government established enclosed neighborhoods to house these families, which were overseen by housing inspectors and social workers. De Regt explains the logic of those who led such programs—the Social Democrats:

> The Social Democratic Workers Party (SDAP) found its greatest support among the industrial workers, on whom it based its hopes for further emancipation of the working class. SDAP polices were thus principally in agreement with, and oriented towards, the interests of 'respectable' workers. In the area of public housing, this meant the protection of settled workers against the proximity of 'unacceptable' neighbors. The socialists did not intend to leave the ostracized families to their fate, however, but rather to educate them until they were in no way distinguishable from the 'respectable' workers (1982, 142).

In Amsterdam North, one such program was realized in the Asterdorp enclave, which existed from 1927 until the German occupation. Most of Amsterdam North was not populated by "unacceptable families," however; it was largely inhabited by close-knit, industrial working class families. Today, some of these neighborhoods retain strong local networks and community ties, and are home to whole extended families whose members have lived within the same few blocks for generations.

Other neighborhoods in North have become more fractured, as their residents have moved due to economic changes and the rebuilding of deteriorated apartments. In certain areas, ship workers and their families made up almost the entire neighborhood; when the jobs evaporated, many workers moved elsewhere. It is common for entire residential areas (owned by housing corporations) to be torn down and rebuilt, as the housing stock is deemed substandard or inappropriate for the market's needs. When such

refurbishing takes place, entire neighborhoods are emptied, and neighbors uprooted. After the refurbishment, previous residents may be offered the opportunity to move back. In one neighborhood in North, such reconstruction efforts brought new renters to the neighborhood and scattered the previous residents, as some stayed in the new apartments, some returned, and others moved to entirely different neighborhoods and cities. Since the 1960s, new housing structures, some towering more than ten stories tall, have been erected in formerly green spaces. Such residential complexes seem out of context compared to most of the other buildings, standing only two to four stories in height.

North was populated until the 1960s primarily by White, working-class Dutch, and slowly grew to include an *allochtoon* population of almost 12% by the beginning of the 1990s. By 2002 that percentage grew to more than 33%; if all foreign immigrants and their descendants are included, the number rises to nearly 40% (Diepeveen 2003). These demographic changes in North follow the trend of most Dutch cities, which are becoming much more ethnically diverse; Amsterdam is expected to become a "majority minority" city by 2020. With the changes in the city's ethnic makeup have come other demographic changes. Many women from ethnic minority groups are having larger families than White women; in combination with immigration, this has resulted in a growing *allochtoon* youth population. At the same time, many White elderly people have moved to North, given its reputation as a quieter and greener borough, and because the housing available is often a better deal for the money than in most other boroughs of Amsterdam. The distribution of residents by age is almost equal in the three age

categories. In 2003, more than 35% of the population was younger than 25, and more than 32% were over 50.[43]

Physical and Social Makeup of Research Area

Social Housing

Within Amsterdam North, I conducted research in three adjacent residential areas. These areas are commonly referred to as "*volksbuurten*," or "people's neighborhoods." These three areas have a total population of about 18,000, and are similar in population density. While certain residential blocks within these areas are slightly better off, the majority of households have a lower-than-average annual income, and one of the neighborhoods was named as one of the five poorest neighborhoods in the Netherlands. Two kinds of housing stock predominate: adjoining single-family homes, and apartment buildings between two and four stories tall. Most single family homes and ground floor apartments have small private gardens, while upper level apartments are outfitted with porches. Abutting each of these areas are industrial and commercial zones; the residential areas themselves, however, have an almost suburban atmosphere to them.

Most everyone rents in these neighborhoods and the vast majority of residences are owned by housing corporations.[44] Some housing corporations, by their charter, are charged with providing housing to people with lower incomes ("social housing"), and the state subsidizes the costs of those tenants' rents. In these three neighborhoods, the

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[43] Source: Dienst Onderzoek en Statistiek (Research and Statistics Service), Amsterdam, table on website at http://www.dos.amsterdam.nl/tabel/96787/.

[44] Of the more than 8,800 residences in this area, only 113 are privately owned and only 341 are privately rented. Source: Dienst Onderzoek en Statistiek (Research and Statistics Service), Amsterdam, table on website at http://www.onstat.amsterdam.nl/tabel/96175/.

average annual rent subsidy is 1,124.5 euros.[45] In comparison with all of Amsterdam, Amsterdam North has significantly more social housing.[46] In general in this area, home ownership is not considered to be as much of a status symbol as it is among more solidly middle- and upper-class populations; I never heard informants talk about wanting to move out because they wanted to own a home, nor denigrate the practice of renting.

Income

Residents in this area tend to have less income than the average person in Amsterdam, and in the Netherlands. In the Netherlands, the average disposable household income (all income after taxes and social welfare and health care premiums) in 2000 was 24,800, while in Amsterdam the household average was 22,300.[47] For all of Amsterdam North during that same period, the average disposable household income was 21,800.[48] The average disposable household income in the researched neighborhoods, 18,900, is significantly lower than both the national and the city averages. [49]

Figure 6. Average disposable household income in euros, 2000.

The Netherlands	24,800
Amsterdam	22,300
Amsterdam North	21,800
Research Area	18,900

Source: Dienst Onderzoek en Statistiek

[45] Source: http://www.dos.amsterdam.nl, Dienst Onderzoek en Statistiek (Research and Statistics Service), Amsterdam, table on website at http://www.onstat.amsterdam.nl/tabel/96175/.

[46] Amsterdam has about 38% social housing and 15% private housing. North has 48% social housing and 1% private housing. Source: http://www.wonen.amsterdam.nl/contents/library/00000007/tabel18.pdf.

[47] Source: Centraal Bureau van de Statistiek (Central Office of Statistics). This is an interactive website that allows the user to build tables; no permanent link is created. Source: http://statline.cbs.nl

[48] Source: http://www.dos.amsterdam.nl, Dienst Onderzoek en Statistiek (Research and Statistics Service), Amsterdam. Table on website at: http://www.onstat.amsterdam.nl/tabel/93684.

[49] Source: http://www.dos.amsterdam.nl, Dienst Onderzoek en Statistiek (Research and Statistics Service), Amsterdam. Table on website at: http://www.onstat.amsterdam.nl/tabel/96175.

Among the people I interviewed, some spoke about having financial difficulties, and often blamed the transition to the Euro as the cause. While those whom I interviewed certainly were not wealthy, neither were they impoverished; most were able to take family vacations, purchase new electronics and pleasant home furnishings, and pay for extracurricular lessons and activities for their children.

Ethnic Diversity

The level of ethnic diversity in this area varies quite a bit from neighborhood to neighborhood, and is sometimes unevenly distributed within the neighborhoods themselves.[50] For example, some streets and even some buildings have more ethnic minority residents than others, sometimes from one or two groups and sometimes mixed, while other subsections are almost exclusively White. One problem in interpreting the available statistics regarding ethnicity lies in the way such information is collected and organized. Amsterdam North is officially divided into 13 different sections for analytic purposes by the Amsterdam Bureau for Research and Statistics; within such sections, however, multiple neighborhoods may exist. It is therefore difficult to get exact statistics about ethnicity within the specific areas that I researched, as the social borders of the neighborhoods themselves do not cohere to the divisions conceived by the Bureau. A second problem with these statistics are the categories of "*allochtoon*," or non-native Dutch, and "*autochtoon*," or native Dutch. While it would be useful to compare the percentage of ethnically "White" residents, the statistics are based on certain aspects of nativity, rather than on ethnicity. *Autochtoon* indicates those people who have two

[50] I am using the term "neighborhood" here to mean a residential grouping that is commonly understood to be an entity by residents and municipal officials, and which is recognized by a specific name.

parents who are both born in the Netherlands, but they themselves may not have been born in the Netherlands. The category *autochtoon* may include "third generation immigrants," who may still appear, by virtue of skin color, to be ethnic minorities, but who would not be considered as such in terms of policy. To further complicate the picture, colloquially the terms "White" (*blank*) and "native" (*autochtoon*) are often used interchangeably; at times, people simply use "Dutch" (Nederlander) to mean White, as well.

Examining the two larger sections to which the three neighborhoods I studied belong (in combination with two other neighborhoods) provides us this more quantitative demographic characterization:

Figure 7. Ethnicity in researched neighborhoods.

Ethnic Group	IJplein and "X" neighborhood	Bloemenbuurt, Van der Pekbuurt and "Y" neighborhood	Total	Total in %
Total population	8202	10048	18250	100.0
Autochtoon	3443	5852	9295	51.0
non-Western *allochtonen*				
Antilleans	128	86	214	1.1
Moroccans	1326	1064	2390	13.1
Surinamese	1107	725	1832	10.
Turks	480	721	1201	6.6
other non-Western	1153	959	2112	11.6
Western *allochtonen*	565	641	1206	6.6

Source: Amsterdam Bureau of Research and Statistics (O+S), as of January 1, 2003

Given the geographical and categorical problems with measurement, general description is perhaps more useful: in one neighborhood, Bloemenbuurt, there is a higher than average percentage of White Dutch; in another, Van der Pekbuurt, there is a higher than average percentage of Moroccans. IJplein is the most ethnically diverse of the three; this neighborhood, and in particular the "Smith Street" area, receive the most attention in this study. Perhaps more interesting than statistical description is the perception among

many residents and municipal officials about the level of ethnic diversity, particularly in IJplein. In interviews and in casual conversation, I was told repeatedly by Whites that IJplein was 70 or 75% *allochtoon*. According to the Amsterdam Bureau for Research and Statistics, however, the percentage of Moroccans, Surinamese, Turks and Antilleans (the groups most commonly referred to in discussions about *allochtonen*) is only 37%; if one includes all categories of *allochtonen*, the percentage rises to just less than 60%. While certainly a high level of ethnic diversity, people's perceptions are still about 10-15 percentage points higher. This discrepancy may be partially explained by remembering that *allochtoon* has a social definition that is more expansive than that used in policy; there are those who may be technically *autochtoon* but who may appear, by virtue of skin color and other outward appearances, to be *allochtoon*. In the end, such statistical representation, it is clear, does not adequately represent the uneven distribution of ethnic diversity or the felt sense of White residents and municipal officials.

Conclusion: Frustrated freedom

The Netherlands is neither the stereotypically placid land of windmills, nor the stereotypically wild land of sex and drugs. It is not the epicenter of open tolerance that it is often imagined to be. Instead, the Netherlands is a complex, changing country, where the political and demographic landscapes are in flux. These shifts are widely seen as a cause for concern, and as grounds for a whole range of interventions. In times of great societal change, youth are often the lightning rod for adults' anxiety and criticism, as an uncertain older generation sees in young people the evidence of social decline.

It is interesting that public concern around *hangjongeren* began to be voiced in the early 1990s, a time of considerable confusion. Just as extreme right and populist

groups were emerging, emphasis was being placed in government circles on the creation of "multicultural policies" to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse population. Just as many began to voice the sentiment that the country was "full," an apparently contradictory concern about the low birth rate took shape. Just as women's participation in the workforce was approaching 50%, awareness grew that government facilities were not going to be able to provide sufficient daycare. None of these factors directly affects the definition of who *hangjongeren* are or why adults see the need to intervene in their behavior. But they do provide a larger context of social change in which some adults react with intense frustration to the presence of youth in public space. Those adults often told me that the Netherlands had become too tolerant in the past few decades; that young people should have to show respect for authority; that parents should have to learn how to set boundaries; that immigrants should have to integrate. But rather than indicating a rejection of tolerance, I believe such sentiments indicate a deep dissatisfaction with the social welfare state, a resentment toward anything that is perceived to limit their personal freedom or intrude on their pleasant living environment, and a wish that someone else would fix this irritation for them. As such, the notion of "too much tolerance" is not a backlash against the values of the 1960s, but their logical extension. In the next chapter, I situate present-day complaints within a long history of adult concerns about youth, and provide a clearer picture of who these youth are and what they do, as well as how they are represented in the news media.

Chapter Three – "The Trouble with Kids these Days"

Hang-around youth in history, in context, and in the news

My heart was beating fast, as if it was about to jump into my throat, when I first approached a group of about eight teenagers, on a weekday afternoon in early October, 2002. It had just begun to drizzle; some were standing around and others were straddling their bikes and motorbikes, underneath the roof of a public building. I had been in the Netherlands about a month, getting acclimated, talking with local officials about the youth and neighborhoods of Amsterdam North, and re-learning how to ride a bike. I fervently hoped the teens wouldn't notice my awkwardness, my wobbly dismount, as I got off my bike and walked over to them.

The teens were smoking cigarettes and chatting, keeping dry under the overhang. The group included an equal number of boys and girls, who looked about 16 or 17 years old, almost all of them White. As I approached, I took a few deep breaths, trying to calm myself and appear confident. I knew that this was an important moment. I was about to make a first impression, and I was nervous because I was all too aware that this initial interaction might determine whether my presence would later be accepted by these youth, and by their friends. I was also worried about my language skills, whether my Dutch was advanced enough: would I would blank out, get tongue-tied, forget words?

But underneath these research-related anxieties, I recognized another, less flattering fear: I was also afraid of them. Although I had been warned that this neighborhood could be a bit rough, I had until that moment shrugged it off, believing that adults generally overreact to youth. But, as I walked toward the teens, I began to wonder: "What if the hype is real? What if *hangjongeren* (hang-around youth) really are a

problem?" There was nothing in the appearance of these youth that I found frightening. Dressed in jeans, cotton shirts and lightweight jackets, with gelled, spiky hair on the boys and long, straight hair on the girls, their style suggested an aesthetic popular among working class youth, but beyond that, they were unremarkable. They were laughing and joking with each other, just standing around. In that moment, as I studied them, I realized I was reacting to a stereotype of "dangerous youth," to the newspaper headlines I had read, to the common wisdom that paints youth as unpredictable and governed by hormones, rather than to the actual individuals who were standing before me. Angry at myself for having succumbed to a stereotype I have long detested, I tried to put aside my anxiety.

While having this realization, I had crossed more than half the distance between us; they were watching me approach. I tried to make my face appear relaxed, open and friendly. "Hello," I said. "Hey," they replied. "May I ask you some questions?" "Sure," they said. And so I explained that I was a researcher, studying conflicts between adults and youth over public space. And they told me that they hang around in the same spots most every day, and pointed out the netted soccer/basketball court where they play. I told them a little bit about living in New York City, and they gave me a quick lesson in current slang. They asked me about 9/11, and I asked them about problems with local residents. They replied that only a few people ever complained, and stated that such people were just "complaining types" anyway. After about forty-five minutes, they got ready to depart, explaining that they had to go home for dinner. Before they rode away, they invited me to stop by the local youth center later that evening.

The experience of meeting these youth was reassuring, in many ways. I found that I could readily communicate with them, that they were easily approachable, and that they found my presence intriguing rather than intrusive. I had long suspected that the dangerousness of *hangjongeren* was exaggerated, that "nuisance" and "danger" were often conflated, and this first encounter seemed to prove me right. These teens, in this "difficult" neighborhood, were friendly and polite, and I rode away feeling foolish for having been so worried.

But that moment of relief and assuredness quickly faded, as I began to follow a number of different conflicts and interactions. The more I listened and observed, the less sure I was of my ability to adequately explain, or dismiss, the "*hangjongeren* problem." I had entered the research believing that this issue was socially constructed, but it became impossible to categorize negative stories about youth as simply exaggerations or hysteria. At the same time, it became unsatisfying to use stories of positive interactions as "proof" that youth were simply being unjustly stereotyped. Each incident was shaped by numerous factors, and given meaning by both specific and large-scale contexts. In some cases, one might rightly conclude that the complaints against youth were largely overwrought; in others, one might find that the youth were transgressing common standards for acceptable behavior. There was no single narrative that could encompass it all. The difficulty was, at least for my research, that so many distinct and disparate stories were all considered part of "the *hangjongeren* problem."

In this chapter, I try to answer the question so often asked me: "So what do these youth do, anyway, to cause such a fuss?" In order to address this question, I provide three different kinds of context, which show the range of ways the term "*hangjongeren*"

has been and can be understood. I begin with an examination of the historical reactions to youth hanging around in public space, and show how the current conflicts must be seen as part of an extended history of adult-youth conflicts over youth behavior. I then describe conflicts that occurred during my fieldwork, and place them in their multilayered, complex, local context. Lastly, I show some ways that the problem has been represented in the print media. What I hope becomes clear is that the term *hangjongeren* is a powerful symbol without any coherent referent. There is no agreed upon definition about who *hangjongeren* are, or what they do; there is a slippery movement between—and sometimes conflation of—"irritating youth" and "dangerous youth"; and high-profile conflicts generate overwhelming press attention, both creating and reflecting a fearful attitude toward youth in general.

"The Youth of Today": Deconstructing "problem youth"

Putting Fears about Youth in Context

There is a rich literature on the historical and social construction of youth as a problem, in which it becomes clear that "youth" is not simply an age category, but also a site of social signification and struggle.[51] These studies show that problems with or among youth are often interpreted as a sign of social decline, and that efforts to protect, save, educate and punish youth are simultaneously attempts to create particular kinds of social order. Charles Acland summarizes this interpretation eloquently: "[t]o invest in youth . . . is to invent imaginary futures, ones that invariably indicate the particular struggles of the present" (1995, 25). Many studies trace various constructions of youth to the social, political, and economic circumstances of the era in which they arise, and show how these

[51] See, for example, Acland (1995), Griffin (1993), Lesko (2001), and Pearson (1983).

factors shape how "problem youth" are defined and approached. While these studies are distinguished by their particular contexts, taken together they show that youth are often seen as both vulnerable and dangerous at the same time. To take but one example, Geoffrey Pearson shows how boys at the turn of the 20th century—working as newspaper vendors or messengers, or providing similar services—are seen as both villains and victims (1983). He cites a 1910 British government report to illustrate this dual characterization:

> Much of [their] money, so easily made, is spent with equal despatch . . . on sweets and cigarettes, and in attending music halls. . . The situation becomes even worse when the money is used for gambling . . . or where it enables the gamins of our large towns to live a bandit life away from their homes, free of all control (quoted in Pearson 1983, 58).

According to this logic, working and earning wages is dangerous, because it can lead to a life of banditry. Adult control is required to save youth from themselves, among other dangers. If we shift our focus to adults' desire for control, away from youths' vulnerability or "delinquency," we can see that the construction of youth has a great deal to do with producing certain kinds of social order. Acland identifies the operation of an "ideology of protection" that underlies the struggle for hegemony:

> The result of the rhetoric of concern for youth, always having to do with "their" best interests (hence, presumably, all our best interests), is the very particular *ideology of protection*. Youth is a time of substantial surveillance exactly because it is a time when the culture is learned . . .The ideology of protection facilitates strategic interventions by the state and others, the purpose of which, invariably, it to guarantee the smooth reproduction of social relations. With this comes the smooth reproduction of racial and ethnic, gender and class relations. In other words, at stake here is the reconstitution of particular ideas about social stability and an associated hegemony (1995, 25).

One of the concepts in today's "ideology of protection" is the notion that youth must be protected from their own adolescent biology. It is commonplace today for youth behavior to be "biologized" in this way, but historical studies show that adults' anxieties

have also been associated with pre- and post-adolescent youth; biology is only the most current framework. More convincing are explanations that connect a particular construction of "problem youth" to anxieties related to larger social changes, and that, by disaggregating the category of "adults," show that specific groups of adults have a stake in maintaining the present social order. When the full context is taken into consideration, it becomes extremely difficult to make generalizations about "problem youth," for they vary in age and gender, in ethnic background and class, and in the activities in which they engage. Similarly, any explanation that relies on a framework of hegemony leaves the category of adults insufficiently disaggregated. This research shows that "adults" are also diverse in their interpretations of and reactions to hang-around youth; parents, youth workers and social workers tend to think that hanging around is rather normal youth behavior; policy makers and police officers see their job as trying to please everyone by preventing problems; and only some adults complain about noise, litter, and vandalism.

Youth Problems and the Maintenance of Social Order

Disaggregating the category of adults allows us to see the particular groups involved in complaining about and regulating youth behavior, throughout history. Pearson's work shows the class-related aspects of "respectable fears," such as the complaints about English apprentices in the 17th and 18th centuries, who were thought not only to be "idle, violent and profligate," but feared for their potential role as political agitators; they were highly regulated in terms of their appearance, prohibited from playing dice, cards, billiards and other games, and banned from many social venues, such as dancing and fencing schools, playhouses and music halls (Pearson 1983, 192-3). In the mid-1800s, criminal activity was seen as "a prelude to social revolution"; this class-based fear is

noticeable in the campaign of Lord Ashley, Earl of Shaftesbury, who petitioned for the education of the "dangerous classes":

> Ashley brooded over this "fearful multitude of untutored savages" . . . "The morals of children are tenfold worse than formerly," he declared as he presented evidence from different parts of the country . . . In Leeds, "the spirit of lawless insubordination" was "a matter for painful apprehension." In Birmingham, the "arts of domestic economy" were at a low ebb, and "sexual connection" began as early as 14 or 15 years of age. In the mining districts, there were girls who "drink, swear, fight, smoke, whistle, sing, and care for nobody" . . . (Pearson 1983, 159-60).

Similarly, the invention of the bicycle, in the late 1800s, for example, met with many complaints about working-class youth who sped through the streets—and dared to venture into commonly middle-class areas—as well as the impropriety of female cyclists (Pearson 1983, 66-9). These kinds of class-based conflicts are obfuscated by explanations that blame misbehavior on male hormones. It does seem to be a pattern that most—but by no means all—complaints about youth misbehavior and criminality have historically been associated with young males. Pearson argues that the "social opportunities" for crime as well as the "social transition from school to work (or dole)" best explain the "peak age" for criminality occurring among male youth, a claim supported by the fact that when youth are required to attend school longer, the peak age rises accordingly (Pearson 1983, 224).[52] Following Acland (1995), I would extend this position by arguing that the historical pattern of "problem youth" involves not only the social transition from youth to adult, but what that transition represents to particular groups of adults, and the vulnerability of the structures that meet those adults' interests.

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[52] The "social opportunities" for certain crimes play an important role in shaping which social groups commit which kinds of crimes. Pearson states that while youth figure prominently in petty crime and public disorderliness, adults are largely responsible for other crimes often far more injurious, such as traffic crimes, fraud and embezzlement (1983, 224). The issue of youth criminality will be examined in greater depth in Chapter Five.

While boys' misbehavior and criminality have figured greatly in the histories of "problem youth," protecting girls and punishing their "delinquency" have also been consistent objects of concern. Historically, boys have had more freedom to move about in public space, and to earn money, which may have led to greater scrutiny of their public behavior and their laboring. Adult anxieties about girls' misbehavior have often been focused on girls' sexual activities. Applying Ann Stoler's analysis of the importance of regulating sexual behavior in the colonies (1989), we can imagine a similar desire among the upper classes to keep separate boys and girls from different milieus. While protecting upper class girls from "unsavory" boys has been a common anxiety, it is important to note that there have been many instances of concern about lower class girls' criminality and sexuality, as well. Interestingly, anxieties about lower class girls' sexuality have been framed less in terms of protecting girls from boys, but rather in terms of protecting girls from themselves. The work by Schlossman and Wallach (1978), in particular, shows how the movement in the early 20th century toward institutionalizing girls was motivated by the belief that without temptations girls would learn self-discipline. Just as adults have restricted boys' independence by regulating their public activities, we might read efforts to exert control over both lower class and upper class girls' sexuality as a way to limit their autonomy, as well as a way of protecting the social standing of parents in the upper classes.

The construction of youth criminality has received a great deal of attention by scholars. In a compelling and concise analysis, Robert Wegs (1999) shows how increasing efficiency in German statistical measurement and new laws led to the perception of increasing youth "waywardness" during the late 1800s, a period of

economic downturn. The 1885 Vagabond Laws redefined wood-gathering and begging as criminal activities, which created a statistical spike in crime, even though there had not been a change in behavior. Other studies have analyzed the construction of the very notion of "delinquency," relating it to the rise of the juvenile justice system at the turn of the century (Platt 1977), and arguing that girls' "delinquency" was punished, through institutionalization, more harshly than boys' misdeeds (Schlossman and Wallach 1978). Scholars have also connected anxieties about youth to other, broader cultural fears: according to Adams (1997), concerns about producing heterosexuality underwrote anxieties about youth delinquency in the post-war United States; similarly, Carrington (1993) argues that racialized notions of Aboriginal Australians shaped how girls' "delinquency" was perceived and punished. These works together show that the meaning of "delinquency" is dependent on context, and that delinquency can be "created" through policy changes.

Like crime, sexuality, and the blurring of class boundaries, the twin issues of labor and leisure have also had a long history of being a focal point for adults' concern, and the shape of those concerns is highly determined by the larger social, political, and economic contexts. Much has been written, for example, about adults' anxieties in the context of the late 1800s and in the first decades of the 1900s,[53] when industrialization and urbanization in the United States and Western Europe were changing the contours of

[53] While most studies focus on this period, Luke (1989) cites the intersection of print technology with Lutheran doctrine about childrearing in the early 16th century, and notes their combined effect to formalize pedagogy; this was partly a response to that period's peasant revolts, and resulted in a particular conceptualization of youth. Luke's argument is in part a refutation of Ariès (1962), who posits that there was no distinct phase of youth in medieval and early modern society. Similarly, Dresen-Coenders, Hazekamp and Van Hessen (1991) argue that a distinct youth phase existed as early as 1500 in the Netherlands.

society.[54] Alongside these large-scale demographic changes was the development of the new fields of sociology, criminology, and psychology; in particular, ideas about adolescent "storm and stress"[55] shaped notions about boys' and girls' vulnerability and volatility as still-developing individuals. These factors are also intertwined with the ascendancy of certain middle-class ideas about what constituted a proper childhood.[56] In Michael Anderson's analysis of the emergence of a "modern life cycle," he writes:

> When nineteeth-century reformers, for example, began to legislate against certain 'unsuitable' employments and activities for children—chimney climbing boys, children working underground in mines, child prostitutes, children in public houses, etc.—*it was not in general new forms of behaviour they were attacking*; rather, middle-class groups were beginning to adopt at least some of what we would now see as 'modern' attitutudes to the life cycle, and were seeking to impose their views often against strong opposition from the working class (emphasis mine) (1985, 70).

Adult anxieties, then, are not necessarily a result of changes in youth behavior, but rather a response to changing socio-political alignments and economic conditions.

Scholars have demonstrated the connections between such ideological changes and historical contexts to the development of institutional efforts to protect and regulate youth, such as the rise of the "youth savers" movement and the creation of mandatory "continuation schools" (extended vocational education) in late imperial Germany (Linton 1991). In the United States, scholars have linked similar changes to the creation of playgrounds, organized sports, and "character building" organizations such as the Boy

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[54] In the Netherlands, for example, around 35% of the population lived in cities in 1850; by 1910 this grew to about 70% (Van Drenth 2002, 125). Between 1850 and 1950, the percentage of people working in agriculture declined from 50% to 20%, and in 1900 only 10% of youth between 13-19 years of age were enrolled in school past the basic level, a percentage that grew to almost 50% by 1950 (Selten 1991, 86-7).

[55] See Lesko (2001) for a thorough review of G. Stanley Hall's influence on ideas about adolescence; she argues that the bio-social concept of adolescence must be seen in relation to the modern project of constructing the White, middle class male citizen as the norm against which all else was found deficient.

[56] Even the way that "the child" is conceptualized has changed significantly over time, from that of contributor to the family's income to that of precious, protected innocent (Zelizer 1985).

Scouts, the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), and the Fresh Air Fund (Kett 1977 and Mcleod 1983). Policy interventions do appear to have consistently targeted working class youth, notably in periods of widespread unemployment, either to direct them to training schools thus reducing competition in the labor force, or to occupy their excess leisure time for fear of crime. Still, studies show that socializing middle class youth has also been a goal of youth organizations (Kett 1977 and Mcleod 1983).

"Moral Panics" and the Construction of "Problem Youth"

One of the more commonly discussed approaches to analyzing the construction of problem youth is the idea of "moral panics," first articulated by Stanley Cohen in his book *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* (1972). In that text, Cohen describes how a relatively small and anomalous incident between two groups of young people, the "Mods" and the "Rockers," in Brighton, England, in 1964, escalated into a widespread panic over young people's behavior. Cohen argues that journalists and expert authorities contributed to a "deviancy amplification spiral": in sensationalizing and over-analyzing the incident, public anxiety was generated, but, in addition, polarization between the youth groups also grew, which resulted in more incidents. These in turn produced more news coverage, more anxiety and more incidents.[57] Today, the term "moral panic" is often used simply to denote an out-of-proportion public anxiety about incidents that are highly publicized. For the purposes of this study, however, I do not employ "moral panic" in either the specific or general sense, relying instead on such terms as "anxiety" and "concern." The term "panic" expresses a sense of hysteria (see also Akeström 1998)

[57] For a critique of Cohen's reliance on a model that opposes an ostensibly objective reality to media misrepresentation, see McRobbie (1994), who argues that in a heavily "mediated" age, there is no division between "reality" and "representation."

that is not accurate in regard to the widespread, ongoing attention to hang-around youth, although on occasion short, intense flare-ups have occurred, in which local, small-scale conflicts have been exceptionally sensationalized in the news media. An example of such a flare-up—concerning youthful "train terrorists"—is examined at the end of this chapter. In addition, "moral panics" are typically attributed to a rather amorphous, undistinguished "public." Taking my cue from Malin Åkeström, who astutely notes that those "who have studied moral panics . . . have concentrated on the panic or on the problem that is constructed . . . Seldom has the public's reaction to these panics been at the centre of such studies" (1998, 324), I try to show how the interpretation of conflicts between adults and youth depends significantly on the particular social locations of people, who, while all members of the "public," view the conflicts in very different ways.

Histories of "the Youth of Today" in the Netherlands

The word "*hangjongeren*" is a relatively new addition to the Dutch lexicon. It was first used in print in 1994, as established by the book *The Year in Language: The debut words of 1994* (Van Lier 1994).[58] The practice of young people hanging around in public space, however, is not recent. Documented as far back as the 1500s, youth have spent time hanging around together in public spaces, often to the anxiety of adults. In the early modern period, from around 1500-1800, the life stage of youth lasted from the onset of sexual maturity until marriage, generally around age 25; during this time, young unmarried people of both sexes (sometimes called "*rauwë* youth, meaning raw or rough) spent time together on the streets, in the fields, at traditional festivals and at holiday

[58] The definition given in this text explicitly relates *hangjongeren* to vandalism; that correlation is not universal, however, as people use the word to mean a wide variety of youth and youth behaviors. The *Jaartaal* definition reads: "*Hangjongeren*—hanging around young people that out of boredom end up in vandalism" (Van Lier 1994, 18).

events; adults worried about potential promiscuity and its effect on marriageability (Dresen-Coenders, Hazekamp, and Van Hessen 1991). Around 1800, the position of the "field watcher" (*veldwachter*) was created to maintain order; conflicts occurred between youth and police; churches attempted to care for the "*ontheemde*" youth (uprooted), in a sort of precursor to the explosion of youth "character forming" organizations in the second half of the 1800s; and families were called upon to engage in a "private offensive against 'the dangers of the street'" (Dresen-Coenders, Hazekamp, and Van Hessen 1991). Public citizens also took part in the effort to protect young people from the dangers of the city streets. In 1884, the Dutch Women's Union for the Advancement of Moral Consciousness engaged in "station work" at the railway stations and harbors of large cities to help prevent the girls arriving from rural areas from falling into prostitution (Van Drenth 2002). In this period, adults were concerned with protecting youth from the dangers of modernity; "hanging around" was considered a problem because youth were not under the protective eye of parental or other authorities, and were liable to encounter unsavory elements, and perhaps become unsavory themselves.

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, "hanging around" was also linked to misspent leisure time. This period saw a tremendous growth in organizations designed to provide meaningful activities for youths during their free time. The definition of the problem, however, was different for religious leaders than it was for the rising Social Democrats. To church leaders, dancing, movie theaters, and hanging around in cafés and, especially, on the street were a threat to young people's morality (Selten 1991). The arrival of ideas about the "vulnerability of puberty" around 1920 added further fuel to this fire (De Rooy 1992). At the same time, Social Democrats feared modernity's growing individualization

and sought to pedagogically orient youth toward working for the common good; the efforts of all of the pillarized organizations resulted in youth movements of every ideological stripe (Dresen-Coenders, Hazekamp, and Van Hessen 1991).[59]

In the 1930s, during the depression that followed the stock market crash in the United States, youth unemployment was seen as the problem to be solved. It was not, however, approached in the same manner as adult unemployment, which was dealt with through unemployment benefits—but through "unemployed youth care" (*jeugdwerklooszorg*) as practiced by the pillarized institutions. In addition, hanging around on the street was still considered a problem, as it was both connected to unemployment and generally thought to limit young people's social development. In the early 1930s, a leader of the Social Democratic youth organization wrote:

> The majority of the unemployed youth would prefer to hang around on the street, playing cards or soccer, and as for other things, for example an educational film or other developing activity, they are too slow, too flabby. When they are unemployed for a time, they just let themselves go and decline from it (De Rooy 1992, 22).

As part of their struggle to ascend politically and socially, the Social Democrats took the lead in providing vocational training, development courses, and relaxation activities, eventually combined together into 8-12 week long "youth camps" (De Rooy 1992, 22-5). Social Democrats found hanging around a problem because they interpreted it as youth being disengaged from their own betterment, and from that of society.

After the Second World War, concern became focused on the "*verwildering*" (or "going wild," in the sense of lacking socialization) of youth, who were thought to have

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[59] "Pillarization" refers to the social and political division of society into ideological groups (Reformed Calvinist, Catholic, Liberal, and Socialist) from the late 1800s until about the mid-20th century; members of a pillar would, for example, attend Catholic school, read Catholic newspapers and listen to Catholic radio stations, patronize Catholic shops, and vote for Catholic politicians. A more in-depth discussion of pillarization is presented in Chapter Two.

been emotionally damaged and to have become morally indifferent during the German occupation (Kennedy 1999, 42-3). Youth organizations and societies established youth clubhouses, youth centers, neighborhood centers, and youth organizations to bring these youth into the fold. Right on the heels of their concern for these "unsocialized youth," adults also worried about the "mass society youth," the "asphalt youth,"[60] and the "big city youth" who were in danger of becoming overly consumption-oriented (Schweizer et al. 1993, 66); in particular, the adoption of beehive hairstyles, pompadours, denim pants and leather jackets among many working class youth was seen as a sign of trouble (Dresen-Coenders, Hazekamp, and Van Hessen 1991, 127-9).[61] Considered "unreachable" by youth organizations, these youth preferred hanging around on the street, going to movies and dances. Sometimes termed "*nozems*" (no translation), their love for rock and roll and their interest in only having fun was described as "incomprehensible" (Kennedy 1999, 43). In addition, the 1950s saw an explosion in the prevalence of motorbikes among youth, which increased their mobility and their visibility; the number of motorbikes grew from about 4,000 in 1950 to 500,000 in 1955, and to 1.5 million by 1965 (Schweizer et al. 1993, 67).[62]

Street fights, reminiscent of the "rumbles" in the United States in the 1950s, between groups of youth attracted a great deal of media attention. Youths differentiated

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[60] This term appeared again in the 1980s, during a period of high youth unemployment, in connection to increased concern about truancy and school-leaving (De Vries 1992, 95).

[61] Style had also marked youth in the past; in the early modern period, adults complained about youth who wore unusual clothes when stepping out on the town: "In the cities, certain streets were well known as 'flaneur routes,' where, especially on Sundays, young single men and women could meet each other. People could parade around there in their best clothing, preferably that of the latest fashion" (Dresen-Coenders, Hazekamp, and Van Hessen 1991, 121).

[62] As will be discussed in Chapter Eight, motorbike noise is currently subject to much criticism; it is interesting to note that the use of motorbikes by young people is hardly a new practice.

themselves in many ways;[63] in Amsterdam there were the "*dijkers*" and the "*pleiners*" after the cliques that hung around at Nieuwendijk and Leidseplein; in Den Haag, White youths with intellectual affectations got into fights with the growing population of Indonesian immigrants, especially at "Indo-rock" (a mix of Indonesian music and rock) events. One former Indo-rock musician remembered:

> What were the fights about? Maybe to underline the difference between the Hollanders and the Indos. The Hollanders were jealous of us because we were picking up their girls. We were the "*bullen*" (bulldogs) and they were the "*kikkers*" (frogs). I can still remember that the *kikkers*, or artsy ones (*artistiekelingen*), wore woolen green jackets. We had on cool denim pants and pilot jackets . . . We loved reading about ourselves [in the papers]. And even though everyone carried boxing braces and bike chains, the press made too much of it. A lot of the fights were really pre-organized (Schweizer et al. 1993, 72).

The artsy ones (*artistiekelingen*), or "beat"-styled youth, often influenced by French existentialist writers, were also an object of concern at this time and into the 1960s, as they were seen as anti-establishment and even anarchistic, and because their groups were very attractive to the more highly educated youth of the period (Lenders 1991, 107).

At the same time, the built environment was changing; hanging around began to be seen as more of a "nuisance" to others and acquired a more negative image, at least in part because:

> . . . urban public space became increasingly directed toward functional purposes . . . restructuring was principally done to improve traffic between home and work, and shopping . . . Open, unmonitored fields disappeared, public squares and streets were reserved for the movement of traffic (Dresen-Coenders, Hazekamp, and Van Hessen 1991, 129-30).

As the urban spaces became more crowded, people increasingly began moving to suburban areas and to the "new towns," which built on newly drained polders (Van

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[63] Dick Hebdige's seminal work on subculture and style (1979) argues that style is one way in which youth seek to differentiate themselves against their elders and their peers, and that this quest is inevitably futile, as elements of distinguishing style are incorporated into mainstream society, and their signifying power muted.

Ginkel, Deben, and Lupi 2002). Contesting these changes to urban public space, in the early 1960s the *provos* (*provocateurs*) put on "happenings" in part to challenge social conformity and authority figures, and in part to "take back the street" for public life. They were followed by hippies and peace activists who also reclaimed public space for their purposes; the presence of these politically oriented youth, however, sharpened the distinction between those groups and the so-called "uncivilized" youth who were simply hanging around together (Dresen-Coenders, Hazekamp, and Van Hessen 1991, 130). Hanging around was a problem, in this period, if it lacked political content or if it hindered the movement of others; youth who hung around just to socialize were increasingly seen as on the margins of society, rather than engaging in an age-old youth behavior. In the 1980s, policy makers began to term these youth "*randgroepjongeren*" (literally, youth from marginal groups), a label evoking "dropping out," truancy, and delinquent behavior.[64] Although Jan Hazekamp (1985) published an extensive ethnographic study at that time, concluding that many boys and girls—even those youth not having difficulties with family, school or work—simply enjoy spending time outside together, forming relationships and establishing themselves as individuals and members of groups,[65] the widespread impression that hanging around was a problem behavior remained.

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[64] This negative image of youth was accompanied by, but differentiated from, other public conflicts over space in the 1980s with the arrival of the squatter (*kraker*) movement, led by youths who broke into and settled in uninhabited residences and warehouses. Since the mid-1990s, authorities have been engaged in "cleaning out" squatter settlements, often creating a spectacle with their use of riot police.

[65] This interpretation of the meaning of hanging around for youth was recently confirmed in a literature review on the topic of the relationship between youth and public space (Karsten, Kuiper, and Reubsaet 2001).

*Looking at Terminology: "*Hangjongeren*" and "*overlast*"*

Clearly, the practice of assigning terms for groups of youths is not new: "the raw ones," "uprooted youth," "the wild/unsocialized youth," "asphalt youth," "mass society youth," "ungraspable youth," "*nozems*," "*provos*," "marginal group youth," and, today, "hang-around youth." Each of these terms references a specific cultural milieu or moment. "Raw"-ness was associated with being unattached and unfinished in early modern times; "uprooted youth" were perceived as lacking involvement with religious institutions during a period of rising secularization; "youth gone wild" spoke to post-war anxieties about social norms, while "mass society youth" and "asphalt youth" referenced an explosion in consumerism and an industrial modernity. "Ungraspable youth," "*nozems*" and "*provos*" each called forth the youth organizations and movements of their times, and "marginal group youth" pointed to a concern about "drop outs" during a period of great unemployment.[66] At first, the term "*hangjongeren*" appears to refer solely to an activity, "hanging around." Interestingly, there are no other terms for other youth activities—no "dancing youth," "smoking youth," "sport-playing youth," or "motorbike riding youth." The term indexes, then, not simply the behavior itself, but, I would argue, a contemporary concern with public space and public behavior. "*Hangjongeren*" does not refer to youth hanging around inside their homes, watching television; it is specifically concerned with young people in the public sphere.

As noted in Chapter One, "*hangjongeren*" means different things to different people. The term is used to talk about youth of all different ages, ranging from about 12

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[66] Some children today have acquired another label: "*achterbankkinderen*" or "back-seat children," in reference to their being ferried to and from extracurricular lessons and sports practices. This term indexes a current concern about the over-scheduling of children's lives, especially among upper- and middle-class families.

to 25 years old. For some, *hangjongeren* are a nuisance, while others report that the *hangjongeren* in their neighborhood don't cause any problems at all. In some cases, people use "*hangjongeren*" to mean youth who hang around all day, who are unemployed and out of school, causing problems and misbehaving, while others simply use the term to describe any youth who are hanging around for any period of time, even those simply hanging around after school before going home for dinner. *Hangjongeren* can be White, or members of ethnic minority groups; they can be citizens, immigrants, refugees. Although youth who hang around outside can come from any social and economic class, the term *hangjongeren* usually conjures up the notion of working-class youth. Sometimes, *hangjongeren* groups are made up of only boys, and sometimes the groups are almost equally mixed. Shopping centers are sometimes the "hang out" spot; other times, it is the local playground, schoolyard, or bridge underpass. In some cases, the police are called to move the kids along, although they mostly give warnings, rather than tickets. Youth have a vague idea about a *samenscholingverbod*, or prohibition on congregating in groups, being in place in some parts of the city, but generally cannot name how many people are permitted to stand around together, or where the prohibition is in place, and where it is not.

In my research, I found that while many adults were irritated by or even fearful of youth, they expected other people to actually deal with them; for example, many called the police rather than speak to the youth or their parents directly. Some adults formed neighborhood groups that created publicly posted behavior rules for youth, including the instruction that youth would "reprimand each other" (*aanspreken elkaar*). My observations led me to conclude that many adults resist taking an active role in the public

sphere; indeed, few adults are visibly present in public spaces. I would thus suggest that the term "*hangjongeren*" indexes adults' declining interaction with and sense of responsibility toward youth, and their increasing reliance on the social welfare state to intervene on their behalf, as much as it points to youth spending time in public space. As we have see, there is a long history of young people spending time together in public space—perhaps simply because they do not yet have a place of their own; the only thing that seems to change, besides styles and available hang-out spots, is the particular meanings that adults attach to hanging around. Anxieties about sexuality, character development, leisure activities, work preparedness, disregard for authority, and disaffection seem to reassert themselves over and over again, but in different formations, shaped by particular historical contexts and circumstances. Perhaps these fears have as a common thread a concern with what kinds of adults the youth in question will become: When will they settle down, get a job, raise a family, become upstanding citizens? While that underlying question may be consistent, the measures that are enacted to "produce adults" vary, depending on the perceived deficiencies of the youth and their threat to the existing social order.

At this point, I want to draw attention to my use of the phrase "adult-youth conflicts," which I employ as a foil to "*hangjongeren*." I use "adult-youth conflicts" when speaking of actual conflicts rather than the amorphous specter of *hangjongeren* whenever possible, because it is my contention that "*hangjongeren*" is an insufficient label in many ways. First, it is an overextended category, applied to a wide variety of youths and behaviors. Its vagueness obscures understanding about conflicts between adults and youth; it tells us more, instead, about a widespread social anxiety over the

regulation of public space. In addition, I want to emphasize that the tension arises between two parties, adults and youth. *Hangjongeren*, as a term, somehow locates the problem in the youth themselves, as if their behavior is intrinsically a problem, without need of contextualization. In this way, it prevents us from seeing whether "the problem" is more accurately located in adult expectations rather than in youth behavior.

*"*Overlast*": An intrusion into one's privacy, one's freedom*

Overlast is an important concept in understanding the complaints about youth who hang around in public space, but it is a concept that cannot be easily translated into English. While some might translate the word simply as "nuisance," the full concept is more complex. The root word is "*last*," which means burden, or nuisance; relatedly, *belasting* signifies taxes, and *lasten* means obligations. If someone is being "*lastig*," it means that they are being annoying or bothersome. The modifier "*over"* means excessive, so *overlast* is, at one level, an excessive nuisance. I was told that *last* is something "you have to put up with," or something that everyone experiences from time to time, such as loud music from a neighbor's birthday party. However, using the word "*overlast"* tells people that the nuisance is repetitious, and that the person creating the *overlast* has not heeded requests to stop their behavior.

This concept is not limited to interpersonal conflict, as one may suffer from *wateroverlast*(flooding) or *vliegtuigoverlast* (noise from airplanes). Interestingly, while a person or a thing can be described as "*lastig*," or bothersome, the word "*overlast"* is only used as a noun. In its most common formulation, someone might say: "I have *overlast*," but it is also possible to describe someone as "giving *overlast*." In the adult-youth conflicts I studied, "I have *overlast*" was the main way adults asserted that certain

youth behavior was intolerable. Clearly both *last* and *overlast* are highly subjective; what is a nuisance to one person might not bother their neighbor at all. From the way the word is used, it appears that "having *overlast*" is thought of as a kind of condition of the self, a state of being in which one finds oneself, rather than the result of an interpersonal situation or from an unfortunate set of expectations about one's surroundings. In this way, it is also an attempt to legitimate a complaint, for it is difficult to dispute the personal nature of another's suffering.

With regard to hang-around youth, the word *overlast* is a kind of "keyword" (Williams 1976). If adults have ongoing complaints about youth behavior, they speak of youth *overlast*. At neighborhood meetings, police officers told the youth who were being reprimanded: "It's not the hanging around that's the problem, it's the *overlast*. If there's no *overlast*, there's no problem." In Amsterdam North, a partnership between the staff of the youth centers, social workers and police officers was created expressly to "address youth *overlast* in the neighborhood in order to reduce adults' feelings of being unsafe."[67] In fact, the words "youth" and "*overlast*" were coupled together so frequently that it seemed to me that if one simply said "*overlast*," listeners might well assume one meant "youth *overlast*." Fatima, a social worker who worked with young people in Amsterdam North, agreed: "If I say only one word in someone's ear—*overlast*—they think of youth."

I discussed this concept at length with senior police officers, who, as "Neighborhood Directors" (*buurtregisseuren*), must respond to many complaints of *overlast.* Interestingly, one of these officers described *overlast* as much more than just

[67] This partnership, the "Safe Meeting Places" project, will be discussed further in Chapter Four; "feelings of being unsafe" are examined in Chapter Five.

excessive nuisance. An officer in his late thirties, Willem, who was involved in an ongoing adult-youth conflict and a series of neighborhood meetings (*overleg*), related *overlast* to an intrusion into someone's private life: "Everyone has *last* from neighbors, from motorbikes. But it doesn't disturb your ability to lead your life. If you have to walk all the way around something to get somewhere, that's an intrusion on your privacy (used the English word "privacy" here)." In even stronger language, he continued, defining *overlast* as something that limits one's freedom (using the word "*vrijheid*"):

> *Overlast* is to cause—or to commit certain behaviors that limit the freedom of someone, of their experience of life. For example, if you are sitting somewhere, and someone is kicking a soccer ball against your door, that limits you in your freedom, you have *last* from it. If it continues a long time, it's *overlast* . . . *last* is of short duration, *overlast* is if it continues and continues. . . and if you speak to someone to stop it, and they don't listen, then that's *overlast*.

These quotes are important, for they make clear some of the deeper concerns called forth when people employ the term "*overlast*." More than simply talking about annoying behavior, Willem's words suggest that people are displeased with having had their private lives interrupted, with having their autonomy compromised, with being forced to step into the public sphere, into interactions with non-familiar others. Like "*hangjongeren*," the term does little to clarify any particular conflict; it tells us more about a contemporary preoccupation with personal freedom, a desire for orderly, peaceful residential environments, and with the social welfare state's role in ensuring that freedom and that peace.

Situating Adult-youth Conflicts

Wilhemina, an upper-middle class, highly educated mother in her early thirties, with a toddler in the house, described to me the way she handled the youth who hung around near her home. In the evenings, some of the 13 and 14 year olds from her neighborhood

would come and sit on the stairs outside her apartment, where they would roll cigarettes and talk for a few hours at a time. Her apartment was at the end of the building, the only one to be served by the stairwell. It was steep, and covered, so the teens were not readily visible from the street if they sat at the top of the stairs, outside her door. She explained to me that she was not frightened of them, nor disturbed by them, but that she didn't like the fact that they often left garbage behind on her stoop. One evening, when she heard them outside, she opened the door to talk to them. They began to run away, but she called them back, saying that she wasn't going to yell at them, and that she just wanted to talk to them. The boys came back, and she said that she thought it was fine if they wanted to hang out on the stairs, but that she would like them to put all their cigarette butts in an ashtray that she would leave for them, and that they should take their garbage with them. They agreed, and they have not had any conflicts.

Many factors may have played a role in this interaction: the mother was relatively young, self-assured, and used to the close quarters of urban living, having recently moved from the city center. The youth may have respected her wishes because she treated them respectfully, and did not yell at them or chase them away. Their individual personalities may have also played a role in shaping the interaction. One can imagine, however, that the situation might have turned out quite differently. The youths could just as well have been considered to be trespassing on private property, to be causing minor damage by littering and grinding out cigarettes on the stoop, and to be disturbing the peace. Is a problem a matter of "fact," or of perception? At what point does a reaction provoke escalation?

Some adults report that they are afraid of passing by youth who are hanging around in large groups. In another neighborhood just down the road from this woman, the families are close-knit, and some have lived in the same area for generations. The youth center is located right on a canal, which is crossed by a narrow bridge. In the summertime, youths enjoy jumping off the bridge into the water, and the youth center organizes canoeing and kayaking on the canal. All the year round, groups of youth hang around in front of the youth center by one end of the bridge. Because there are few cliques, there can be as many as 20 or 30 youth hanging out together. The staff at the youth center told me that they sometimes had to disperse the youth, because it might be intimidating for people trying to cross the bridge. A couple of the local youths reported that some adults just race across the bridge, shouting at them to move out of the way.

As part of the context of this situation, it should be noted that this neighborhood is sometimes referred to as "the jungle," whether in a derogatory tone by outsiders or with pride by some residents. This term denotes the "less civilized" behavior of its working class inhabitants, sometimes called "*asociaal*" (antisocial) behavior, such as yelling, littering, and being inconsiderate of others.[68] On the edge of this crowded neighborhood, on both sides of the bridge, runs a quaint, cobblestone road, alongside which are some of the only single-family homes in the area. These homes, in contrast to the surrounding housing, are privately owned by more middle- and upper-class families; many have little gardens, hospitable benches out front, and are picturesque reminders of what life might

[68] There has been an increasing preoccupation with "antisocial" behavior in the Netherlands of late; in addition to the broadcasting of popular television shows focused on "antisocial" behavior ("The Tokkies," "Shameless," "Bad Neighbors"), growing numbers of "antisocial" families are being evicted (NRC 2003b), and proposals are being made to house these families in separate neighborhoods. In Amsterdam North, there is a proposal to house "antisocial" families in shipping containers (DV 2004f). There is a similar growing public concern in England in the last year; see "No Music for Noisy Neighbor" (NYT 2004b) and "Britain Cracks Down on Nasties Like the 'Neighbor from Hell'" (NYT 2004a).

have been like in the late 1800s. How can we understand the tension that sometimes arises over the youths' presence on the bridge? Are the youth just being inconsiderate? Are the bridge-crossers rushing across because they are in a hurry, or out of fear? Does the expectation of *asociaal* behavior on the part of middle- and upper-class homeowners precipitate altercations? Are the youth purposefully obstructing the way? I would argue that each of these factors might shape particular incidents; individuals may be motivated by different reasons. Some youth might enjoy intimidating adults, perhaps especially privileged adults; others might not even notice that they are in the way of those trying to cross. Stereotypes about class may play a role, or they may not.

Other neighborhood incidents may shape people's interactions on the bridge, as well. A little way down the cobblestone road, one finds a large soccer field with a small playground. The field lies between the single-family homes and some of the densest apartment complexes of "the jungle"; the two are joined by a number of narrow, short bridges. Some youth park on the bridges, and play music loudly through their car speakers. This irritates some of the residents on the cobblestone street; one man, Wouter, a highly educated professional in his fifties, described how he would stand in his doorway, arms crossed, and glare at the youth in anger. His irritation was exacerbated when the youths refused to turn down their music; he stated that each time he saw them by the bridge, he would feel his temper rise, in expectation of their noisiness. Already exasperated, he became outraged when he saw some of the teens making bonfires near the playground; his anger only increased when, later, someone set fire to the wooden structures on the playground. He explained to me that he had tried to talk with the youth, to ask them why they were causing problems, and to tell them how upset his young child

was to have the playground damaged. His enjoyment of life (*woongenot*), he told me, was deteriorating because of their behavior, and his own state of constantly simmering anger.

This situation shows that "a *hangjongeren* problem" may actually encapsulate a whole history of adult-youth conflicts, with emotions and expectations carried from the past into the present. People sometimes react to an incident before it ever happens: the man above told me that he began to anticipate getting irritated by the youths' behavior, becoming angry before anything happened—if anything did. Sometimes, Wouter admitted, the youth simply stood quietly on the bridge, yet he stewed with anger nonetheless. The incidents may involve different individuals who are "lumped together" in the mind of the aggrieved. Those who set fire to the playground structures may not have been the same people who play loud music out of their car speakers. When people react to "*hangjongeren*," they may not be reacting only to the youths standing before them, about only the incident at hand. Instead, they may be reacting to a whole series of events, a variety of individuals, and a tinderbox of held emotions. It seems plausible that these factors could shape how this man, and many of his neighbors, might approach a group of local youth when crossing that bridge.

As we will see in more detail in Chapter Eight, young people's lived experiences in certain places may also play a role in shaping adult-youth conflicts over those spaces. In the Smith Street neighborhood, for example, a group of youth had grown up playing soccer and hanging out in a courtyard between their apartment buildings, and underneath the adjoining covered passageway. Now between 18 and 23 years old, having played in that space since they were young children, these youth had a strong sense that they

belonged in that space. When a new resident to the area, whose front door and private garden unfortunately opened up into the spot where the youths had hung out for many years, moved in and began complaining about the noise, the youths' reaction was: "This is our neighborhood, we live here, and you can't make us leave." Seeing the courtyard and passageway as their place, at least at some level, they blamed the new resident for creating conflict and for trying to impose her norms on others. Similarly, the playground conflict above might have been shaped by the fact that the adjoining soccer field is used every New Year's Eve for an enormous bonfire of Christmas trees; the event is largely organized and attended by the residents of the tight-knit, working-class community. Those who made small bonfires and who set fire to the playground structures may have perceived that space as theirs—and suitable for pyrotechnic play—rather than as open, public space to be equally shared with their wealthier neighbors.

A significant difficulty, I have found, in accurately describing adult-youth conflicts, is that sometimes the identities of particular youth are not known, which can be especially problematic if conflicts escalate into acts of vandalism. In interviews and at neighborhood meetings, many adults would complain about "the youth," without knowing the names, or even remembering the faces, of particular individuals. Acts of vandalism were often attributed to "the youth," without any proof that any young person was responsible. The playground fire, for example, was blamed on the local youth by the angry father with whom I spoke; the local youth denied knowledge about it, and police officers thought that teens from a nearby neighborhood might have been responsible. Can we be sure that any one incident is linked to other incidents? If, indeed, it is, what does that connection help us to understand?

In the situation in the Smith Street neighborhood, when the conflict between the new resident and the youth who hung around in the courtyard and the passageway escalated, it was unclear which, if any, of the youth she had earlier reprimanded was responsible for smearing mayonnaise on her door, jamming the lock, leaving an empty chips bag in her mailbox, or smashing a rock through her car windshield. It was unclear, as well, whether the same individuals authored all of these events, which happened on different dates, over a period of months. The youth denied responsibility, and claimed no knowledge about who had committed these acts. The fact that there were many different groups of youth in the neighborhood, with shifting memberships, comprised of different ages and ethnicities, did not make pinning down those responsible any easier. Adults in that neighborhood, at community meetings, developed different categories for the youth: the Surinamese, the younger ones, the motor scooter boys, the skateboarders and the older youth. These groups—already vague—were not discrete; some boys belonged to more than one group; some youth lived in other neighborhoods and only visited on occasion; and some had their own group and had siblings or friends in another group.

At the general level, it is possible to say that youth often hang around in groups in public space, and they can be noisy and messy. As noted above, *hangjongeren*—or, more accurately, those who are typically perceived as *hangjongeren*—are male,[69] working- or lower-middle class, and between the ages of 12 and 25. Most are enrolled in vocational

[69] Girls do hang around with boys, and by themselves, in certain neighborhoods; in other neighborhoods, one encounters mostly boys in public spaces. The image of *hangjongeren*, however, is overwhelmingly male. The news media often makes mention if conflicts involve girls, particularly if there is any violence to report. There appears to be two common, contradictory theories about boys and girls hanging around together; for example, one youth worker and one parent told me when boys and girls hang around together that they tend not to cause as much *overlast* and that they act more "normal," while a police officer explained to me that boys will try to show off and act tough when girls are around, in order to impress them, thereby causing more *overlast*.

school or have a job; few can afford to live on their own, due to both low wages[70] and the difficulty of finding housing. Some adults find their behavior irritating, even intimidating. Although a number of adults told me that "everyone walks around with a knife these days," this belief seems rather exaggerated; in a 1992 study of youth delinquency, only about 10% of youth reported carrying a weapon of any sort (MinJustitie 1994). In some cases, adults react very strongly to their perception of *overlast*, calling upon authorities to intervene. In other cases, adults are able to resolve the situation by speaking with the youth, or with their parents.

But, when specific conflicts are examined, this coherent generalization breaks down. The unfolding of each conflict is significantly shaped by local dynamics, neighborhood histories, and the individuals themselves. Other events, outside of any one interaction, can have influence; conflicts with one individual can bleed over into interactions with another. Current discourses about "at-risk youth," prevention, safety, "senseless violence," aggression, "norms and values" and integration give a specific contour to today's discussions about "*hangjongeren*"; they shape, as well, what policies and interventions are deemed appropriate. Hanging around in one era differs from its interpretation in another; why it causes anxiety is specific to the historical context.

Representations of *Hangjongeren*

Adult-youth conflicts over public space are not limited to the Netherlands, of course. In the United States, as in many other countries, it is common to read about youth who hang

[70] Each year of age from 15-22 has a different minimum wage; from age 23 on there is one minimum wage. For gross income, beginning 2003, the minimum wage for adults for a full day of work was 57.66; for 22 year olds it was 49.01, for 21 year olds 41.80, for 20 year olds 35.46, for 19 year olds 30.27, for 18 year olds 26.23, for 17 year olds 22.77, for 16 year olds 19.89, and for 15 year olds 17.30 (CWI n.d.).

around in shopping malls and parking lots.[71] In a compelling examination of youth in English shopping malls—the "unacceptable *flaneurs*"—it has been argued that adults have transformed public spaces into an extension of their own private space (Matthews et al. 2000). In many Dutch news articles about *hangjongeren*, the concern with orderliness, and the state's role in ensuring it, arises again and again. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the vast majority of articles do not adopt a sympathetic tone in regard to the youth being discussed. In contrast to the images evoked by stories about "street children" from far away places, nearby, close-to-home "youth" are often portrayed as responsible or at fault, rarely as innocent or victimized (Hall and Montgomery 2000). In the following section, I examine the many ways in which *hangjongeren* are represented in the Dutch news media, and describe how sensational language and inaccurate, "grabbing" headlines often complicate the already troubled representation of youth in public space as "*hangjongeren*."

Hangjongeren in the News, 1994-present

Playing Bing Crosby Drives *Hangjongeren* Away (DZN 1999)
Tormenting Youth Harass Leiden: "These guys make it impossible to live here" (LD 2002b)
"If You Take One of Us, Then You Take Us All"(NRC 2003g)
Hangjongeren Terrorize Koningsspilstraat (DR 2003)
Mischief or Pure Intimidation? (HP 2003e)
"*Hangjongeren* Are Also Just People, Too" (DG 2004)
"They Piss in the Garden" (DV 2004m)
Hangjongeren Need to Think about the Neighbors (BN 2004)
Not a Gang, But Not Darlings, Either (NRC 2004d)
Neighborhood Watch Reins in *Hangjongeren* (NKD 2005)
Troublesome Youths' Misbehavior Can Now Be Punished with Temporary Ban (HP 2005b)

[71] For recent stories on youth in the United States see: "The Endless Night: Hanging around in Cars with Boys, and Girls" (NYT 2005a) and "Malls Nationwide Setting Curfews for Teens" (AP 2004).

This selection of headlines from local, provincial, and national newspapers[72] shows that print journalists have covered adult-youth conflicts in a variety of ways, from describing new anti-*hangjongeren* measures, to reporting on "trouble areas," to giving voice to those asking for more tolerance for youth who hang around. A few articles even make note of the fact that hang-around youth have been considered a problem for ages, and try to explain why youth hang around.[73] Given the amount of ink expended on the subject, the range of content and perspective is not surprising. Since 1994, more than 800 articles using the term *hangjongeren* have been printed in provincial and national newspapers.[74]

While the reportage of the last decade clearly shows a range in coverage, it becomes quickly evident that the majority of the articles characterize adult-youth conflicts in a negative light. Certain incidents become major news stories, and are carried throughout the nation, with follow-up coverage for days at a time, such as the stories about "train terrorists" (discussed below). The word "*hangjongeren*" is sometimes used to designate youth who are simply hanging around and being noisy; other times, it is used

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[72] I am not familiar enough with the local and provincial papers to detect particular leanings, but some of the national papers position themselves in distinctive ways that are partly reflected in their titles. *NRC Handelsblad* (NRC Business Paper; abbreviated here as NRC) tends to have more in-depth coverage of international, business and economic news, and is read by highly educated people; *De Volkskrant* (the People's Paper, abbreviated as DV) leans a little to the left, in a liberal humanist way, in its coverage of societal issues, and is read by many who consider themselves progressive, and by many students; *Trouw* (Faithful, abbreviated as TR) still has some Christian overtones in its reportage and editorial selections; *Algemeen Dagblad* (General Daily News, abbreviated as AD) attempts to provide news from a neutral position; *Het Parool* (The Message, abbreviated as HP) is Amsterdam's daily paper and it focuses on more city and national news; and *De Telegraaf* (the Telegraph, abbreviated as TE) presents very short stories in a more splashy way, and is the most popular paper in the country.

[73] "*Overlast* from *Hangjongeren* Is from All Time" (HP 1994); *Hangjongeren* Want to See and Be Seen (BN 2003).

[74] Figure obtained through searching Lexis-Nexus (foreign-language, provincial papers) and the Dutch Royal Library's Krantenbank (national newspaper archive), April, 2005. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the word *hangjongeren* was first used in print in 1994 (Van Lier 1994).

to talk about youth engaged in much more serious, even criminal, behavior. There is an easy slippage between irritating youth and criminal youth, primarily because the word "*hangjongeren*" is used to describe both.

A closer look at the choices of words reveals the sharp tone used in many headlines, which becomes even more interesting when contrasted with the articles' content. In headlines, youths are described as "tormenting," "terrorizing," "harassing" neighborhoods; they "spoil," "ruin," and "plague" events and institutions. The police are described as having a "tough approach," engaging in an "offensive," "writing tickets," "banning youth," and "protecting the safety of elderly residents." School officials and store owners "fend off" the youth with fences, behavior rules and bans; youths "destroy" signs, "chase away" consumers, and "mess up" playgrounds.

However, in many articles, the declarative and sometimes shrill tone of the headlines gives way to a more complex story. For example, in an article concerning youth and "shopping-evening," the evening when stores stay open a few hours later than their usual six or seven p.m. closing time, the headline reads: "Shopping-evening Spoiled by *Hangjongeren*" (UTN 2003). In the article, we are told that a retail store interest group is arguing that shopping-evening is less well attended due to *hangjongeren*, because older people feel unsafe at shopping centers. "*Hangjongeren* are surely not always criminal, but the customers can't bear them," states a storeowner. Another storeowner is described as also being concerned about the "explosive growth of youth parading around," but states that the declining popularity of shopping-evening is also due to the arrival of large discount shopping centers located in industrial malls. We can see from the article that youth are hanging around in shopping centers, and that, in some

cases, they are irritating shoppers.[75] One store owner states that "more is involved" than *hangjongeren*, because shopping centers are now in competition with other, relatively new discount outlets. Yet, the headline declares: "Shopping-Evening Spoiled by *Hangjongeren*," a pronouncement that is surely misleading with regard to the article's content. This article was carried by four different city and provincial newspapers in addition to the *Utrechts Nieuwsblad*: the*Amersfoortse Courant* , the *Dagblad Rivierenland*, the *Gelderlander*, and the *Veluws Dagblad*. Notably, the day before these articles were printed, a similar, longer article appeared in the *NRC Handelsblad*, a respected national daily paper, but with the much more accurate headline: "Shopping Evening Less Popular" (NRC 2003e).

In addition to a lack of correspondence between headlines and content, the use of sensationalistic language is often apparent. In a report on adult-youth conflicts in Rijnsburg, the headline reads "*Hangjongeren* Besiege Rijnsburg Councilors; Plants thrown against windows," and begins:

> Even the city council is not safe from the *hangjongeren* that have settled around the municipal building. The lawmakers H. de Mooij and G. Mostert were so beleaguered that that they had to leave through the back door. There were plants thrown against the windows of their workspace, and they were cursed at (LD 2002a).

The report continues with the information that this was not the first time that the youths have been in the area: "The group of about 15 youths, aged 12-15, are the cause of more and more *overlast* in the vicinity of the municipal building." When the meeting began, according to one of the councilors, the youths outside "started hitting the windows, so we shut the curtains, expecting that would quiet things down . . . But it got worse. Finally,

[75] We can also see that the youth are not perceived, at least not primarily, as shoppers themselves.

plants with their roots and all were thrown against the window" (LD 2002a). The article does not clarify with what the youths were first hitting the windows, but we may assume no windows were broken, because there is no mention of damage.

The article is split between two pages, and at the bottom of the first page the reader is enticed to turn the page with the use of an enlarged, boldface quote: "You are dead and buried before the police arrive." This quote makes visible a deep discontentment with the services of the social welfare state. The use of this rather dark, almost hysterical quotation is important, for approximately half of the text of the article concerns when the lawmakers said they called the police, their complaints that the police did not arrive, and counter-statements from the police, who say that they arrived as soon as they had an officer available, about a half-hour after they received a phone call. According to the police, when they arrived, there were four youths hanging around, doing nothing; the police spoke to them, and the youths departed. The page-turning quote contributes to the article's emphasis on fearfulness, danger, powerlessness, and abandonment by the authorities; had the quote read: "When we arrived, there were only four youths standing around, doing nothing," the overall emphasis of the story would have been quite different.

Clearly, throwing plants at municipal office windows is annoying behavior, and could potentially be dangerous if windows were broken, yet the councilors' reaction and the journalist's portrayal both seem out of proportion. I find it surprising that the adults appear to have cowered behind the drapes, called the police, and left through the back door, without ever first confronting the young teenagers. This aspect of the story sheds a bit of light on how many adults see youth, and their expectations of the social welfare

state. I am also struck by the seriousness of the reporter's language: "*hangjongeren* besiege," "even the city council is not safe," "fled through the back door." With such phrases, one might picture a gang, equipped with knives or guns, holding the city councilors hostage. While the councilors' meeting was disrupted, and they were annoyed, it does not appear that they were in great danger; the only damage was the uprooted plants. In this story, we see a common slippage between "irritating youth" and "dangerous youth." It is not difficult to imagine that such reporting plays a significant role in generating fear of youth, especially of the vague, amorphous, catch-all category of "hang-around youth."

"Train Terrorists"

One of the most sensational news stories that occurred during my field research was that of the "train terrorists," a group of youth whose behavior was reportedly so irritating that the train conductors refused to drive the trains between Hoorn and Enkhuizen, two towns in the northwestern portion of the Netherlands. The use of the term "terrorists" was highly inflammatory and, one can only assume, employed to draw readership; coming after the attacks on New York City and Bali, the word "terrorist" had lost any sense of being associated with misbehavior and misdemeanors. Fear of young men, especially Muslims, had coalesced with a longer discourse about the problems with Moroccan and Turkish boys, and it is not surprising that the youth in this incident were initially reported to be Moroccan, a fact that was later contested.

On May 5, 2003, this story was carried by the Dutch General Press Bureau (*Algemeen Persbureau*), akin to the Associated Press in the United States; it was then picked up that afternoon in the widely distributed Amsterdam daily, *Het Parool*. A quick

look at some of the headlines for this story illustrates how sustained and extensive the press coverage was. The following are taken from the national papers, only.

May 5	No trains between Hoorn and Enkhuizen due to youth *overlast* (ANP 2003) Train terror from group of Moroccan youth (HP 2003g)
May 6	"Hangjongeren need an alternative" (TR 2003b) Terror from the little dictators at the Enkhuizen station (AD 2003)
May 7	Extra security personnel for Hoorn instigators (HP 2003b)
May 8	"It's those Dutch boys (*kaaskoppen*)," says Mustafa (DV 2003e)
May 10	Threatened, spat on, tormented (NRC 2003a) Again problems on the Enkhuizen line (HP 2003h)
May 12	"Sure, we're the train terrorists"; According to Vito the National Railways staff is super scared (DV 2003f)
May 13	Youth workers didn't know anything, railway police couldn't do anything (DV 2003g) Measures to fight youth terror in trains, Enkhuizen-Hoorn line (NRC 2003f) Enkhuizen and Hoorn meeting to discuss train vandals (HP 2003a)
May 14	Municipalities take on 'train terrorists' (DV 2003d)

For nearly two weeks, this was a prominent news story; most articles were printed in the first few pages of the paper, running on average about 500 words. Of course, there were also letters to the editor, and articles in the provincial papers, as well. What had these youth done, to shut down part of the national rail service? Delving into the articles, the "facts" of the story seem to unravel.

In the first story, by the *Algemeen Persbureau*, it is admitted that "what precisely happened is not yet known." Not having such information does not prevent a story from being written, nor from linking the (unclear) incident to set of other events:

> On the Hoorn-Enkhuizen line there has been, for awhile, reports about nuisance from "groups of youth" who make the lives of train personnel difficult, said a spokesperson from the National Railways. According to him, it has to do with threats, bullying, and forms of harassment (ANP 2003).

Later that afternoon, *Het Parool* gives more details:

> A group of about 20 youth have for weeks harassed and intimidated passengers at the Enkhuizen station, and travelers from Hoorn to the city. According to a spokesperson from Train Travel, the youth are Moroccan. . . . According to Krijgsman (National Railways spokesperson), the *hangjongeren* are guilty of spitting at personnel and travelers. They harass and beleaguer them. They try, for example, to obstruct the doorway (HP 2003g).

The next day, in an article entitled "*Hangjongeren* need an alternative," we hear from a woman who works at the ticket counter in the Enkhuizen station:

> Under the iron roof of the Enkhuizen station, ten youths stroll around. They slouch against the windows of the 19th century establishment. Inside, the ticket seller complains in the direction of the youth, "I have already, for the fourth time, ordered a new fire extinguisher. They have emptied them all. They pee outside against the wall. Three times a window has been broken. If you are here on the weekend, by your lonesome, and such a group comes around . . . well, that's not pleasant. I'm sick of it" (TR 2003b).

But in this article, the youth counter: "It's just a convenient meeting point. Before we go out for the evening, we meet here first. There is nothing else to do" (TR 2003b). Rejecting the reports that the youth on the train were Moroccan, the youth say, "Actually not . . . There were at least four people causing trouble. That many Moroccans have never lived here" (TR 2003b). At the end of the article, a conductor is quoted, who states that the youths' behavior is annoying, but understandable:

> But I can't really blame them. Here in Enkhuizen there is just nothing to do. Everything has suffered from budget cut-backs. Of course, you shouldn't do what they are doing, but, hey, weren't we all young once? Ensure they have something better to do than hang around here, and you'll see the problem disappear. And you have to approach them in a relaxed manner. Not immediately shoot off in a spasm if you see them. I was just standing with them, talking. Saying they shouldn't make too much trouble. They react well to that [kind of approach] (TR 2003b).

In contrast to the first reports, it appears from later articles that there are a handful of youth—mostly White instead of Moroccan (DV 2003e)—who are making trouble on the trains; larger groups of youth are also hanging around at train stations. Youth on the

trains are reported to have blocked doorways, climbed in and out through the windows, traveled without a ticket, unscrewed fuses and extinguished the lights, used foul and threatening language, spit, and fashioned passkeys to allow them to walk from car to car, even entering the driver's cabin. Some of these activities have the potential to be quite dangerous, while others are simply annoying; however, they are treated as all of a piece. We learn, finally, two days later, that the "last straw" was a fire that was started in a train car; this was the reason train personnel refused to work on that line on Sunday (HP 2003b). Fire is certainly a serious matter, yet it is remarkable that none of the articles ever discuss how big the fire was and whether the car sustained damage.

In the reporting, we can see that no individuals have been identified; accusations are made about "the youth," or "some of the youth." The stories of youth who meet up at the train station, and spend time smoking and talking and goofing off, are linked to those who cause more serious problems in the train. In one article, a spokesperson from the National Police Service Corps acknowledges that the two are not the same: "Police say that it's difficult to deal with the *hangjongeren* who make the Enkhuizen station unsafe. 'Hanging around is permitted; that is no reason to arrest someone'" (HP 2003b). Adults who work at restaurants in the station are not anxious about the youth; one owner reports that the youth don't come to his café, a server at one of the snack bars calls the local youth "darlings," and insists that the annoying youths are from other towns (DV 2003e).

What also becomes clearer, as one reads through all the articles, is that there is a noticeable absence of train personnel during most train rides. No one is there to take tickets before travelers board the train, and many times no conductor appears to collect tickets during the trip. In one article, reporters describe their trip:

> Feet up on the seats, youth fighting, and a heavy smell of marijuana in the car. No one heeded the rules during the half-hour ride. Only one girl even looked at her travel companion who was smoking pot, and then quickly ducked her head back into her novel. The conductor didn't once show himself the entire trip (DV 2003e).

Another traveler confirms the absence of Railways staff: "You seldom see conductors, out of fear they often stay by the driver" (AD 2003). One of the main measures taken in response to the incident, and the general situation, was to assign extra security personnel at the Enkhuizen station, and to have a six-man team monitor the trains while they traveled between the stations. Without personnel, it would be extremely difficult to fine or arrest those individuals responsible. Being insufficiently staffed to be able to identify the offenders, both police and reporters are left to talk only in terms of "the youth" and "the *hangjongeren*." Such generalities only serve to increase travelers' anxieties about any young people they might encounter; the mere presence of youth thus becomes cause for feeling unsafe.

As the "train terrorist" story continued, readers learned that such youth behavior was not unique, as there were other routes that were labeled "risk-lines." A spokesperson for the National Police Service Corps said, "It has to do with youth who have nothing to do, all born in the Netherlands, and mostly from ethnic backgrounds. Setting fires, vandalism, fire extinguishers through the window, you can't imagine how crazy" (DV 2003h). Problem behavior, as discussed in this article, included hanging around, fare jumping, vandalism, pick-pocketing and theft. I would argue that there is a significant difference between fare-jumping and theft, and between hanging around and vandalism, yet this article treats hanging around as one end of a spectrum of public misbehavior, which extends all the way to robbery.

The columnist and writer H. J. Schoo responded to the growing discourse about problems with youth on the trains with an insightful essay entitled "The national track," making reference to both the railway track and the direction of the country (2003).[76] In this piece, Schoo describes the intense individualization of recent decades (as seen in part by increasing automobile usage) and neo-liberalism (as seen in a growing dependence on market approaches). Arguing that "[t]he railway has been a mirror to politics," he writes:

> Social changes and political positions have influenced the image and the reality of the railways. It was the dream of the capitalist, the symbol of technical and social progress, the instrument of the modern state, a bit of the ideology and iconography of collectivism. . . Now the climate of the railways has markedly changed . . . The state is the problem, the market is the solution (Schoo 2003).

As adults' dissatisfaction with the limits of the social welfare state to order the social world make clear, the state is certainly seen as the problem. I did not find, however, that the participants in this study therefore embraced market-based solutions; rather, they longed for the state to work as promised.

Schoo's essay provides an interesting perspective, nonetheless, on the "train terrorist" story. After discussing the financial and management difficulties often encountered by public transport companies, and the auto's role in decreasing the number of train travelers, Schoo notes that while the left would like to continue expanding the railways, the right—currently leading the government—is "not interested" in public transportation:

> The railway is not really primarily a question of economic order, it is a societal ordering problem that can't be solved by a state that continues to let it wither away. That the troublemakers between Enkhuizen and Hoorn can terrorize the trains, is then not a coincidence. It is a consequence as much of the old-left "logic of subsidy" as the new-right's utopia of 'the stateless market' (2003).

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[76] An in-depth analysis of the evolution of the political economics of the railroad can be found in Schivelbusch (1986).

In this piece, Schoo suggests that that "the invisible hand" might not just be invisible, but may actually be absent; public order problems can only be solved through investment in public spaces. Following Schoo's comments about the railways, I would suggest that the above characterizations of adult-youth conflicts are a kind of mirror to today's political climate. Youth have long hung out in public spaces; adults have found their behavior irritating for centuries. But by examining the way in which this public problem is constituted, articulated, and approached today, we can learn a great deal about contemporary ideas about individual, collective, and state responsibility.

Returning to the "train terrorists": the following weekend there were more troubles with young travelers on the Hoorn-Enkhuizen line, and two youths were arrested for getting into a fist-fight with newly assigned private security guards. They were reportedly vandalizing something (the reports do not give details), the guards reprimanded them, and a physical altercation occurred. The National Railways declared that the two seventeen-year olds who were arrested should pay 100,000 in damages. The two youths were being held responsible for the previous actions of all the youths; the 100,000 included estimates for material damages, the cost for extra personnel and security, the financial consequences resulting from the day that train conductors refused to travel the Hoorn-Enkhuizen route, and the cost to hire busses to ferry passengers when the trains were not running. The story eventually died, after nearly two weeks of national attention.

I have examined this story in depth because it illustrates a number of points I have argued in this chapter. The use of the word "*hangjongeren*" is often more mystifying than illuminating. It does not clearly correspond to a specific set of actions or behaviors;

in some cases, *hangjongeren* are simply sitting around on an apartment stoop, in other cases, *hangjongeren* are on trains, destroying the seats and harassing other passengers. It would be more accurate to describe those who destroy train seats as "vandals," and those who harass as "harassers." The term is simply imprecise in its current application; its vagueness is dangerous, and powerful. It does not correspond to any particular behavior, and, more ominously, it potentially corresponds to all young people. The vagueness of the term creates a category that encompasses all youth, making all youth potentially suspect. The lack of specificity and the all-inclusiveness of the category result in the frequent conflation of "irritating youth" with "dangerous youth."

The use of sensational language and misleading headlines points to the news media's partial culpability in fostering an image of "dangerous youth." In my research, it became clear that if adults were acquainted with the local youth they were much less likely to be afraid of them. There are other reasons why many adults are afraid of young people, including a general, society-wide diminished respect for all kinds of authority, unfamiliarity with ethnic difference, and uneasiness around foreign languages, all themes discussed in later chapters. It must be recognized, however, that reporters' continued approach to adult-youth conflicts as if such conflicts were an entirely new phenomenon contributes to fear of and confusion about the presence of young people in public spaces.

Conclusion: Youth as a site of struggle

Analyzing adult-youth conflicts in multiple ways—in terms of historical patterns and particular moments, as specific, contextualized incidents, and in representations—reveals the complexity of discerning what is meant by the term *hangjongeren*. Examining the history of young people in public space, and the attendant anxieties of adults, shows us

that "youth" has long been a site of signification and struggle. Geert de Vries, who has studied the historical development of the Dutch "pedagogical regime," argued recently that although youth articulate and make visible social changes, they do not principally create the changed world in which they find themselves: "They are the messengers, but not yet the authors of the message," he writes (1992, 37). There is clearly a link between social changes and the notion of "youth as problem"; attempts to shape youth are often responses to such changes, attempts to shape the future in particular ways, to define what is normal and what is good. "Youth" is, in this way, the site where cultural battles are waged, where hegemony is asserted and contested (Acland 1995; Griffin 1993; Lesko 2001).

At another level, in studying how individual incidents are shaped by specific contexts and personal experiences, we can also see that there is a great range of meanings that can be attached to any particular conflict. Conflicts may be about youthful noise or litter on one level, but they also act as a vehicle for other anxieties, for example about ethnic integration, gender roles, (sexual) relations that blur ethnic and class boundaries, the regulation of public space, and the assignation of responsibility. The representation of adult-youth conflicts in news media is simply too superficial to capture the deeper reactions and emotions at play in these conflicts, and instead only exacerbates already present anxieties. In contrast, taking a close look at what motivates the frustration felt by some adults—the particular ideas that give shape to their angry reactions to youth in public space—can tell us a great deal about what people expect from their lives, the state, and each other. Such an in-depth analysis makes sense out of adults' seeming over-reactions, and clarifies youths' seeming over-aggressive response: both parties are acting

out of a particular expectation of personal freedoms, freedoms which are frustrated by the limits of the social welfare state and the disruption of others.

In August 2004, about a year after I finished my field research, another media "flare-up" occurred, this time focused on some Moroccan youths in the Diamantbuurt in Amsterdam, and the (presumably White) married couple whom they had "chased out of their home" by causing *overlast*. This story gripped the nation for a few weeks, with headlines such as: "'*Hangjongeren* Are the Boss in the Diamantbuurt'; Politicians investigate story about an Amsterdam family's terror" (DV 2004d), and "Living among *Hangjongeren* in Amsterdam South; 'Such nice things as we have they don't have at home. We would be asking to be burglarized, if we didn't use window blinds'" (DV 2004l). This story was the talk of the town for months, and these two headlines hint at some of the issues—authority in public space, and class differentiation—underlying this conflict. It was only in late October that other voices from the neighborhood began to be heard, defending the youth and criticizing the married couple, even to the point of accusing the couple of yelling racial epithets at the youth (AD 2004c and TR 2004). Meanwhile, officials were lambasted for not acting sooner to solve the problem (AD 2004b), and the public was notified (and frightened) about the "fact" that a recent study showed that there were 80 *hangjongeren* groups in Amsterdam alone (AD 2004a). In this anxious period, the mayor of Amsterdam, Job Cohen, pushed for, and succeeded in getting passed, a new policy that allows police to issue temporary bans on individual youths, preventing them from passing through specific streets and other public spaces (HP 2005b).

In many ways, this episode serves as a clear example of the need to take an ethnographic approach in investigating so-called "moral panics." The reaction of "the public" was much more diverse than initial media reports indicated, which demonstrates the need to disaggregate the category of "adults" in such conflicts. The different sets of adults had competing group interests, and a close analysis of the situation could have examined the particular ideologies that contributed to shaping how the youth behavior was differently perceived. This episode also shows that policy decisions are often made on the basis of rough-cut characterizations such as those put forth by the news media. The history of youth policy shows, in fact, how prevailing notions of "the youth problem"—as articulated by powerful social groups—have shaped youth policy in specific ways. The next chapter details these changes over time, and shows that current youth policy is directed more than ever toward the management of public space and public behavior, and toward addressing the complaints of adults.

Chapter Four – Youth Policy

> Today, youth work is "neighborhood-oriented"—we monitor problem areas in neighborhoods. And has a lot more to do with residents' *onveiligheidsgevoelens* (feelings of being unsafe) . . . it's all about the adults' feelings of being unsafe). The youth workers now have to go outside the youth centers to *aanspreken* (admonish) the youth who cause that feeling in adults. And I'm supposed to start doing that now, too. But I am not going to. Absolutely not. It's nonsense. . . It seems that adults just don't want to see youth, they want them off the street. Youth work is now focused on hauling the youth inside.
>
> —Gerrit, youth worker

Introduction

In early November, 2002, I was invited to observe a training for the staff of a local project called "Safe Meeting Places." This project is collaborative in nature, involving youth workers, social workers[77] and police officers, and is part of the Youth and Safety Policy program of Amsterdam North. Youth workers have traditionally worked within youth centers, setting up and supervising a variety of leisure and educational activities, and offering "drop-in hours" during which youth can stop by the youth center and hang out. The social workers in this project are foremost employees of Streetcorner Work, an organization that has other locations throughout Amsterdam, and their tasks include meeting with youth and young adults at the local office, providing assistance navigating the web of social service organizations, and directing clients to homeless shelters and programs for drug addiction, among other things. In addition, these social workers spend part of their hours walking through individually assigned neighborhoods and reaching out

[77] Youth workers (*jongerenwerk*) and social workers (*maatschappelijkwerk*) have different educational trajectories; youth workers complete the MBO track (*Middelbaar Beroepsonderwijs*, or middle level vocational training), while social workers complete the HBO (*Hogher Beroepsonderwijs*, or higher level vocational training). To attend university, one begins six years of Preparatory Academic Education (*Voortgezet Wetenschappelijk Onderwijs*, VWO) at around age 12 or 13. Those on the HBO track complete five years, and those on the MBO track complete four years.

to people in need. The police officers involved are the "Neighborhood Directors" for particular districts, whose duties include monitoring and addressing problems with youth and responding to residential complaints. In addition to the staff from each of these three "partners," the administrators and policy makers for the project were also in attendance.

As a collaborative project, these three groups of professionals are expected to meet in various committees, share information about problem areas, and coordinate how such problems should be addressed. To this end, working groups identify and monitor the "Top Five" problem areas; during my research, they were also holding discussions about whether to require youth to possess "passes" or identification cards for each youth center, and debating how much information about individual youths should be shared among the partners. As one might expect, conflict sometimes erupted over these issues, as youth workers saw their role as trying to build trust and rapport with youth, and did not want to risk damaging relationships by reporting information to the police. At the same time, the police felt that "as partners" youth workers should help identify problems, and even lodge formal complaints against particular individuals, so that the police could "do their job." In good faith, the three partners attempted to find a balance, but these divergent visions of professional responsibility continued to raise problems for the organization.

During the training meeting, a heated discussion broke out about the project's "statement of purpose," which was presented as part of the draft covenant between the partners. In the draft, the text read: "The purpose of this work is the reduction of feelings of being unsafe among residents in public space." Some of the youth workers and senior staff from that organization argued against this statement, pointing out that "it sounds

more like neighborhood resident-work than youth work," and that they "work for the youth, not for adults." One of the senior officers of the project reminded everyone that this document was intended for the politicians who fund the project, so the language had a political purpose. While the youth workers' criticism was acknowledged and agreed upon, the revised statement of purpose ended up changing very little: "The purpose of this work is reducing the youth *overlast* in the neighborhood that creates feelings of being unsafe among residents." The conception of the problem to be addressed was essentially unchanged: adults feel unsafe. To this end, youth workers have been given the additional (and some felt contradictory) task of making contact with youths in public spaces outside the youth center, with the hope of encouraging them to attend youth center activities and drop-in hours, in order to reduce adults' complaints. This was a departure from the original conception of the project, which was to provide additional resources to youth centers in order to offer young people more opportunities to interact with and receive guidance from professionals. Despite its name—Safe Meting Places —the project focused not on youths' safety, but that of adults.

Throughout the year, as I continued to study the policy networks and organizations in Amsterdam North, the clear discrepancy between the current purpose and the name of this project lingered with me. It became representative of a larger struggle over "defining the problem," one which seemed to be repeated on multiple levels and between conflicting interests: national ministries, municipal policy makers, senior project staff, youth workers, social workers, police officers, residents, parents, youth. At certain points, there was broad consensus: everyone seemed to agree that things were going well for most young people; over and over again, I heard that only 15% of the

youth population was having or causing serious problems, a figure that seems to have originated in a government study (discussed further below) (MinJustitie 1994). This figure was cited in policy documents and government studies, and repeated by police, social workers and youth workers; it was considered common knowledge. But in terms of what the specific problem was, and what was to be done to solve it, there seemed to be less consensus. Policy efforts took multiple directions, from providing general services such as sports facilities and youth center-based activities, to establishing specific projects intended to deal with "at-risk" groups, to reducing adults' complaints and fears by getting youths off the streets, to creating sets of behavior rules for playgrounds and other public spaces, in the hope that youths will discipline themselves.

Policies both mark and contribute to larger societal, political and intellectual trends. In the example above, youth workers now are expected not only to provide activities for and establish mentoring relationships with youth, but also to monitor areas where youths hang around, establish contact with those youth, and try to bring them inside the youth centers, in order to make adults feel safer. Such policy developments—both in terms of official documents and the practices such texts give rise to—tell us a great deal about how social problems are imagined. This chapter examines some of the recent changes in youth policy, in particular those that pertain to youth who hang around in public spaces. It is beyond the scope of this study to outline all of the efforts undertaken in the social work, social services, and justice systems. Instead, I provide an overview of the changes in youth policy during the twentieth century with an eye to how different eras have defined the problem to be solved, and show that in recent years youth policy has been shaped by, and taken on, four particular themes: "preventing" youth

criminality among those "at-risk," specifying a range of "target groups" for different interventions, collecting and sharing information about individuals and groups of youth, and re-conceiving some forms of behavior previously seen as "mischief," including causing *overlast*, as criminal or as potentially leading to criminal behavior. I also discuss a few of the theoretical approaches that have played a large role in shaping recent policy, including ideas about the "linked chain of responsibility" among social institutions and agencies, the notion of a much needed "social pedagogic infrastructure," and the strategy for "bringing into clear view" groups of youth through measuring their level of criminality. Following this overview, I examine in more detail how youth workers, social workers, police officers and policy makers variously engage with the problem of "hang-around youth" in Amsterdam North. What I hope to show is just how seriously the social welfare state takes these adult complaints, and how much effort is being expended to "prevent" such aggravations.

A Brief History of Youth Policy

In this section, I examine the development of the policy structures through which youth work has been carried out, and discuss a few of the major policy documents, focusing on the way in which youth policy has over time shifted its target group from "youth in general" to "problem" or "at-risk" youth. This narrow focus has troubled the Council of Europe, among others, whose study commissioned by the European Steering Committee for Youth stated: ". . . it seems that in many cases youth policy in the Netherlands is addressing only the 15% of young people at risk and not the remaining 85%" (Nissen et al. 2000, 47). Criticizing the current focus on at-risk youth, the authors write: "Prevention, as a point of departure for all youth policy, sets as a premise youth as a

problem" (Nissen et al. 2000, 28). Much was also made, during my research, of the announcement by Amsterdam legislator Rob Oudkerk (Labor Party) that he would set aside monies to fund programs for non-problem youth; one headline read "Oudkerk sets aside 1.5 million for the 'good guys'" (Metro 2002). In the following pages, I review the major youth policy developments during the twentieth century, to show how past approaches have differed from the present-day situation.

From Pillarized Youth Education to Professionalized Social Work, 1900-1965

In the first half of the twentieth century, youth work was focused on the "forming" or "education" of youth (*vrije jeugdvorming*),[78] outside of the institutions of family and school; this was articulated in the idea of a "third educational milieu," as supplemental to the first and second milieus of family and school (Selten 1991). Large-scale societal changes led to a growth in "free time" for youth, as laws restricted the number of hours youth could work and the age at which they could begin, and a greater number of youth began to participate in longer formal education (Selten 1991, 86-8).[79] Kees Bakker writes that the establishment of youth work in local clubhouses was seen as a way to lead the "un-organized youth" from the "folk masses" into formal youth organizations, and as a way to teach them "self-motivation, responsibility, and self-discipline" (1990, 231). While about half of all youth were engaged in formal youth organizations, many scholars

[78] The term that is often used interchangeably here is "*opvoeding*," which means to educate, and to rear or to raise, from the root "*voeden*" (to feed or nourish) with the prefix "*op*" (up); education in the sense of formal schooling or training is termed "*opleiding*."

[79] As noted in the previous chapter, by 1950, almost half of youth aged 13-19 were fully participating in daily schooling, a great increase from that of 10% in 1900. Society also became increasingly urbanized and industrialized; more than 75% of the workforce was engaged in industrial or service labor by 1950, whereas in 1850 approximately half worked in agriculture (Selten 1991, 86).

and other authors at the time wrote, with great concern, about the general decline of traditional "norms and values." Selten describes their mourning of:

> the disappearance of family, village, and neighborhood bonds and the connected loss of *sociale controle*[80]. . . [T]he arrival of new forms of leisure time activities, such as dancing and the movie theater were seen as a threat to morality, just like already existing leisure opportunities such as the café, celebrations such as festivals and carnival, and especially hanging around on the street (1991, 92).

Criminality also loomed as a specter.[81] Because of the influence of social pedagogical and adolescent psychological ideas in this time, youth were increasingly seen as "not fully formed"; knowledge being gathered about youthful criminals "displayed the importance of preventive youth welfare programs, which could prevent youth from veering off into criminality" (Selten 1991, 93).

Youth work thus has long had a focus both on leisure time and the prevention of criminality; the pedagogical approach of the first half of the twentieth century, however, distinguishes it from the policy approaches of today. The "pillars" of Dutch society each established organizations for this "third educational milieu" such as the socialist Social-Democratic Youth Organization, the Catholic Inter-diocesan Youth Committee, and the Protestant Path Finders (*Padvinderij*, akin to the Boy Scouts) (Matthijs 1993, 92-104). These organizations engaged in recreational activities, established youth clubhouses, and provided for the political and religious "education" of youth. The 1919 "Research Commission on the Development of Youthful Persons 13-18" gave further impetus to the "pedagogizing" of youth, building on a variety of activities in the 19th century, from the

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[80] Roughly, "*sociale controle*" means the combination of adult oversight and community cohesion; it suggests that in a tight-knit community, adults admonish and look out for other adults' children, and would report misbehavior to parents. See Chapter Seven for an in-depth discussion of this term.

[81] In addition to anxieties about criminal youth, programs were established in the early 1900s to remove young children from parents who showed "unacceptable" child-raising behavior, "to prevent the 'child in danger' from becoming a 'dangerous child'" (Van Wel 1990, 254).

rise of the socialist youth movement in 1888 to the establishment of the neighborhood clubhouse "Our House" (*Ons Huis*) in Amsterdam in 1892 (Selten 1991, 90). Vocational schools (*volkshogescholen*) and work camps were created to train youth, and these came to play an important role during the high unemployment of the 1930s economic depression. During this period, the government's role in youth work was that of a funding agency, providing subsidies to the pillars that carried out the programs (Bakker 1990, 232).

After 1945, youth work slowly began to become more professionalized, specialized, and shaped by government oversight, within a context of fear about the "mass society" and the process of reconstruction. Between 1945 and 1960, youth policy was divided into two streams: the support for "normal" youth education and pillarized organizations, and the work with "mass-society youth work" (*massajeugdwerk*), which later became "social work" (*maatschappelijkwerk*), and later again "special youth work" (*bijzonder jeugdwerk*). In addition to concern about the unsupervised leisure time of the "mass youth" from "socially weak backgrounds" who "remained outside the grasp" of the traditional organizations (Matthijs 1993), there was anxiety about the "social degeneration" (or "going wild," *verwildering*) of the general youth population (Bakker 1990, 233). Matthijs emphasizes that the government's increasing role as administrator worked to professionalize all youth work during this period; for example, clubhouses were required to hire full-time expert staff, be open on a daily basis, fulfill a specified local need, gain additional subsidies from the municipalities, and receive guidance and support from national organizations (1993, 100).

In the 1950s, some of the "normal" youth organizations began to lose members and relevance, due in part to the beginning of the breakdown of pillarization; but there was a rise in "youth movements." These were organized both autonomously and within pillarized structures, and their members strove to articulate a better vision of the future (Selten 1991, 94-7). In general, the youth movements were comprised of more educated students, while the working class youth participated much less. Selten states that this division made for a sharp contrast between students and workers: "The movement youth was a strong, tough guy or a nice girl with a clear vision; the regular youth slouched around with a cigarette hanging out of his mouth" (1991, 96). Despite the popularity of the youth movements, governmental subsidies were increasingly distributed to "mass youth work" organizations; in order to remain relevant, and funded, the pillarized organizations began to change their focus. As discussed in Chapter Three, the spectacular, James Dean-like *nozems* were a visible manifestation that something was amiss. According to Matthijs, the increased professionalization of social work at this time was a result of the growing preoccupation with "problem youth, however they were titled" (1993, 104).

In the movement from youth education to youth social work, we can see changing definitions of the problem. The first three decades of the twentieth century saw an increase in youths' free time, with the unemployment of the 1930s seen as a kind of "extreme free time" (De Rooy 1992); the problem was that youth were not spending their free time in character-building, socially meaningful ways. The solution was for the national government to provide subsidies to the various pillars, so that they could educate and train their youth. After 1950, the problem was redefined: the mass society and the

effects of the war were damaging youth, and professional social work was needed to help those who were otherwise ungraspable by mainstream social institutions. In this conceptualization, the government was responsible for providing the protection and assistance required by youth, both through governmental services and through the pillarized structures.

Emancipating the Youth: 1965-1980

In 1965, the Ministry of Education, Arts and Sciences and the Ministry of Social Work were reorganized and their tasks redistributed. The first ministry became the Ministry of Education and Sciences, and the second was named the Ministry of Culture, Recreation and Social Work. This reorganization was reflective of the administration's move toward a "socio-cultural approach" to policy, instead of the previous "pedagogical-forming" approach (Matthijs 1993, 106). By the mid-1960s, government officials began to formulate national youth policy in a broader way again, to be directed toward all youth, not only problem groups; at the same time, policy became focused on "emancipating youth" rather than "educating" or "forming" them (Matthijs 1993, 104-11). This transition mirrors a larger change in welfare policy, as the idea of "participation" became an important goal in and of itself; for example, emphasis was placed on the formation of youth councils and advisory boards that were to participate in the formation of policy (Bakker 1990, 239). As discussed earlier in Chapter Two, government officials and institutional leaders had come to believe that they had no choice but to adjust to the rapid social, political and economic changes underway, and saw their task as facilitating the transition to the society of the future, rather than resisting change. Instead of continuing programs to "form" the youth, government officials helped establish "Open Youth

Work," which included support for a larger range of youth recreation activities, such as youth societies and cafés. At the same time, the Dutch economy was rapidly expanding. The concern in previous decades about the welfare (and diversion) of working class youth subsided, and the "target group" of youth policy was expanded to include all youth. The pillarization of society was also now rapidly dissolving, while the welfare state was growing both broader and more professionalized. As a result of the expansion of higher education, there was a "wild growth" of policy makers and civil servants (Matthijs 1993, 110-1).

In response to a 1965 study, the Ministry of Culture, Recreation and Social Work set about redefining the scope and the structure of youth policy. Under the leadership of Marga Klompé, that Ministry authored in 1969 a comprehensive Memorandum on Youth Policy (*Nota Jeugdbeleid*). In the Memorandum, the authors described their decision to adopt the term "youth policy" as a replacement for "youth services," which the Ministry found too "paternalistic" (CRM 1969, 8). In marked contrast to earlier policy, the committee argued for an approach that saw the "youth as a partner in society" who can "collaborate in shaping society and who can develop themselves toward adulthood, as will be expected in the society of the future" (CRM 1969, 10). The idea of self development (*zelfontplooing*), articulated here, is an important development in the post 1960s individualization of Dutch society. Ton Notten, scholar of urban and adult education, states that this document was merely a beginning point for the Ministry:

> The Minister for Culture, Recreation and Social Work, Ms. Marga Klompé, recognized the very limited range of the youth policy she presented. That's why she pleaded for the extension of the policy aimed at all public sectors that fall within the government's responsibility. She wanted to create coherence between all measures and initiatives, offering a basis for further development of youth policy. Future youth policy needs to be developed from one perspective, the Minister stated: the young generation's well-being and the youngsters' full preparation for the future (2001, 4).

Toward this end, the Ministry established an Interdepartmental Steering Group on Youth Policy. The Memorandum also argued that youth policy should become both more coordinated and more decentralized; there should be an increase in collaboration rather than direction, and the municipalities should take on a larger role in determining what should be done and how to do it. This policy tone dominated well into the 1970s, as youth work was articulated in terms of creating conditions for the "optimal development" of young people's abilities, and creating space for "youthful identity" (Bakker 1990, 248).

Youth identity was certainly visible during this period, particularly with the anti-establishment provocations of the *provos* which began in the early 1960s, the hippie and anti-war countercultures, and the arrival of the squatter movement (*kraker*) and the "punk" scene in the late 1970s. As discussed in Chapter Two, one of the main strategies of the authorities, including policy makers, was to accommodate youthful rebellious and countercultural activities; the police quickly learned that to crack down on *provo* "happenings" only worked to make the authorities look more foolish. In the same way, cultural changes involving drug use, sexual practices, and confrontational "style" (Hebdige 1979) were handled in a pragmatic way, as Kennedy makes clear in regard to the changes to the drug policy at the end of the 1960s: "Tolerating soft-drug use was part of the reconciliation-inclined (*verzoeningsgezinde*) youth policy, which was directed

toward quieting the rebellious youth" (Kennedy 1999, 177). These cultural changes made Amsterdam a destination for hippies and other counterculturalists from the United States and Western Europe, who then contributed to the visibility of the youth culture in the 1970s. The 1969 youth policy should be seen in light of these cultural developments, just as the creation of social work and "special youth work" must be seen, in part, as a reaction to the spectacular "*nozems*," the James Dean styled youth who frequented dance halls and rode motorcycles in the 1950s and 1960s.

The "problem" to be solved in the 1969 policy document is, interestingly, not the youth themselves, but the lack of coordination among the Ministries, and the paternalistic stance of the government. Rather than focusing on "youth as problem," this Memorandum articulates a vision of "youth as equals," albeit equals who are not typically treated as such; the document suggests that policy be directed toward supporting the self-development of youth (*zelfontplooing*). This stands in marked contrast to the earlier definitions of the problem, as previously noted: 1) unsupervised and meaningless free time which could be used to educate and nurture youth, and 2) the emotional damage inflicted on "mass society youth." The definition of the problem also relates to how these different policy regimes interpreted their "target group"; in the first half of the century, the target group shifted from all youth to "mass youth," while after 1965, the problem was not the youth themselves, but a paternalistic and uncoordinated approach to policy.

The Era of Self-reliance: 1980-1993

The broader perspective argued for by Klompé did not last long. By the time of the appearance of the next Memorandum, in 1984, the focus on "emancipation" had been transformed into one of "self-reliance." Notten writes:

> The government's role of offering all youngsters whatever type of socio-cultural product or service they require (the head-waiter's metaphor), the Ministers explained, had failed. In their view, the national government's priority had to be replaced by an emphasis on basic social, i.e. family and educational, networks in which youngsters participate, or from which they tend to drop out (2001, 5).

Beginning in the 1980s, unemployment grew tremendously in the Netherlands, especially among lesser educated, working class youth; in expressive cultural terms, "squatters" and punks had become visible in the scene. In 1984, the rate of unemployment among youth was 36%, double that of adults, and among early school-leavers, 70% were unemployed for some period during that year (De Vries 1992, 89). At the same time, there was a growing critique of the cost, and potential overburdening, of the welfare state; politicians began to focus on deregulation, strengthening the market, and rejecting tasks previously seen as a responsibility of the government (Bakker 1990, 245).[82] Youth policy shifted from a general, broad based policy to one that emphasized problem individuals, and which was focused on increasing the self-reliance and employability of youth; youth wages were reduced to stimulate employers to hire them, and plans to increase youth employment were drafted (De Vries 1992).

The 1984 Memorandum was authorized by the Minister of Welfare, Public Health and Culture and the Minister of Social Affairs and Employment, which demonstrates the

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[82] Bakker argues against those who characterize this period as the withdrawal of the welfare state, instead describing the period as one in which the state became stricter and harsher but no less interventionist. He relates this, in part, to the redefinition of youth from being a separate social group, to being just like other adults in terms of self-reliance and responsibility. This re-conceptualization had far-reaching implications, beyond the shift from general to narrow youth policies:

> Because the status of youth was not generally seen as a problem, the lengthening of the youth period was also not seen as a problem. Reducing the youth minimum wage, raising the age when people had a right to the adult minimum wage, reductions in welfare benefits, ideas about lengthening the period of mandatory education, and ideas about mandatory work and apprenticeships were all symptoms of this [conception] (1990, 245-51).

interweaving of "youth" and "employment" at the policy level during this time. Furthermore, in this re-conceptualization, problem individuals had to be cared for by the government to prevent them from dropping out of mainstream social institutions. Specific programs were established for smaller "target groups" such as "*randgroepjongeren*" (marginal/delinquent youth), drug addicts, ethnic minorities, and long-term unemployed youth (Bakker 1990, 247). Economic recession led to large cutbacks throughout the welfare system, transforming the "social welfare state" (*verzorgingstaat*) focused on the welfare of all social groups to the "caring society" (*zorgzame samenleving*) focused on problematic individuals. Matthijs describes this dramatic shift, with resounding tones of encroaching neo-liberalism:

> Those who could take good care of themselves, live healthily, choose an appropriate path of education, continue to learn and be flexible in the employment market cost the state less money. If every citizen would do this, and take responsibility for themselves, then the government budgets for general welfare could be reduced. In principle such monies only had to be reserved for problem cases and socially deprived groups . . . In policy terms, youth policy (*jeugdbeleid*) was slowly displaced by youth help and assistance policy (*jeugdhulpverleningsbeleid*) (1993, 111).

This movement can be seen, as well, in the adoption within policy circles of the term "*randgroepjongeren*," meaning literally "marginal group youth," used to indicate youth who had problems in multiple areas of their life, such as unemployment, school leaving, use of drugs and alcohol, and crime.

Municipalities continued to provide some funding for youth centers, but with such heavy budget cuts these centers were severely understaffed, often closed, and without resources for activities. One youth worker, Mies, who had worked in Amsterdam North during that time, told me about how youth work was changed during this period:

> It began with the big budget cuts, around the end of the 1980s, when there was an enormous amount of resources stripped from youth work. Only one youth center was closed down during that time—the buildings remained open—but what happened was that only one worker was in the building, and there weren't any activities organized, there was no budget. In contrast, when I started, before the budget cuts, there were four full time, 40 hour-a-week, positions.

In the early 1990s, the economy began to gradually improve; youth centers began to rebuild their staff and activity schedules, but a new way of distributing municipal monies was coming into prominence, in the form of "projects." Projects were limited in duration, had specific goals and activities, and were designed to reduce the level of disadvantage among a target group. In addition, such projects required more paperwork in terms of funding proposals and evaluations; in interviews, staff workers expressed frustration about the fact that they now spend a great deal of time on administrative efforts, rather than working directly with youth. Funding for projects can also be drawn from multiple sources, but this can have implications for the nature of the work done by youth workers. Because some of the youth centers in Amsterdam North double as "Safe Meeting Places" sites, the costs for those centers are paid for out of multiple budgets; these monies supplement the fixed costs of the youth centers. As discussed further below, because the youth center is dependent on project money to meet their fixed costs, the municipality and the other partners in the project have a greater amount of input in shaping how the youth workers do their work. With the emergence of project-based funding, youth policy began to become even more focused on "prevention." The problem was redefined again, seen to lie at the level of the individual, whose situation presented specific risk factors; the solution was for adults—both parents and professionals—to address these problems early on.

Prevention, Safety and Public Space: 1993-present

Looking at the changes in youth policy since 1969, Ton Notten argues there has been a move away from "emancipating" and toward "regulating" the youth. He describes three turning points, each marked by major youth policy documents: ". . . the completion of post-war reconstruction and the rising optimism about the youth as 'the hope for the future' (1969), the economic backsliding and the idea of the state's withdrawal (1984), and the new growth of the economy and a care-centered fear for the youth-at-risk (1993)" (2001, 3). In each of these three eras, the problem is re-constituted: "In the first phase: young people have to participate; in the second one: young people have to work; in the 1990s: young people have to behave" (Notten 2001, 1). While this description may be a little simplified, it resonated with many youth workers, social workers and policy makers with whom I spoke. It is certainly the case that in the early 1990s, a great deal of attention came to focus on youth behavior, youth crime, and the *onveiligheidsgevoelens*, or "feelings of being unsafe" of adults (see Chapter Five).

In the first half of the 1990s, a number of studies and policies were produced that had an impact on the way youth policy is configured today; this section concentrates on the major developments related to the growing concern with the prevention of youth criminality, the desire for safety, and the regulation of public space. Policies were shaped by many factors, but common threads can be traced throughout the variety of projects that flourished at this time: establishing "bonds" between "at-risk" youth and society; identifying the "signals" of problem behavior and notifying the agency or institution responsible for particular problems; intervening early in problem behavior; and collecting and sharing information across professions and governmental departments. As the

economy improved, and as youth criminality became an important political issue, more resources were distributed to a whole array of policy frameworks and projects. In terms of causality, it is unclear the extent to which any one of these developments influenced another; I do not want to make the case that any one policy or project or theory "led to" the next, but rather that certain themes were prevalent and powerful at the time.

The Rise of Youth and Safety Policy

In 1990, the level of public "feelings of being unsafe" began to be measured by the police, a task that was then taken up and expanded as part of the work of the Ministry of Justice. Increasing the public's feeling of being safe became a political priority; in 1993, a Comprehensive Safety Policy Report (*Integrale Veiligheidsrapportage*) was published as a collaborative effort of five different ministries: Domestic Affairs, Justice, Social Affairs and Employment, Transportation and Waterways, and Housing, Public Space and Environmental Management (BZ 1993). This report depicted "safety" as a very broad field that included topics as diverse as youth criminality and car accidents. As noted above, the movement to delegate more responsibility to municipalities in the planning and development of policy was already well underway; this is reflected in the creation of local-level safety policy documents at both the Amsterdam city level and the Amsterdam North borough level. While the national Comprehensive Safety Policy Report was wide ranging in scope, its articulation seems to have contributed to the creation of more specific policy frameworks at the municipal level.

Amsterdam's 1993 Comprehensive Safety Policy also targets youth criminality as part of the overall approach to safety. In the introduction to that document, the authors write:

> Too easily, deprived youth slip away into criminality. For two reasons it is important to act in both a preventive and repressive way: criminality arising from groups of youth must obviously be fought against; on the other hand, our society can't allow groups of youth to grow up in deprivation, because that leads to no other path than criminality (Amsterdam 1997, 26).

Clearly, we can see that part of the meaning of "comprehensive" here is not only the cooperation between governmental sectors, but also a growing concern with the "prevention" of criminality, rather than simply "repression," i.e. the tracking down of criminals and bringing them to court. In general, "comprehensive safety" was becoming strongly linked to the problem of youth criminality, a connection defended by the authors of the 1995 Strategic Plan entitled: "Binding Youth to Society, or Putting them in Handcuffs?" (*Binden of Boeien?*):

> The emphasis on youth criminality is logical. The comprehensive safety policy prioritizes addressing the forms of unsafety that are most directly experienced by citizens, and those that are connected to the widespread and still growing level of feelings of being unsafe. Additionally, it holds that youthful offenders are responsible for a large portion of the most common kinds of criminality (Amsterdam 1997, 7).

This Strategic Plan was later developed into a new policy program at both the Amsterdam city and the Amsterdam North borough levels, called "Youth and Safety." Within the context of the policy documents briefly reviewed above, it should be clear that this framework was concerned less with the "safety of youth" than it was with "making youth safe for society." I will return to the development of the Youth and Safety policy framework, and discuss some of the projects begun under its aegis in Amsterdam North, in a separate section, below.

<u>Youth "Deserve" the Future</u>

The year 1993 also saw the publication of a new Memorandum on Youth Policy, created by the Ministry of Welfare, Public Health and Culture, with the positive-sounding title,

"Youth Deserve the Future"; the cover shows a large group of smiling young people, probably between the ages of 12 and 14, jostling to get in the picture. The use of "deserve" here, however, requires a moment's pause. The Dutch word "*verdienen*" means both "deserve" and "earn"; this second meaning adds an important connotation, which complicates the meaning of the introductory text to the Memorandum. In what could be perceived as a scolding tone, the authors write: "To be young means: having opportunities and being required to grasp them," and "The title of this Memorandum leaves no doubt over the situation: youth *deserve* the future; they can deserve it and they must deserve it" (MinWVC 1993, 9). The authors could have used the well-worn phrase "Youth Are the Future" for their title, but instead chose "Deserve"; the secondary meaning of *verdienen* suggests that youth are also being asked to earn their way in the world, they *must* take advantage of opportunities. In this title, two messages can be discerned: 1) youth are not undeserving; and 2) while they may deserve the future, they also have to earn it. In this document, the theme of responsibility clearly remains on the agenda, joined by the metaphor of youth as a resource. As in the 1969 Memorandum, the future of society is thought to be at stake; however in this 1993 document, youth are no longer primarily characterized as partners. The authors write: "The Ministry sees the youth as the capital of the society" (MinWVC 1993, 7). This capital should be invested—for the sake of society: "Investing in the youth means investing in the stability and the development of the society of the future" (MinWVC 1993, 8). In this formulation, the purpose of youth policy is not to improve the education of young people, or to give them the reins in forming the future, but is rather a means to "securing" a "stable" future.

The authors set out two main priorities: the "promotion of opportunities for all youth" and "the prevention and reduction of youth dropping out[83] of society" (MinWVC 1993, 4). The Memorandum states that only about 15% of the youth encounter or cause serious problems, and notes that this figure stands in contrast with the current image of youth, given the negative publicity over youth problems. Arguing that not only "society has problems with youth" (criminality, lack of fixed residence, and addictions) but that "youth has problems with society" (societal changes, deprivation or neglect, risk factors, and emotional problems), the authors state: "through these problems youth can drop out or be pushed out from society" (MinWVC 1993, 8). In this document, it is clear that the notion of "risk factors" and "dropping out" had become central: "Among a minority of the youth the situation is going more or less badly. An accumulation of risk factors, one on top of another (*opeenstapeling*) leads to such behavioral and emotional problems that many youth in one way or another (threaten to) fall out of the boat" (MinWVC 1993, 30). But the problem is not simply that some at-risk youth might fall away from society; those who fall away also cost society a great deal of money and energy:

> In general, each form of dropping out from society leads to a demand for services. These are under a great deal of pressure. Increasing dropping out of society increases this pressure and even causes stoppages: the number of welfare recipients is high, special education is growing, the number of shelters is rising, [and] many psychiatric patients can no longer find a place in institutions (MinWVC 1993, 30).

Coming after large-scale budget cuts and economic recession and at a time of increased negative publicity over youth problems and "feelings of being unsafe," this document can be interpreted as setting out a new, rather disciplinary tone for youth policy. In contrast

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[83] The Dutch word here is "*uitvallen*" which literally translates as "fall out"; it has the sense, in this instance, of "drop out." I believe the word carries both the sense that one disengages with society as well as the sense that one falls away from; the disengagement is not necessarily the fault of the person who has fallen away.

to the broad vision for youth policy of 1969, the 1993 Memorandum follows its direct predecessor of 1984 in continuing to narrow the "target group" for intervention. This small group of youth became the primary focus, as they were a kind of "wasted capital" that was draining the system; by dropping out, they were also not contributing to society. As Notten notes: "The Department of Justice's former marginal target group of youth care youngsters in 1969 was promoted, twenty-five years later, to the central category of the Ministry of Welfare, Public Health and Culture" (2001, 7).

The issue of youth criminality was taken up separately by the Montfrans Commission in 1994. This commission, installed by the Youth Criminality Committee in 1993 by the Second Chamber (akin to the U.S. House of Representatives), published a study of their findings called "Youth Criminality Strategic Plan: Facing the facts" (*Advies Aanpak Jeugdcriminaliteit: Met de neus op de feiten*), in which they outlined the need for a balance between preventive and repressive measures. In particular, they focused on three principles for youth policy: early intervention, quick sanctions, and meaningful sanctions. The authors write: "The purpose can be no more, but also no less, than the reduction of the amount of *overlast* to a level that is societally acceptable (*aanvaardbaar*) and achievable" (MinJustitie 1994, 11). The Commission directed their attention to youth under the age of 12, as well, a category of delinquents that was becoming of growing concern. The Montfrans Commission's study was received with great interest, and formed the basis for another "Youth Criminality Strategic Plan" within the Comprehensive Safety Policy of 1995-1998, as well as the development of "youth and safety" policies at the municipal level. On the basis of this Plan, and under of the "Large Cities Policy" framework, the 25 largest cities were charged with the creation of "action

plans" to reduce the number of youth "contacts with police" and to increase the use of alternative sanctions, such as community service.[84]

Defining and Redefining Target Groups

As a measurement of actual and possible youth criminality, the meaning of "contacts with police" is less than clear, as the *Binden of Boeien?* program document acknowledges: "What, for example, is meant by coming into contact with the police remains unclear, and in relation to which punishable offenses even less so" (Amsterdam 1997, 12). In interviews, having "a contact with the police" was used to signify a range of actions, from receiving an official warning, to getting a ticket for an offense, to being picked up by the police in an investigation, and to being arrested. The number of contacts with police is an important figure, as it can shape the path of recourse taken against an individual; if one has multiple contacts with the police, one can be reclassified from being in the "at-risk group" to belonging to a more problematic group. This issue of "contacts with police" brings me to the practice of categorizing youth into a number of different groups, and how it has changed in the last decade. Amsterdam's Youth and Safety policy has, in this time, defined and refined the "target groups" of youth in increasingly narrow ways. In 1995, policy was directed toward the following groups:

> "prevention group": youth who generally are doing well but may have a problem at home or at school, who may have committed a crime of opportunity; it is expected that most of these youth will, in growing older, halt such behavior. Approximately 70,000.

[84] In addition, outside of the Safety Policy framework, in 1996, the project group "Developing Preventive Youth Policy" (*Ontwikkeling Lokaal Preventief Jeugdbeleid*, or OLPJ) was established, intended to stimulate all municipalities toward the creation of local preventive policies for youth. This group positioned itself, as well, as a resource to all municipalities, providing a range of materials and suggested projects.

> "at-risk group": these are youth who are often truants, early school-leavers, and often unemployed. They rarely are involved with serious crimes, but probably have "more contacts with police" from lighter offenses. They may also use drugs and alcohol regularly. Approximately 12,000.
>
> "group on whom measures (*maatregelen*) have been taken": often members of a subculture of unemployed drop-outs; involved in crimes such as break-ins, car theft and theft; often use soft and hard drugs and possess weapons; may have psychiatric problems. Many are of not-White or Moroccan background; they have multiple contacts with the police, justice system and social services agencies. Approximately 3,000.
>
> "homeless/vagabond youth" (*zwerfjongeren*): this group has a greater chance to come into contact with criminality because they have no regular income and they are not surrounded by mainstream social institutions (Amsterdam 1995, 5-6).

Over time, this schematic was further narrowed and specified, so that in a 2002 fact sheet, the target groups were presented in a pyramidal form, with the "professional" and "hard core" youth at the top, followed by the "light criminals," then the "first offenders"; the base of the pyramid was identified as the "at risk" group (DSP-groep 2002). Most interesting for this study is the list of behaviors associated with the "at-risk group": "problem behavior, hanging around and causing *overlast* on the street, family problems, no punishable offenses (yet), young." In this schematic, hanging around on the street is clearly defined as a potential precursor to criminality. Interesting as well, is the assumption implied by the use of "yet" in "no punishable offenses (yet)"; such offenses appear inevitable. Specific interventions are assigned to each target group; for the "at-risk group" such interventions include the city-wide "Safety in and around Schools" initiative, as well as programs in particular boroughs, such as "Safe Meeting Places," and the now ambulatory form of youth work directed at public spaces.

The changes in policy at the city level had a direct impact on the way policy was created and structured at the borough level. In the Amsterdam Strategic Plan for Youth and Safety, 2001-2004, a specific youth and safety policy was required to be established for each police district (Amsterdam 2001, 3). Amsterdam North is one police district,

and the task of creating policy was delegated to the department of Welfare and Education of the Amsterdam North borough government. In their first Strategic Plan for Youth and Safety, 2002-2004, reference was made to the central city's plan when explicating the goal of this "new phase" of youth criminality policy: "a measurable increase of the level of safety in the (semi)public space" (SDAN 2002, 4).

While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss all of the target groups and the variety of interventions being made to reach this goal, I would like to emphasize four aspects of the overall development of youth policy in the 1990s: 1) a clear increase in the level of attention and resources devoted to "preventing" youth criminality; 2) a continual specification of target groups with linked interventions; 3) a perceived need to collect and share more information about groups of youth and about particular individuals; and 4) a kind of criminalization of *overlast* in public space.[85] In the next section, I show how these elements were manifested in the field of youth work, policing, and policy in Amsterdam North. In particular, I will discuss the adoption of practices to create "bonds" with children and youth and the new focus on youth work outside of youth centers. The notion that the social welfare state is responsible for preventing *overlast* and for creating neighborhood bonds is indicative of the expansiveness of this idea of government.

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[85] It is worth noting that there was a short-lived movement for the establishment of "youth meeting places" (*jongerenontmoetingplaatsen*, or JOPs) in public space, both as a way to create space for youth and to give them responsibility over "their" space. These JOPs were typically open structures, sometimes like public sculpture, that were placed out on the margins of neighborhoods. Initially, these structures were thought to be a wise, one-time investment toward reducing tension between neighborhood youth and adults, one that required little oversight by the municipality. In the end, these structures were largely left unused; policy makers opined to me that such investments were worthless, because youth are too mobile and like to hang around in different places. The JOP trend, however, indexes the growing concern with youth in public space in the mid-1990s.

Influential Ideas

Before turning to the instantiation of those ideas in the practices at the local level, it is important to note a few of the most influential Dutch theoretical contributions to the discussion about youth and youth criminality during the 1990s, from the fields of sociology, child education, and criminology. The prominent sociologist, columnist and government advisor, Kees Schuyt, was asked by multiple ministries in 1993 to examine the problem of "at-risk youth"; his report, "Vulnerable Youth and their Future: Policy advice based on an examination of the literature," was published in 1995. This lengthy analysis, in which he argued that some youth who need the help of social services agencies and institutions often instead end up being dealt with by the police and justice systems, has been roughly summarized into one concept: "the linked chain of responsibility" approach (*ketenaanpak*) (Schuyt 1995). As part of his report, Schuyt described the different "links in the chain" of a young person's life, as they pass from the family to primary school to secondary school to either post-secondary school or work. Each social welfare institution must recognize with which "link" they are aligned, and determine how best to support youth at that stage. At the same time, each social welfare institution must be responsible for "signaling" problems outside their purview to the appropriate "link." Throughout my research, it was common to hear social workers and youth workers reference the "chain link approach" as one of the guiding principles of their work. This idea dovetails nicely with the focus on prevention; each link can make it their task to prevent problems from arising at any point in the chain.

Micha de Winter, a prominent scholar of child and youth education, has been notable in countering the current, often blaming, discourse on youth criminality; his

influence within youth policy, however, has not crystallized into one main idea the way that Schuyt's has. De Winter has argued that in trying to prevent criminality, "interventions are projected upon a very broad group . . . which leads, among other things, to the criminalization of mischief" (2001). According to De Winter, there is a need to re-envision children and youth as "fellow citizens" (1995). For the purposes of this chapter, however, his treatment of one theme in particular holds a great deal of salience: the need for "social pedagogic infrastructure." To lay out this idea, I examine here the text of a speech de Winter gave in 2001, in which he argues that youth welfare work must take on a pedagogic role: "This means creating a social infrastructure in which youth feel welcome and valued, wherein they know that they have a role, in short, a pedagogic atmosphere that makes manifest positive expectations for youth" (2001). Positing that youth have something to say about the society in which they live, he writes:

> Youth in the so-called risk-groups themselves report, when asked, a gap in education and a break in social bonds: in deprived neighborhoods and in schools, there is, most of all, a great lack of social facilities, of personal involvement on the part of adults, and of possibilities for positive identification. Youth feel unwelcome and not taken seriously, and they seek out their identity in groups of people like them. Whoever listens well to these youth forms a different image of the remedies needed to fight problematic behavior and marginalization (De Winter 2001).

Youth social work has been, according to De Winter, "too one-sided in its focus on the support of individuals, and the setting of societal boundaries has been left to the so-called hard sector of police and justice. . . ." (2001). These must be combined: "Whoever only offers support without setting conditions and boundaries does not take youth seriously as responsible people. There is currently an insufficient effort to meet the universal human need for mutuality" (De Winter 2001). De Winter sees a serious cause for concern in the "emptiness of the public domain where many youth are left to find their way," arguing

that "the public space in which today's youth grow up must again be filled with many adults," such as youth workers (2001). To this end, policy makers must invest in a large increase in such staff, as well as in their education.

In contrast to De Winter's pedagogic approach, B.M.W.A Beke, A.Ph. van Wijk and H.B. Ferweda (Beke, Wijk, and Ferwerda 2000) argue for the improved collection of information about groups of youth, since much criminality is committed in groups. In their study, *Youth Criminality in Relation to Groups: Between hanging around and forming gangs*, these researchers developed a "Group Criminality Short List" that allows police (and others) to survey groups of youth and assign them a numerical score, which determines how severe of a problem they present. First, the "social background" of a group is evaluated and documented, on the basis of the size of the group, the members' ages, their school/work participation and frequency of truancy, their alcohol and drug use, and whether they have come into contact with the justice system. Then, the group is measured for "light criminality" and "serious criminality." The score for "light criminality" is determined by measuring how often the group engages in a wide range of behaviors, including: interfering with public authorities, hanging around, causing excessive noise, public drunkenness, vandalism, shoplifting, bike and motorbike theft, auto theft, breaking into businesses or schools, possession of drugs, intimidating behavior, and simple assault. The "serious crimes" include dealing drugs, breaking into houses, robbery, mugging, rape, assault and battery, driving without a license, driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, joy-riding, murder and attempted murder. It is important to note, here, that "hanging around" is categorized as a light form of criminality.

Once all these behaviors have been surveyed and assigned a numerical value, the group's total score then places them in one of three categories: troublesome (*hinderlijk*), *overlast* causing (*overlastgevende*), and criminal (*criminele*). Based on their research of more than 100 groups of youths, the authors state that "troublesome" groups usually "hang around, provoke people around them, are excessively noisy, sometimes drink or use soft drugs too much, and commit light vandalism"; these youth are typically engaged in some work or school, stay mostly in their neighborhood, and are mostly White (Beke, Wijk, and Ferwerda 2000, 130). The second group does not differ much in terms of their behavior, but are more likely to have dropped out of school or be unemployed, to come from different ethnic backgrounds, and to have had multiple contacts with the police. The third group, in addition to engaging in criminal acts, is characterized as more organized, with subgroups and leaders; its members have little education, are typically unemployed, move about throughout the city and the region, and have a high percentage of ethnic minorities. In their policy recommendations, the researchers call for this "short list" to be used in a regular way, and for the establishment of a Strategic Information about Youth Groups Police Data File at the national level. This method of "getting a clear picture" (*in kaart brengen*, literally, putting on the map) of specific groups of youth, and the systematizing of such information was being used during my research in another borough, Amsterdam West. In September, 2003, the city newspaper announced the purported success of that method, in a story entitled "Science Has the Answer to the *Hangjongeren* Problem" (HP 2003i). While some trumpet this method as an effective innovation, the privacy issues inherent to this practice, the potential criminalization of youth for perfectly legal behavior, and the invasiveness on the part of the police in this

work are three issues that have not gone unnoticed; during a visit to my research site in July 2005, youth workers and social workers were critical of the so-called "Ferweda method" being adopted there.

Youth Policy in Amsterdam North

During my research, I met and interviewed 33 professionals: nine from youth-related organizations, nine from social welfare agencies, nine from policy departments and civil service offices, and six police officers. The youth and social workers were located in youth centers, at drop-in centers, in community centers, in sports facilities, and at public playgrounds and other open squares; policy makers and civil servants spent their time in offices and inter-group meetings, and police officers divided their hours between patrolling and paperwork back at the station. My research activities did not engage with every possible youth-related organization, however. Many other agencies and organizations work with or for youth, including schools, pre-school and after-school organizations, organized sports clubs, ethnic minority organizations, and more; as noted, it is a very well developed social welfare state. As one social work professional put it:

> There's a ton of organizations, even if you look only at Amsterdam North, you've got *Opstaap* (A Step Up), *Overstap* (Transitions), *Centrum voor Moeders* (Mothers' Center), *Raad voor Kinderbescherming* (Council for Child Protection), and so on, and more, just concerned with *opvoeding*. Then there's foster homes, and social workers who deal with that. And in the Netherlands, they are terrific at clustering. So *opvoeding* programs go from age 0-4, 4-12, 12-23. There's help and assistance programs for *opvoeding* that teach parents how to communicate with kids. Then there's after-school centers, and places where single mothers can get housing for themselves and their kids. And all of these things are part of the Amsterdam North Community Work Foundation *(Stichting Buurtwerk Noord*). So many organizations, community centers like *Ons Huis*, and agencies, they all give courses, or have facilities, there is so, so much.[86]

[86] Some of the *opvoeden* programs offered in the fall of 2002 included parenting classes; mother-child drop in hours; lessons on teaching self confidence to children; gatherings for single mothers; inter-ethnic conversation for women; lending libraries for play materials; and the opportunity to have professionals come to your home, teach you about play and play materials, and teach your children how to play.

My research around youth policy in Amsterdam North had to be limited to those professionals who came most directly and most frequently in contact with the youth who were getting in trouble for hanging around in public space, and the adults who were complaining about them. This section, therefore, addresses only a portion of the youth-related work done in Amsterdam North. To focus my analysis on the recent developments in youth policy and the way in which the problem to be solved is currently defined, I have also limited my discussion to two projects that form a central part of the 2002 Youth and Safety Policy for Amsterdam North: "At Home on the Street" and "Safe Meeting Places."[87]

It is interesting to place these developments and today's concerns within a broader context, one which questions the extent to which policy is expected to solve social problems. Civil servants talk today about the "demanding citizen" (*mondige burger*, literally "mouthy citizen"), who is extremely vocal in saying what the government should do for them. The political issue of youth criminality and the public concern with safety, in this context, surely exert a great deal of pressure on policy makers and professionals. Yousef, a social worker who deals with at-risk youth, spoke to me quite passionately about the impact made by the sheer size and reach of the social welfare state, and how its

[87] During the research period, I also attended many meetings of the neighborhood "Sounding Board Groups" (*Klankbordgroepen*), where professionals from a wide variety of agencies and organizations met to exchange information about their current activities and to identify problems that need addressing, and the neighborhood meetings of "Communities that Care," an organization designed to identify the "risk factors" and the "protective factors" for children most prevalent in each neighborhood and to ascertain which programs should be employed to address specific problems. Neither of these organizations directly interacted with youth, and are therefore not discussed further in this study. It is worth noting, however, that they constituted an important site at which professionals exchanged information with each other, and defined the problems to be solved. For more information on Communities that Care, a strategy developed in the United States, see Hawkins and Catalano (1992).

promise to care for its citizens may lead to their diminished involvement in solving everyday problems:

> The caring state (*verzorgingstaat*) is an illusion. In the 50s and 60s it wasn't set up like this; people only had the churches. They collected the money and helped poor people. Now the citizens must be protected by the state. The Ministry of Welfare. The caring state. "We will care for our people. What do they need?" We need people, staff and agencies to carry this out, people must be educated to take care of these problems—social workers, and so on. So this goes on and on, and the offering of services grows, because society is more complex, there are more changes. And society becomes more individualized. More agencies are created. At the same time, citizens are expecting more and more that the state should provide the solution [to their problems].
>
> Now, across from the grocery store there is a snack stand, boys and girls meet there, stand, talk, maybe smoke a joint. But what's normal for me may be disturbing for some other guy. So that guy says to the youths, "Go away, go to the store." And if the youths then go to the store, someone else will see them and say, "Oh, no those kids are going to steal something." But what happened, really? The guy could have just gone downstairs and asked them to talk more quietly. But people don't do that. Maybe they call the police right away, the police must solve the problem, the state must solve it. People expect too much from the state. This is maybe not just in the Netherlands, I think it might be in industrialized countries where people say: "I pay taxes, so that means that the state has to provide me with a fantastic life."

That "fantastic life," for many adults, is a quiet one, without youth *overlast*, without fear. The state is expected to solve those problems, and its civil servants are complying.

The developments in youth policy discussed earlier in this chapter are also present in the new projects adopted in Amsterdam North: an increasing focus on prevention, the collection and exchange of information, the specification of target groups, and the regulation of public space. But in actual practice, some youth policy makers seemed to juggle two conflicting visions of "the problem" in their work. As people who were genuinely concerned with improving the circumstances of youth, and who wanted to provide the infrastructure and human resources to do so, policy makers saw themselves "on the youth's side." Further still, some felt that the whole problem of *hangjongeren* and *overlast* was generally exaggerated, and more reflective of adults' intolerance and

excessive individualization than really indicative of any increase in "problem behavior." One policy maker, Jan, who thought that some adults' complaints were self-centered, lamented:

> . . . [P]eople think that public space should be public space according to their norms of public space. They don't see it as something you share with others. Some residents complain, "There are kids sitting on the wall outside my apartment, and I can see them through my window. Please tell them to move!" But that is not *overlast*. I'm glad that such people are told to deal with it, that youth aren't bothered by the police in that kind of situation.

At the same time, policy makers are charged with addressing the prevailing concerns about safety and public space within a framework that prizes—and funds—"prevention"; they see this as their civic duty, and they take their responsibility seriously. Thus, even though complaints about *overlast* are considered overblown, policies are created to help reduce such *overlast*. Even though "mischief" (*kattenkwaad*, literally "the wrongdoing of cats") has been re-conceptualized as "criminality," policy makers still draw up programs to identify the risk factors that can lead to youth criminality. Even though they think youth have a right to meet in public spaces, youth workers are assigned the tasks of making contact with young people outside the youth centers, and gathering information about them. I do not mean to assert that there are no problems facing or caused by young people; I only want to demonstrate a certain kind of tension appears to exist within the role of youth policymaking, between "being on the youth's side" and attending to the complaints of adults.

Livable Spaces and "Bonding" with the Youth: "At Home on the Street"

The "At Home on the Street" project organizes activities and games in a variety of public playgrounds and small courtyards for younger children, usually up to about age 12. Adult staff members walk through the neighborhoods in recognizable blue and white

sweat suits, and encourage children to join in games in these play spaces. One of their staff people explained these goals to me in terms of "bonding": "The goal is to bond with the youth . . . Our staff members know the youth and the youth know them; we have contact with them and that works well . . . Activities are just the means. The goal is bonding, the ultimate goal is to make the street safer and more livable (*leefbaar*)." An overview of youth policy in the borough (SDAN 2001) demonstrates that there are many other goals to be reached, in addition to creating bonds:

> At Home on the Street is a project that is directed at the youth on the street 365 days a year. It organizes activities for children and youth on the street, and works to build up a network of residents around streets and squares. The project also works to identify children and youth who may be facing problems. The quality of the public space is central in this project, and is continually examined. The project is directed at creating a good climate in the public space . . .
>
> The effect of At Home on the Street will be:
>
> > Re-establishment of relations between adults and youth and the surrounding area
> > Knowledge about the target group
> > Getting to know the youth and getting known by the youth
> > Improvement of the neighborhood circumstances (more high points than low)
> > Reduction of *overlast*

We can see in this program, originally started in the late 1990s in Rotterdam and adopted by Amsterdam in 2001, many of the policy developments that I outlined above. While the staff person quoted above spoke more in terms of building personal relationships with youth—creating cohesion—the policy document speaks directly of prevention, knowledge, target groups, and public space. This may be, in part, because policy documents are ultimately written for the politicians who determine which projects get funded, and which do not. In relation to the image of the "demanding citizen," this project also is a visible neighborhood-level action that may reduce the complaints of citizens to the government. Notably, it does not actually require those with complaints to interact with children and youth; professionals have been hired to do that for them.

Youth Workers' Changing Roles: Safe Meeting Places

In the beginning of this chapter, I briefly described some of the changes taking place within the realm of youth work in Amsterdam North. Some of the youth workers have been engaged in this kind of work for many years and even decades, and have taken on additional responsibility and more administrative tasks. While I spoke with and interviewed youth workers with many different levels of experience, it was particularly interesting to hear how youth work has changed from people who have been in the field for many years. After criticizing the increasing level of government oversight, and the amount of time staff spend drafting proposals and proving effectiveness, one long-time youth worker, Mies, related to me how youth work has also changed in focus from forming relationships with youth to providing activities for them:

> When I began, what was important was that you gave youth with fewer chances, deprived youth—sometimes called *randgroepjongeren*—that you organized activities for them, provided opportunities for them. We spent a lot of time, then, on things that we absolutely can't do now, it was a sort of social work. . . . that kind of work was at least half of my time. I helped people write official letters, I visited them if they were arrested, I went with them to court, I did all those sorts of things.
>
> And we started little projects, there was a lot more freedom to do what you found important. If a problem arose with someone, it would have been kind of strange to just keep organizing nice activities and not help them. But at some point, the municipality said "There's other organizations that are supposed to do that work, you are supposed to focus on the youths' free time, that's your work." . . . And that's partly how "Safe Meeting Places" came to be, because cooperation [between us and the social workers] became really important.
>
> (Mies then turns back to the older style of youth work.) Because of course, if you helped a youth who was having problems, then he was really grateful, and you meant something to him—you built up rapport and relationships much faster if you helped them out with something serious. And then, if he came around to a disco night at the youth center, and was misbehaving, you could just say, "Come on, now," and he'd respond to you, rather than someone else—he'd think, "Well, maybe I'll need her again next week." So you understand, the relationship was really different, it had a very different meaning.

> Now it's so difficult. Look, as a youth worker, of course you have really very few, in fact, *very few* measures at your disposal to make the youth behave. It's not like at school, where there is the diploma and the importance of getting that, or in sports clubs, where there are also very clear rules, but in the youth center, yeah, there are rules, but if the youth breaks the rules, what can you do? You can kick them out. That's the only thing you can do. And then what happens if the youth continues to hang around outside the entrance?
>
> I've experienced that situation before, a few years ago, there was a boy who one day was just acting horribly, so I told him he had to leave. But then, his friends didn't want to come in if he couldn't, so they all hung around outside the door, bothering people who were walking by. So what are you going to do then? . . . I mean, you can say I'm going to call the police, but that is so heavy handed, and—and, in fact, it's much easier for a youth worker if they can also spend time on serious aspects, because then the relationship that you can build is so much better, and if you help one person then other youth hear about it, and you get respect from them too. But now, you have to earn it in a totally different way.

Youth workers sometimes appear to struggle in their current job description; it is difficult to build relationships with the youth, and this may help explain why many youth workers in the Safe Meeting Places project strenuously objected to the idea that they were working "to reduce the feelings of being unsafe among residents." The difficulty in establishing strong rapport may intensify youth workers' reluctance to share information about individual youths with the police, as they are increasingly expected to do.

Established in 1998, this project sets out to create a cooperative framework for youth workers, social workers, and the police. Extra resources are given to each of the partners in order to finance the staff time devoted to Safe Meeting Places. In that same policy overview referenced above, the purpose of this project is laid out as follows:

In the "Over the IJ" Memorandum[88] it states that:

> "Meeting places are needed for adolescents and youth from 12 to 25 years of age who threaten to fall into or persist in problematic behavior. In the three youth centers that are vested as "safe meeting places" there are house rules that, among other things, forbid violence, dealing and using drugs; in this sense they are "safe places."[89]
>
> Thanks to the offering of meaningful activities and space for pleasant companionship, these youth are literally "off the street." With this, the project contributes to the safety and liveability in the neighborhood. They are also "meeting places" where youth, social workers, caregivers and the police can find each other. If necessary youth can be referred to social services or placed on a path to school or work.

Clearly, one of the goals here is the supervision of and increased contact with "at risk" youth by professionals; just as clear is the desire to improve the "safety and livability" (*leefbaarheid*) of the neighborhood by getting these youth inside the youth centers and out of the public space.

Many youth workers agreed in principle with the Safe Meeting Places approach, even as they held strong criticisms of the way in which the project works on the ground. When asked about the project in general, Mies told me:

> Mies: Look, it is very sensible to have a cooperative approach. . . And the problem is always—of course there can be lots of agreements and such about how to do the project, but in the end the people have to do their own work. If they can work well together—I don't mean if they can be friends—but if they can have the same perspective and know what they are each responsible for, yeah, then it make a lot of sense. I think it's also necessary—also for youth, that they know that if they seek out someone at Streetcorner Work, or the youth center, or even the police, that they can't tell one person one story and then turn around and tell a different story to someone else. That youth realize that people are working together, so in that sense, it's really sensible.

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[88] This Memorandum is the 2000 youth policy document for Amsterdam North; this statement makes a play on the words "Over the IJ," meaning both "over the IJ river," and "About the IJ" where IJ is an acronym for *Integrale Jeugdbeleid*, or Comprehensive Youth Policy.

[89] In practice, however, this varied from site to site. At some youth centers/Safe Meeting Places, smoking marijuana or hash was permitted under certain restrictions (they had to be consumed outside, or after certain hours); some sites permitted the consumption of alcohol, even selling alcohol at the center's canteen, while others did not.

> Erin: Do you worry about the privacy issues?[90]
>
> Mies: Yes, absolutely. At one place they started using a pass system, because there had been far too many older adults hanging around the center . . . But the youth were always scared of having an ID badge, saying they didn't want to give their address to the youth center because they were afraid it would be turned in to the police. It wasn't going to be, it was just for our registration, so we know how to reach them or something. But then, if you promise not to share their addresses, then you can't share their addresses. But now in Amsterdam West, they've made a policy that groups who hang around on the street have to be "brought into clear view" (*in kaart gebracht*).[91] And everyone has to do this—police, youth workers, Streetcorner Work.
>
> So at first, we say ok, we'll help gather information on the groups. But then, it was also said that groups are made up of individuals—so we need to get the names and information about these individuals. And the youth workers I know said, "No, we won't do that!" So maybe there is a group of 20 for example, among whom one or two may have been involved in a crime before, but not the other 18. Why should we have to give the information about the other 18, who haven't done anything, to the police? And in the workplace, really, we don't know all that much about some of the youth, what their last name is, and we aren't going to go and ask the youth "what is your last name?" They don't come to the youth center, we've already surveyed the youth who come to the centers; these are groups that really just hang around on the street. You can't just go to everyone and ask their first and last name . . . And the youth workers were just refusing. And I said to them, "Look, they can't make you know the names of the youth—if you don't know it, then you don't know it."
>
> I think that's going really too far. When every single youth who hangs around on the street is identified and registered by the police—that's too much. And now it's going so far, that look, all the youth workers in North are paid partly out of the Youth and Safety budget from the central city government. And as a condition of the funding for youth work, you have to agree to cooperate. So, in this situation, if we continue to not cooperate, they say there is a chance that we will lose our funding. . . . And another thing, if there is a youth, then, who stole something sometime, then the police already have his name and they don't need to get it from the youth workers.

Cooperation with the police was also seen as difficult because some youth workers, such as Gerrit, felt the police didn't allow the youth workers to do their work as they saw fit:

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[90] This had been a frequent point of discussion among youth workers and in the Safe Meeting Places committees.

[91] Here she references the "Ferweda Method" (Beke, Wijk, and Ferwerda 2000).

> Cooperation with police is only possible if strict principles are upheld, such as the organizations respect each other and let each other do their work. And with the police, that's impossible. The police expect youth workers, just like they expect citizens, to—if they see something that isn't right—to report it to the police, and justice can follow up, and mete out punishment.

Conflicts between the partners could erupt over many issues, and they did so particularly when the police insisted that youth workers file complaints against individual youths, usually for behavior that was considered by the youth worker to be better addressed through other means. Gerrit told me about the following incident, to illustrate his point; this story was repeated to me by other youth workers, as it clearly dramatized what they saw as the difference between their role and that of the police.[92]

> Gerrit: There was this one youth, he was warned a couple of times during walk-in hours, and then one time he threw something and it broke, it cost a lot of money. And then we said, he can't come in here, for an indefinite period. We had always had a problem with him, with vandalism, misbehaving—very difficult adolescent, had pissed against the door, harassed other people, and so forth. So we talked about it, and decided that he couldn't come to the youth center for awhile. We made an agreement with his brother, who was really worried about him. His brother agreed that he would contact us when he thought the boy was ready to come back. For a while the boy was complaining, but recently he began to see why he was not allowed in; when the other kids would complain and ask why he couldn't come in, he would tell them to leave it be.
>
> So it was actually going really well. He was sitting on the bench outside one afternoon, and the door was open, and someone called to him to come look at something on the internet, and so he came in. One of the youth workers told him he had to leave, and he said "I'll go in just a second." But the youth worker replied, "No, you have to leave now." So he got mad, picked up a chair and looked like he would throw it, but then set it down. Then he walked out the door and slammed it behind him. At that moment, a police officer in his own car—not in uniform—he sees this, by chance, sees him slam the door, and races with his auto onto, across the grass, opened the door, jumped out and grabbed the boy, threw him in the car, and yelled to the youth worker: "I insist you file a complaint; he's not allowed in there." Then he took him to the police station . . .

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[92] Another youth worker related a second story to me in which the police wanted the youth workers to file a complaint, and remarked: "You have to decide which behavior you want to participate in punishing, and which you want to handle yourself. I can imagine that one time, I might give up a name, for a good reason, if something had to be done. But not over a can of soda."

> How far do you work with the police in such situations? You have to cooperate, but only to where you think it's right. See, there was an agreement (between the boy and the youth center), and it was going well, it was working. There was no reason to file a complaint.
>
> Now meanwhile, it appeared that the police bureau had said they would be able to send fifteen people to Den Engh (a year-long re-socialization workcamp, on a boat, for 'hard core' (*harde kern*) problem youth)—those spots have to be filled, because if you don't, then they go to some other city borough.
>
> (He raises his eyebrows, as if to say, "You see how this is going to turn out?")
>
> Now this kid already had a dossier. . . Someone, a friend of a police officer, told that officer that the kid had once taken a can of soda from his store. And because of that, he was reported, picked up and arrested for theft. So they were building a dossier on him. They couldn't find anything bad enough to send him off with—but you can add up a bunch of little things, and then you can also send someone to Den Engh. And people have to go to Den Engh because they have to make their quota. It's truly too crazy for words.
>
> Erin: Is this really unusual, or do you see such things a lot?
>
> Gerrit: No, this is not extraordinary. If we leave here on Friday night around 9 p.m., four out of five times there is a police officer across the street . . . waiting, watching to see what happens. And if someone walks on the bumper of a car, they are put in handcuffs and taken to the station.

In general, police officers see such misbehavior in a different light than youth workers. Neither group finds misbehavior unproblematic, but youth workers tend to characterize it as normal boundary-testing behavior. What is needed, in their eyes, is respectful, mutual relationships with adults, firm boundaries, the opportunity to participate and take responsibility, and support. Police officers tend to see misbehavior as leading to future problems, something that "needs to be nipped in the bud." The recording of all misbehavior into dossiers is, for this reason, important; it establishes patterns, and legitimizes a range of interventions. For example, Frans, a police officer with many years experience, related this situation to me:

> Well, I'm now busy with a case, two boys around 10 years old, and we were alerted that they were walking around a playground, when they are not allowed to, in the evenings, when the gate is closed, when they are forbidden to enter. They sit there on the square there, on the playground, with malice, vandalizing things, walking on the roof of the building, climbing around, and so forth. It begins like that. I looked in the computers, and one of the youths has previously been in contact with the police, more than once; you can also see if the Youth Care Agency (*Bureau Jeugdzorg*) is busy with that kid, is it OK at home, and so forth, and you see, usually, that a number of these things are frequently connected to this, that for example things aren't good at home, they don't like being there, and so they go out on the street, and they go out and misbehave.
>
> And you know that . . . a bank robber does not turn into a bank robber overnight. He begins, first, with a store robbery. And it grows worse, and then he is a bank robber. According to me, it can't be that you never have contact with the police and then all of a sudden rob a bank. I don't know if that can be. It's completely, really, a development. Frequently, in my opinion.

We see here how this idea of "prevention," in terms of preventing the development of criminality, is a powerful one within policing. In addition, the overall focus on prevention has re-shaped some aspects of police work, forcing some police officers to feel the need to assert their identity as "criminal catchers," not youth workers. Cornelius, a police officer and Neighborhood Director, explained how he "wears two hats":

> On one hand, I've got to work with the Safe Meeting Places project, to get kids on the right path. But the police are still the police, and we have to catch criminals. . . . I'd say that many of the kids know who I am. And so if something happens, I can go to those responsible. But I still have to make sure I let them know that "I'm from the police, I'm not a youth worker!" My task is to know the neighborhood, see what's going on, and who's doing what. . . .

In contrast to Frans, the police officer who talked about preventing the development from misbehavior to serious criminality, Cornelius continued on to say:

> But it's funny, problems often solve themselves. There was this group that was really bad in 1996, and now they have all gotten jobs, are married, a couple are serious addicts but now they're in the city center . . . The only thing is, that if kids don't come into contact with the police, then I don't know them as well, but I still have to try to prevent things from developing. So I organized this event, you know, to interact with some of the youth. [It's all about] Getting to know them and getting known by them (*kennen en kennen worden*).

The comments of these police officers and the youth workers before them demonstrate that "prevention" is a complicated concept, meaning anything from 1) reducing the risk-factors that youth face as a result of unemployment, early school leaving, family problems, or addiction, to 2) creating "safe places" where youth can come into contact with professionals for mentoring relationships and guidance, to 3) establishing bonds with youth, getting to know them and getting known by them, to 4) cracking down hard on misbehavior and misdemeanors as a way of halting the development of criminality. It is not surprising, perhaps, that disagreement exists between youth workers and social workers and police officers and policy makers about how best to approach the problem, as these groups define "the problem" in various and sometimes conflicting ways.

Conclusion: Assuaging the fears of adults

This chapter has demonstrated how youth policy both reflects and gives shape to the ways in which social problems are defined and approached. An historical review of how "the youth problem" was constituted in different eras shows that there has long been concern about youth: how to educate them, how to develop their character, how to attach them to society, how to employ them. In the last fifteen years, there has been a preponderance of concern with both "prevention" and "safety": new policy frameworks have been implemented, budgets allocated, programs developed, all making clear the arrival of a new focus that falls not on youth per se, but on the feelings of being unsafe among adults, and on the regulation of public space. Hanging around is now seen as a behavior with the potential for criminality, and youth workers must try to get the youth off the street and into Safe Meeting Places. Other adults are being hired to spend time and create bonds with children in public spaces, to make public space more livable

(*leefbaar*) and safer; at one level, the At Home on the Street project can perhaps be thought about as an attempt to extend expectations for domestic tranquility into public space.

Many professionals from a wide range of youth-related organizations, even police officers, told me that the presence of young people in public space causes many adults to feel afraid; I was also told by many of the same individuals that the youth problem wasn't really very serious in Amsterdam North, as the worst thing that the vast majority of local youth do is cause *overlast*, not commit crimes. "We've got *overlast* groups here, not criminals. Crime is done by smaller groups, professionals, not the kids who you see hanging around," as one police officer told me. Yet, given the political climate, the expectation of a responsive social welfare state, and the construction of the problem in terms of *overlast* and prevention, policies are made to address and reduce adults' complaints and feelings of being unsafe. One professional, when I asked her opinion about the severity of the youth problem in one neighborhood, just laughed. She said,

> There is no real problem, the kids are out, playing in the streets. They know each other, they know their brothers, and some people just complain because they can't stand any noise. There is no youth problem—of course there are a few people who need help, unemployment, addiction, but that's not very many people at all. But all the professionals—they have to make it look worse than it is, so that they can get funding. They have to say, look, here is the problem, and what we're doing helps, but it's still not solved, so we need money. It's like a social welfare mafia (*welzijnsmafia*). They make a problem so that they can solve it.

There is clearly a large, extensive network of youth-related organizations that employs hundreds of people—if not exactly a welfare mafia—in Amsterdam North. While they may have good intentions about providing services for and guidance to local youth, many of these groups are also intervening in the lives of young people in order to address a problem located not in the youth, but in the perceptions and expectations of adults. One

could imagine other kinds of interventions that would bring isolated adults together ("educating" them about the neighborhood), encouraging them to socially interact with others, enlisting them to provide lessons or services to the neighborhood, or even just creating opportunities for them to share their life stories with one another, as was done in an inter-ethnic "Memory Project" in Utrecht. Such projects, however, are rare; adults with complaints depend on the social welfare state to address their concerns and their fears, to interact with problem youth for them, to create order. They feel they have a right to demand it, as *overlast* is perceived as an infringement on their personal freedoms. Their subsequent frustration with the inability of the social welfare state to meet their expectations intersects with discourses about feeling unsafe. The following chapter looks at these matters in more depth, examining the measurement of "*onveiligheidsgevoelens*," or feelings of being unsafe; recent crime statistics; and how this current concern with safety is related to fears about other social changes in the Netherlands.

Chapter Five – Interpreting "Feelings of Being Unsafe"

> When I was a kid, 12 years old, adults dared to approach kids more (*aanspreken*).[93] But now, with the generation after me, people have grown fearful even over small things, like just kicking a ball around. Earlier it wasn't so. Why? I don't know, maybe the developments in recent years with senseless violence, or they're just self-involved. If something is really dangerous, that's one thing, but if it's just kids being mischievous . . .
>
> —Neighborhood youth, age 21

Introduction: The "strong language" of statistics

The quote above raises one of the key issues in the problematic of adult-youth conflicts: how should we interpret the apparent fear of some adults around youth in public space? Is such fearfulness a result of increased danger, or are acts previously considered mischievous now understood as criminal? Does such fearfulness pertain solely to the presence of youth themselves, or is it related to another level of existential insecurity? When people talk about feeling afraid, is that simply an expression of fear, or does "fear talk" function as a kind of unifying social script, in which everyone can participate? Is the talk about "feelings of being unsafe" another way in which adults seek to activate the intervention of the social welfare state? This chapter places the recent focus on *onveiligheidsgevoelens* in a critical light, with the goal of illuminating some of the ways in which such "feelings of being unsafe" are measured and acted upon. The discourse of *onveiligheidsgevoelens* exists alongside and is at times intertwined with reports on crime statistics, which I examine in the second part of this chapter in order to contextualize, and question, the heightened attention to youth criminality. The problem of understanding the roots and dynamics of fearfulness is taken up in the third section, in which I discuss some of the recent scholarly work on insecurity as a contemporary reaction to global

[93] See Chapter Six for more discussion of this term, which roughly means to address or admonish someone.

capitalism, as a product of a mediated politics, and as a kind of social communication. I conclude the chapter by turning to the people of Amsterdam North, highlighting the range of their perceptions of being safe and unsafe, and demonstrating how the nuance of this picture is elided by the common conceptualization of *onveiligheidsgevoelens* as widespread and monolithic.

In the process of writing this chapter, I found myself drowning in statistics—on "feelings of being unsafe," crime rates, youth criminality, ethnic representation—and was frustrated at my inability to "talk back" to the numbers so easily tossed about in discussions about fearfulness, youth, and crime. For days, I was at a loss, poring over police documents, government studies and international reports, trying to formulate new tables and charts that would represent the views of the people whom I interviewed, and that would somehow separate hanging around from threatening or criminal behavior. Then, while on a walk, I realized I had unwittingly fallen into the very discourse I was hoping to disentangle; I was trying to use certain statistics to counter other statistics, feeling compelled to analyze the discourse from within its own structure, within its own limits. Talal Asad has written about the way in which statistics is perhaps the "strongest language" of modernity, as it is "not merely a mode of *representing* a new kind of social life but also of *constructing* it" (1994, 71).[94] He further suggests that the strength of statistics lies in the way in which the terms of discussion and possible contestation are established; statistics are countered and questioned with other statistics, or with

[94] I am indebted to Asad's discussion of the productivity of statistics in creating and defining problems and populations to be measured, and in determining how "progress" is to be gauged. This approach follows that of Michel Foucault's theory of "governmentality" (2003). The historical emergence of statistics as a way of seeing and measuring the world is illuminated by Ian Hacking, in his work *The Taming of Chance* (2001).

challenges to method. I take as a given that statistical representations reveal more about the definition and conceptualization of social concerns than they do about unambiguous facts, yet, in writing this chapter, I found myself time and time again drawn into the strong language of statistics, and being profoundly unsatisfied with the result. Rather than countering numbers with other numbers, this chapter provides context for understanding the relationship between the current preoccupation with "feelings of being unsafe" and the interventions to regulate the presence of youth in public space. I hope to show that the current focus on safety does not necessarily mark new public problems, but rather anxiety about the regulation of public space and public behavior.

***Onveiligheidsgevoelens*, Neighborhood Problems and Victimization**

The Measurement of "Feelings of Being Unsafe"

Alongside "*overlast*," the word "*onveiligheidsgevoelens*" is another important keyword in the articulation of *hangjongeren* as a social problem.[95] Quantified every two years through extensive national surveys, and addressed through policy measures such as "Safe Meeting Places," *onveiligheidsgevoelens* are currently a serious matter for the Dutch government. In 1990, "feelings of being unsafe" were measured in 25 municipalities; since 1993 such feelings have been measured on a national scale every two years, through telephone surveys of approximately 90,000 people, and the results are published in reports under the title of "Police Monitor of Population" (*Politiemonitor Bevolking*)

[95] I find this an interesting term, in that the word can convey a sense of individual subjectivity—"feelings"—as well as carry a certain kind of objective heft, as if such feelings were discrete, concrete, measurable things.

(MinBZK 2003).[96] The emergence of *onveiligheidsgevolens* as a public policy issue in the early 1990s occurred at the same time as attention to youth policy began to focus on "prevention" and the regulation of public space; these related concerns are foundational aspects of the environment in which "Youth and Safety" policy programs arose. By the end of the 1990s, Amsterdam policing practices increasingly focused on giving out fines for small offenses,[97] including hanging around, which were seen as creating feelings of being unsafe. In addition to the presence of youth in public space, problems such as litter and dog poop—aesthetic disorder—were frequently cited as contributing to such feelings. Reporting on the change in policing strategy, one national newspaper explained the logic of Jelle Kuiper, Amsterdam's Chief of Police: "Kuiper does not yet have the figures, but the quantity of fines has increased 'enormously.' That's how it should be, stated the Chief, because *onveiligheidsgevoelens* are caused more by dog poop on the stoop than by crime statistics" (NRC 1999).

What is being measured and monitored tells us a great deal about what is considered a social problem, and how such problems are defined. Zygmunt Bauman argues that crime statistics do not record "raw facts," but "are all processed by human choices: by the 'definitions of the situation,' classifying decisions and the practices that follow" (2002, 71). What interests me, then, about the last decade's attention to "feelings of being unsafe" is the fact that such feelings are considered important to measure in the

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[96] Surveys had been conducted by municipalities and police organizations before this time, however in the 1990s the survey became nationally organized and formalized in a regular way. The 2003 survey was the joint responsibility of the Ministry of Domestic Affairs and Relations (*Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties*) and the Ministry of Justice (*Ministerie van Justitie*). The research was conducted by an organization called Uitvoeringsconsortium Projectbureau Politiemonitor and the fieldwork group Pro-Info; one out of every 200 persons is surveyed.

[97] This change in strategy, and its relation to "zero-tolerance" policing, is discussed further below.

first place, and that such statistics are used to measure the level of neighborhood "liveableness" (*leefbaarheid*) as well as the effectiveness of the police. Even more interesting is the fact that those who deal explicitly with such statistics, such as policy makers and police officers, find themselves frustrated about people's perceptions of safety and danger. I was repeatedly informed, sometimes with exasperation, that more and more people feel unsafe, even though crime rates have decreased in recent years; this bit of "professional wisdom" is not supported, however, by other measurements in the last few years, which also show a decline in *onveiligheidsgevoelens*. Here is how one local police officer explained it to me:

> [T]he problem is that feelings of being unsafe have been increasing while the crime rates are decreasing. It's because of the media—so many stations have crime programs, for about the last 10 years.[98] And the population is getting older. Feelings of being unsafe are high among people above 50 years old, it's been researched. By 2040, 60% of the population will be older than 60[99]—but they feel unsafe even though it's actually safer.

Laughing, he went on to tell me that a new problem was on the horizon: "hanging around elderly people" (*hangouderen*). When I responded with surprise, he continued:

> It's happening! Little old men sitting on benches, making jokes, whistling at women. In Diemen, for example, there are lots of old guys, also causing a lot of *overlast*—staying there late, they're in the way, you can't get past them with a baby carriage, there's lots of smoke, lots of noise.[100]

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[98] The Netherlands television media was only commercialized in the last two decades; in recent years there has been a proliferation of shows such as "Stop Police!," "Tracking Criminals," (*Opsporing Verzocht*!), and "Peter de Vries, Crime Investigator."

[99] This is a significant exaggeration; the expectation is that by 2035 approximately 25% of the population will be over 65 years of age. This trend is expected to hit its peak between 2030 and 2040 (Verzijden and Fransen 2004, 2004).

[100] This phenomenon has been noted in a number of Dutch towns. In Pekela, for example, seniors were forbidden from congregating in the shopping center (AD 2005a), in Leerdam, seniors have requested a covered area in which to spend their time (AD 2002a), and in Amsterdam, seniors were outraged when the benches where they often spent time in the City Hall were removed (HP 2003c).

But the mirth with which he relayed this new "*hangouderen* problem" to me stands in sharp contrast to the serious way in which the presence of youths in public space is experienced and approached. As discussed in the previous chapter, hanging around is currently considered an at-risk behavior and, in some spheres, even a form of "light criminality." In response to this characterization of the problem, programs have been established to draw youth into contact with youth workers and social workers, with the goal, at least in part, to reduce adults' feeling of being unsafe. But how are adults' feelings of being unsafe quantified?

In the *Police Monitor of Population* (*Politiemonitor Bevolking*), three aspects of *onveiligheidsgevoelens* are measured: intensity, the location in which such feelings are felt, and the practicing of "avoidance behavior." Respondents are asked if they have "frequently" (*vaak*) or "ever" (*wel eens*) felt unsafe, and whether they feel unsafe in particular situations, including on public transit, in nightlife areas, in their own home, in their own neighborhood, in the presence of hang-around youth, or in shopping areas. They are also asked if they avoid certain spots in their neighborhood, if they refuse to open their door in the evening and at night, if they leave valuables at home to prevent being mugged, if they avoid certain places by walking or riding out of their way, and if they forbid their children from going certain places. It is worth noting that such questions are quite vague. How often is "frequently"? If you felt unsafe once, ten years ago, do you count that as "ever"? What constitutes "feeling unsafe" on public transit? Does that mean securely holding onto one's belongings as a matter of habit, or being too nervous to take public transit by oneself? These nuances are not considered, nor measured.

After examining what is measured, I found myself surprised to learn that feelings of being unsafe had not only significantly declined in the last decade in Amsterdam, but that they had not originally been as high as one might imagine, given the heavy focus on this issue. I was also surprised to see that, on the national level, only 6.5% of the population "felt frequently unsafe" in 1993; feelings of being unsafe seemed hardly a widespread social concern. In the following table, the statistical measurements for the Amsterdam region are compared to the Netherlands as a whole.[101]

Figure 8. *Onveiligheidsgevoelens*, in percent of population, 1993-2003

	Amsterdam-Amstelland		Netherlands	
Feel Unsafe?	Ever	Frequently	Ever	Frequently
1993	41.8	11.0	29.2	6.5
1995	36.7	8.4	29.0	6.9
1997	35.6	7.5	29.5	6.0
1999	37.5	7.7	30.8	6.0
2001	37.4	7.1	28.5	5.5
2003	34.7	6.4	27.7	5.0

Source: *Politiemonitor Bevolking Tabellenrapport* 2003, 35

Overall, it appears that in recent years people feel safer both in Amsterdam and at the national level; in the Amsterdam region the decline in *onveiligheidsgevoelens* is steeper over the last decade (-7.1% and -5.6%) than nationally (-1.5% for both categories). Only 5% reported feeling frequently unsafe in 2003.

When one examines the situational aspect of such feelings, it becomes clear that hang-around youth play a significant role. In 2003, 22.6% of respondents answered that

[101] As might be expected, the percentages in more rural and small-town areas are often significantly lower than in cities such as Amsterdam. While still lower, interestingly, some of the more rural areas have shown a small increase, in contrast to the urban areas which have largely seen decreases. For example, in Zeeland, a less densely populated province in the southeast of the country, only 18.3% reported feeling unsafe "sometimes" in 1993; in 2003, 20.8% reported sometimes feeling unsafe.

they felt unsafe around hang-around youth, in comparison with 13.2% who felt unsafe on public transit; 15.4% who felt unsafe in nightlife areas; 5.6% who felt unsafe in their own home; 12.4% who felt unsafe in their own neighborhood; and 8.3% who felt unsafe in shopping centers.

Figure 9. Situational *onveiligheidsgevoelens*, in percent of population, 2003.

Have you ever felt unsafe:	Amsterdam-Amstelland	Netherlands
On public transit	23.3	13.2
In nightlife areas	16.7	15.4
In own home	6.3	5.6
In own neighborhood	21.4	12.4
Near hang-around youth	28.6	22.6
In shopping centers	9.1	8.3

Source: *Politiemonitor Bevolking Tabellenrapport* 2003, 37

Again, these categories do not provide a great deal of information: are the "hang-around youth" known or unknown to the person being asked? Is the respondent talking about youth in their neighborhood or elsewhere? Are they older youth—young adults, perhaps—or younger teens? All that is measured is a rather amorphous category of youth in public space. Interestingly, the other situations are only described by their physical location, not by the presence of particular kinds of people; respondents are not asked who or what causes *onveiligheidsgevolens* in those spaces. It is as if those spaces were somehow inherently threatening, even without the presence of others.

"Neighborhood Problems" and Victimization Rates

The *Politiemonitor Bevolking* also measures the public's perception about certain "neighborhood problems" (*buurtproblemen*), and whether they "occur frequently" (*komt vaak voor*). Respondents are asked about a wide range of such problems, and the report shows a significant decline in the last decade in the perceived frequency of most

problems; significantly, however, a few problems are perceived to have increased or stayed the same, including youth *overlast*. The following is a selection of some of the problems respondents are asked about, and their perception of those problems.

Figure 10. Neighborhood problems, perception of frequency, 1993 and 2003.

Occurs frequently?	Amsterdam-Amstelland (in % of population)		Netherlands (in % of population)	
	1993	2003	1993	2003
Bike theft	47.1	29.6	27.2	17.8
Home break-ins	34.9	16.5	29.7	14.1
Auto accidents	19.2	11.2	13.6	8.4
Speeding	53.5	42.0	47.8	46.5
Threatening behavior	8.0	3.8	2.3	1.8
Public drunkenness	18.3	12.1	7.6	7.4
People harassed on the street	11.8	6.5	3.6	2.8
Graffiti	34.4	24.4	16.1	12.5
Overlast from youth	16.6	16.7	9.1	13.2
Litter	46.5	48.7	21.6	30.2
Dog poop	54.8	48.8	47.1	45.6
Vandalism of street fixtures	21.7	16.6	16.0	20.0

Source: *Politiemonitor Bevolking Tabellenrapport* 2003, 11-34

This table shows that only the perceptions about the frequency of youth *overlast* and litter have increased in Amsterdam; the perceptions of both of these, as well as vandalism, have also increased nationally. I would like to emphasize that these figures pertain to public perception, and are not crime or offense statistics themselves. Again, many of the "neighborhood problems" are subject to personal interpretation: for example, what constitutes "harassment on the street" or "threatening behavior"? In interviews, youth workers and social workers repeatedly told me that groups of ethnic minority men who were standing on a street corner, and talking loudly in a foreign language, are often

perceived as frightening to the Whites who cannot understand them. Is that "threatening behavior"? Or must one be waving a knife to be considered "threatening"? If a woman is spoken to on the street by a man, is that harassment? If an addict asks for money, is that harassment? The neighborhood problems being measured are less than precise. I would also like to note the coupling of "unsafeness" and "public space" inherent in this document; the questions asked largely deal with problems in public space, and do not address violence, danger, or disorderliness in other realms, such as domestic violence or workplace harassment.

Whereas the first section of the *Politiemonitor Bevolking* measures *onveiligheidsgevoelens*, and the second measures people's perception of neighborhood problems, the third section measures the rates of specific crimes as reported by the respondents to the survey. This section details victimization rates for a number of crimes, including bike theft, home break-ins, auto accidents and street robbery. These cannot, of course, match every category of the previous "neighborhood problems" because not all of the neighborhood problems included in the second section of the report are actual crimes; there is little way to record the rate of public drunkenness or litter through a victimization survey. In the summary to the report, the authors note a few highlights:

> 24 out of every 100 automobiles were vandalized. For theft from automobiles (7 out of every 100) and theft of automobiles (1 out of every 100) there was less evidence than in years past on which to follow up and arrest someone. For every 100 bicycles in the Netherlands there were five stolen. In three percent of all residences there was a break in. In comparison with 2001 there was a significant reduction in bicycle theft and attempted break ins. The rate of victimization for different forms of auto criminality has not really changed since 2001. In 2003, auto accidents were the most frequent form of personal victimization; almost one in 11 (9%) state that they were a victim of this. Other forms of personal victimization are clearly less frequent (MinBZK 2003, 7).

Reading these numbers alongside perceptions about the frequency of neighborhood problems, we can see significant and interesting relationships. In some cases, people's perception of frequency of problems nearly matches their rate of reported occurrence, while in other cases, the rates are quite far apart; these numbers, of course, are not measuring the same things, so this in itself is not surprising. But what such a comparison does make clear is that "frequent" is not only undefined, but a subjective measurement. For example, 14.1% of respondents answered that home break-ins happen frequently, and 3% of all homes were broken into. Is a 3% rate frequent? Perhaps to some, perhaps not to others.

What I am attempting to emphasize here is that, rhetorically, the document as a whole works to link things that would appear to be unrelated, such as the presence of dog poop or litter and being a victim of theft or a car accident. Relationships are established primarily between levels of fearfulness and perceived rates of neighborhood problems. The perception of disorder is elevated to a central focus; victimization rates only come at the end of the document. This emphasis on disorderliness is reflective of what Jock Young has written about the recent shift toward an "administrative criminology," and the policing strategies to which it gives rise:

> There is interest neither in liability nor pathology, in deterrence nor rehabilitation. The focus is prior to the event rather than after the event, on prevention rather than imprisonment or cure. It is not an inclusionist philosophy which embraces all into society until they are found guilty of an offence and then attempts to reintegrate them. Rather it is an exclusionist discourse which seeks to anticipate trouble whether in the shopping mall or in the prison and to exclude and isolate the deviant. It is not interested in crime *per se*, it is interested in the possibility of crime, in anti-social behavior in general . . . It is an actuarial police calculating what is likely to cause disorder and discontent, and moving on the inappropriate rather than arresting the criminal . . . (1998, 77-9).

The following section on recent changes to policing strategies in the Netherlands makes clear that "moving on the inappropriate" is now an important task of the Amsterdam police force.[102]

"*Streetwise*": Fighting undesirable behavior

Disorder appears to have become a more important priority for the Amsterdam regional police since the creation of "Streetwise" in 1998, a new policing strategy focused on tackling low-level offenses. The Amsterdam-Amstelland Police website states:

> Research shows that more and more people are annoyed by littering, chaos, and anti- social or unpleasant behavior. This has to do, for example, with groups of stupidly drunk youths holding a bachelor party in a night life area, drinking too much and causing too much noise, and behaving in a way that they would never dare in their own neighborhood. In particular, Amsterdammers can easily make a list of behaviors that damage their *woongenot* (living-enjoyment) and the liveability of their neighborhood (Politie n.d.).

The authors then go on to explain the "broken windows" theory, on which the new policing strategy is based.[103]

> Attacking Undesirable Behavior
>
> Streetwise is based on the 'broken window' theory. When there is a broken window in an abandoned building, you have to repair it immediately. If that doesn't happen, then soon the whole building will become a ruin. In other words, it's important to also punish smaller undesirable behaviors, to prevent things going from bad to worse. The frequency of undesirable situations in our area has grown over the years. The citizenry, but also the police, thought for a long time that this should be tolerated (*dit moest kunnen*). *And so, the freedom of*

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[102] In his work on the current concern regarding *incivilités* in France, Frances Bailleau notes a similar "mismatch" between public anxieties about young people's disturbing conduct and judicial remedies: "Most laypeople now have a new definition of the insecurity they feel in relation to young people's behaviour, irrespective of the official definitions of delinquency, police function and police and legal action"; juvenile law is challenged, then, by misbehavior that may not technically be illegal (1998, 99-100).

[103] This idea, from the work of James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling (1982), has been critiqued by Mitchell Dunier, author of *Sidewalk* (1999), among others, for at least two reasons. Policing based on this theory can give a great deal of discretion to the police over a broad range of behaviors that may not technically be infractions, leading to inconsistent enforcement, even abuses of power. In addition, this idea frames a way of thinking about street activities as inherently disorderly; Dunier (1999) shows that New York City sidewalk vendors can function as the "eyes on the street" described by Jane Jacobs (1992), rather than contributing to disorder and creating the conditions for crime.

> *one became the loss of freedom of the other*. Now that it appears, from many different researches, that neighborhood residents are more than sick of *overlast* and anti-social behavior, our police corps have a way to fight back. The purpose of Streetwise is to give the street back to the citizen, and with that to increase the liveability in our region (emphasis mine) (Politie n.d.).

This statement continues on to assure the reader that this new strategy is not a New York-style "zero tolerance" policy, which was and is thought by many to be too strict, just another example of American excess:

> Not Zero Tolerance
>
> Streetwise has been unjustly tossed in a pile with 'zero tolerance'; a policing practice where nothing is allowed or permitted. 'Zero tolerance' does not fit with our region and also not with our police officers. Streetwise is the way back to a normalized situation, and therefore certainly not permissive. Our police officers are required to follow Streetwise and to issue fines (Politie n.d.).

The quoted text from the Streetwise website makes clear that unruly and unpleasant behavior has become a significant preoccupation for policing in Amsterdam. Small infractions must be punished immediately, to "prevent things going from bad to worse," and to protect the "freedom" of individuals.

This strategy is focused on behavior in public space; the full title to the police booklet reads "*Streetwise: Tips for fighting violations in the public space*."[104] The introductory text reads: "This booklet offers an introduction to fighting disturbing anti-social behavior . . . Government and Justice support our offensive against degeneration (*verloedering*)". Importantly, it does not state that the purpose is to punish "illegal" behavior, but, instead, to mount an "offensive" against "degeneration," manifest in the form of "disturbing anti-social behavior." I have included below some of the violations listed in this booklet, along with the amounts of fines for those violations:

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[104] I was able on June 6, 2003 to print out the pages of booklet from the Amsterdam-Amstelland official police website; those webpages appear to have since been removed.

Disturbance from motor vehicles and motorbikes: If the driver of a motor vehicle or motorbike causes unnecessary noise. Ticket: *f*180 (approximately 80).[105]

Household garbage: To look through or spread out household garbage that stands ready for collection. Ticket: *f*150 (approximately 68).

Garbage on the street: Disposal of garbage on the street or medians (for example, emptying car ashtrays, throwing away a beverage container, remaining food, packaging, paper; disposing of garbage in forests, parks, meadows, fields, farmland, building sites). Fine unspecified.

Dog poop: If dog owner or walker does not pick up and dispose of dog waste on a pathway intended for pedestrians, on a publicly accessible playground, sandbox, or game area, or on any other place than those selected by the mayor or legislators. Ticket *f*60 (approximately 27).

Without reasonable purpose (*Zonder redelijk doel*): To stop in a doorway or tunnel, or to sit or lie on or against a window frame or threshold of a building. Ticket *f*80 (approximately 36).

Hanging around (together) youth: (In/On) a publicly accessible entrance, telephone booth, public transit waiting area, parking garage, bike garage—
Without reasonable purpose, and in a disturbing way for others, or
During cleaning, or
With a purpose not intended for that place.
Ticket *f*80 (approximately 36).

On or by the road/path: To cause *overlast* or disturbance for people using the road/path, or residents of nearby buildings. Ticket: *f*80 (approximately 36).

Drunkenness: In a clear state of drunkenness on public path. Ticket *f*50 (approximately 22).

Public urination: Relieving one's natural needs outside places intended for such. Ticket *f*60 (approximately 27).

Not stopping for red light. Ticket for bicyclists: *f*50 (approximately 22), motorbikes *f*70 (approximately 31), and motorvehicles *f*180 (approximately 81).

Interestingly, the fine for being in a doorway or tunnel without reasonable purpose, hanging around in particular public spaces, and causing *overlast* near roadways or paths, is higher than the fines for running a red light (for motorbikes and bikes), public urination, drunkenness, and not cleaning up after one's dog. This schema suggests that

[105] Currency exchange values as of August, 2005.

hanging around is more "messy" than urination, drunkenness and dog waste, and potentially more dangerous than not stopping for a red light on a bike or motorbike.

If we return to people's perceptions of public problems, as measured in the *Politiemonitor Bevolking*, for a moment, it is interesting to compare the responses about "hanging around groups of youth" with some of the other problems. While a significant number of people answered in 2003 that youth *overlast* occurs frequently, the highest responses were recorded in relation to the problems of litter, dog poop, and speeding.

Figure 11. Comparison of perceptions of frequency of problems.

Problem	Amsterdam-Amstelland % say "occurs frequently"		Netherlands % say "occurs frequently"	
	1993	2003	1993	2003
Litter	46.5	48.7	21.6	30.2
Dog poop	54.8	48.8	47.1	45.6
Speeding	53.5	42.0	47.8	46.5
Overlast from youth	16.6	16.7	9.1	13.2

Source: *Politiemonitor Bevolking, 2003*

According to public perception, youth *overlast* occurs much less frequently than litter, dog poop and speeding. Yet, the amount of attention to youth *overlast* from the police, policy makers, youth workers, social workers and the media appears to vastly outweigh that given to the most frequent complaint: dog poop. Municipalities do take some measures, for example, on playgrounds one can often see a small metal sign with a representation of dog poop surrounded by a red circle, which means "prohibited," or signs that read "*Spelen zonder hondenpoep*," or "Playing without dog poop."

Figure 12. Playground sign: Dog walking prohibited.

Other small, citizen-led campaigns are sometimes waged against dog poop: in the neighborhood in which I lived in Amsterdam there was a banner that read "This street is dog poop-free!" Similarly, in a neighborhood in Utrecht, where friends of mine live, children's hand-made signs staked in the ground exhort dog owners to use specified dog walking areas. But, at least in anecdotal terms, no one I spoke to had ever heard of anyone getting a ticket for dog poop or for littering; many complained, as well, that people who ride through red lights rarely get ticketed. In contrast, issuing fines for hanging around appears to be growing as a policing practice. Not all forms of disorderly behavior are treated equally: the presence of youth in public space has received a great deal more attention (and a higher fine) in terms of policing, policy and news coverage.

Crime Statistics in the Netherlands

Reading Crime Statistics

In this chapter so far, I have attempted to demonstrate that the issue of feeling unsafe is linked to public space, generally, and to the presence of youth in public space,

specifically. Police have focused, in response to this definition of the problem, with an aggressive campaign against public disorderliness. Alongside these developments, crime, and in particular violent crime, has also received a great deal of attention. Among government officials, police officers and criminologists, it is generally recognized that statistics show a significant rise in criminality between the years of 1970 and 1985.[106] Since 1985, crime rates have remained relatively stable:

Figure 13. Crime rate, as percentage of the population aged 15 years and older, 1980-1998

Year	Violent Crimes	Theft-related offenses	Vandalism
1980	6.0	12.7	12.6
1982	8.2	15.2	13.4
1984	9.4	15.6	12.4
1986	7.6	15.6	10.9
1988	7.4	14.2	10.7
1990	7.7	14.5	10.5
1992	8.0	15.6	11.6
1994	7.1	15.3	12.7
1996	5.8	13.5	11.7
1998	7.6	14.5	14.0

Source: Social and Cultural Planning Office (SCP) (2001, 581)

While crime rates have not increased dramatically in the last decades, attention to youth crime has. As already discussed, the Montfrans Commission undertook an investigation of this topic in 1994, after which youth and safety policy programs were created with youth crime prevention as their major goal; in the same period, new policing strategies were adopted that focus on disorderliness, especially among youth.[107] Of particular

[106] See, for example, the report by the Montfrans Commission (MinJustitie 1994, 15).

[107] In addition to Streetwise, police bureaus established a new position—the "Neighborhood Director" (*buurtregisseur*)—in which experienced police officers were given the duty of overseeing defined residential areas, and, in particular, youth problems in those areas. In my research, these officers were involved with the Safe Meeting Places project, attended neighborhood meetings, responded to adults' complaints, and visited the homes of reprimanded youths to speak with their parents.

concern has been whether there has been an increase in violent crime among youth. In an analysis of the development of youth crime rates between 1980 and 1999, M. Krussink and A.A.M. Essers state that the number of youthful violent offenders increased from 3,000 in 1980 to 9,000 in 1999; however, they temper these figures with the following statement:

> To what extent do increasing violent crime statistics mirror reality? It is possible that the societal commotion and clearly declining societal tolerance toward violence—arising after a few serious incidents with fatal consequences, where youth were involved—have had the consequence of dramatically increasing policing organizations' attention around violence. This attention can lead, for example, to earlier and stricter crack-downs against violence, more quickly recording official complaints, and increased judicial opportunities to try more suspects (2001, 4).

In addition, these figures must be seen in relation to the overall growth of the populace, which increased during that period by more than 1.5 million (from approximately 14.1 million to 15.8 million).[108] The sociologist Kees Schuyt, in discussing the lack of consensus among those who have attempted to analyze youth crime rates, acknowledges that statistical changes in youth crime may be generated by a number of additional factors—outside of actual crime rate increases—such as changing definitions of crimes; increased efficiency in registration of crimes (for example, through computerization);[109] differences in measuring practices over time; and the multiplicity of "measurers," including the Central Bureau of Statistics, the police organization, and the respondents to self-report surveys (2003, 84-7).

Another interesting explanation for the changing rates of youth criminality is given by Hans van Laar, in the Dutch anthropological journal *Focaal*. In his analysis, he

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[108] Central Bureau of Statistics, http://www.cbs.nl.

[109] This was also noted in relation to the brief spike in the crime rate for the year 1992 in the Montfrans Commission report (1994), but that acknowledgement was relegated to the end notes of that document.

examines how the changes in birth rates since the 1950s, and their subsequent flux in the number of youth, can be related to youth crime rates. Using this perspective, he concludes: "A large increase or decrease of the number of youth in the most criminally active age categories has a great impact on the height of the youth crime statistics" (Van Laar 1991, 38). In 1978, when youth criminality rates declined England, Wales and West Germany—earlier than in the Netherlands—this was in part due to the fact that the birth rate had also fallen earlier in those countries (Van Laar 1991, 44). Acknowledging that birth rates and youth cohorts cannot fully explain the changes, Van Laar also argues the ability to oversee and discipline larger cohorts is a more difficult task; authorities and other adults will have more impact on smaller youth populations (1991, 41).

Krussink and Essers also take issue with the frequent claim that youth are becoming more criminal, and at a younger age. They argue that the percentage of youth involved in illegal activities has not increased in recent years, nor have offenders become younger; using "self-report" surveys, they conclude that approximately 35% of youths admit to committing one or more offenses per year, a percentage which has remained the same between 1991 and 2001[110] (Kruissink and Essers 2001). One must also examine to what offenses these youths are admitting; in the accompanying English summary, the authors write: "As always, using public transport without paying is the most frequent occurring fact. Other frequently reported offences are graffiti and vandalism" (Kruissink and Essers 2001, 32). Youths who are on the college-bound track of education—rarely stereotyped as juvenile offenders—are the most frequent "fare-jumpers," or illegal riders of public transport, which is the most frequent offense (Kruissink and Essers 2001, 5).

[110] Self-report surveys are considered to be more accurate than police statistics in that they capture a picture of how many offenses are committed, not only those which are caught by the authorities.

Finally, it is important to place youth criminality in relation to that committed by adults. Van Laar acknowledges that youth commit a significant amount of criminal offenses, but notes that such offenses are overwhelmingly "small crimes." He writes: "The serious offenses, such as crimes against life, vice crimes, and armed robbery, are overwhelmingly committed by adults. If environmental, vehicular and economic crimes are also taken into effect, the adults' image changes further for the worse" (Van Laar 1991, 38). A report by the Dutch Social and Cultural Planning Office (SCP) shows that in the category of "crimes against life," less than 10% are committed by youths between the ages of 12 and 17 and about 27% are committed by youths between the ages of 18 and 24, leaving approximately 63% to be committed by adults (SCP 2001, 587). Violent sexual crimes are also much more frequently committed (approximately 64%) by adults. In contrast, "violence in public" is overwhelmingly committed by youth; only about 25% is committed by adults. These figures are, however, less valuable as indicators of actual crime rates, and more revealing, instead, of the disproportionate attention to youth crime. While youth crime certainly is a problem, adult crime is as much or perhaps even more so, yet there is little discourse about or attention to "adult crime" as a category. Few wonder about how to solve the "adult crime" problem, perhaps because focusing on youth crime allows the discussion to center on prevention, rather than on causality or rehabilitation.

Much has also been made about the "overrepresentation" of ethnic minorities, particularly Moroccans, Turks, Surinamese and Antilleans, within crime statistics. The statistical overrepresentation is often accepted as a fact of greater involvement in criminality, rather than as an artifact of policing tactics and statistical measurement. In

the spring of 2005, for example, newspapers reported that Moroccans above 18 were four times as likely as native Dutch "to be involved in a crime," and that these statistics confirmed studies done by the government in the late 1990s, thus implying that the situation had not improved (HP 2005a). What this statement elides, of course, is the fact that such figures conflate actual involvement with crime with being arrested or suspected for being involved in a crime; many are involved with crime without being caught, and many are arrested on suspicions that prove baseless. These figures are often simply taken as proof of high levels of criminality among Moroccans, and are spoken about in policy circles and on television talk shows. I am not attempting to argue here that ethnic minorities are not involved with crime, nor that youth are not involved with crime, but that the discussion of both tends to take statistics at their face value, without regard for issues such as racial and age-based profiling.

One foundational study concerning ethnicity and crime rates was authored by Marianne Junger, in a law dissertation entitled "Delinquency and Ethnicity," in which she argued that the Moroccan, Turkish and Surinamese youth from one residential area had higher arrest rates than that of White youth from the same area (1990). These differences could not be accounted for, she argued, by any socio-economic or policing differences since they all lived in the same neighborhood; instead, she explained the disparities in terms of the varying amount of social control exercised by parents on the youth, and particularly the Moroccan and Turkish youth. As seen in the previous chapter, many youth workers would disagree with her findings about policing, having witnessed racial profiling as a prevalent practice in police-youth encounters. But even those who would plead for a careful reading of the "overrepresentation" of ethnic minorities in crime

statistics seem hesitant to argue that discrimination or racial profiling might affect such statistics. For example, the criminologist Frank Bovenkerk submitted a report to the Montfrans Commission, in which he dissected a statement he had written summarizing the then-current consensus on ethnicity and crime among criminologists:

> The statement reads that people agree that *allochtoon* youth 'have a greater chance of coming into contact with the police and justice systems,' not that the criminality of these youth or their portion of the criminality is greater. The reason this statement is written as such is that we do not know how much of an impact selective policing measures and judicial actions have in contributing toward higher criminality statistics. Nota bene: it does not state that the police 'discriminate' (although that can also be the case), but above all that the numbers are partly the product of criminal justice measures that always and necessarily are selective (MinJustitie 1994, 52).

Today there continues to be a great deal of attention paid to investigating linkages between culture and criminality among ethnic minority groups, but, perhaps unsurprisingly, no one seems to be asking just what it is about native Dutch culture that leads native Dutch to commit the majority of crimes; in that same report, Bovenkerk estimates that native Dutch commit approximately 90% of all crime (MinJustitie 1994, 51). Just as the focus disproportionately rests on youth rather than adult crime, the attention to ethnic minority crime, conceptualized for example as "the problem with Moroccanness," reveals a glaring absence: where is all the talk about "the problem with Dutchness"?

How much can we derive from any of these statistical representations? While such statistics might not be accurate in demonstrating actual crime rates and criminal groups, they can tell us about how such problems are imagined. If ethnic minority youth are overrepresented in statistics, just what does that mean? The very measurement of such statistics by ethnicity indicates that ethnic difference itself is seen as an indicator for potential criminality. If youth commit fewer serious crimes than adults, and Streetwise

policing tactics focus important resources on writing fines for disorderliness, what does that tell us? It shows us that police think their job, at least in part, is to stop youth from being disturbing in public and from becoming a danger, rather than stopping crimes and catching criminals; in their eyes, youthful disorderliness is seen as an indicator of potential criminality. Without having to speak in the strong language of statistics, it is possible to examine these representations and ask critical questions about what is being measured, what is being assumed, and what is being forgotten; of course, "law and order" advocates dismiss this kind of analysis as "relativizing the problem."[111] Is there more crime, more youth crime, more ethnic youth crime, or is there more attention being directed on the behavior of ethnic minority youth, and all youth, and particularly in public places? One might ask—as I certainly do—how relevant such statistics are to current conflicts between adults and youth, anyway, given that hanging around is not a crime, and that it does not necessarily lead to criminal behavior. In the current climate, however, it is important to recognize that crime statistics are being marshaled in ways to support claims about increasing youth criminality, particularly among ethnic minority youth, and that such statistics form the basis for a great deal of interventionist policy. These crime statistics, published in the newspaper and serving as fodder for television

[111] See, for example, the way in which the Dutch anthropologist Hans Werdmolder (2005) dismisses analyses that attempt to contextualize statistical representations of Moroccan youth criminality as "relativizing"; such analyses, I would argue, do "relativize" in the sense that they attempt to "relate" statistics to the social context in which such statistics are created. This, however, is not the failing that he intimates; all statistics arise out of particular histories, contexts, and relationships: to argue that they can stand alone, as plain fact, is to seriously discount the production of knowledge and the constructedness of social problems.

discussion shows, are part of the environment in which youth—particularly those in public space—are seen as a "problem group."[112]

Fearfulness

The Perception of Violence

Statistical measurements may bear little relation to people's perceptions of the world. This can be seen clearly when looking at who is afraid of crime, and who is statistically more at risk for it. In general, men between the ages of 15-24, who are more highly educated, and who are living alone have a higher risk of being a victim of crime; yet women and elderly people often have a much higher level of fear about becoming a victim (Boels et al. 2003, 14-5). The matter of perception is an important one; some scholars have argued that violence and aggression have not increased in absolute terms, but rather that violent and aggressive behavior has become less acceptable in society. Educational theorist Micha de Winter, in an interview, describes this process in relation to his own experience:

> I think that [people think violence is increasing] because our tolerance with respect to violence is decreasing. Awhile ago there was a prominent piece in the news about a group of adolescents . . . who had put out a cigarette on the body of another adolescent. Big headlines in the newspaper. When I read that, I thought: Hey, that also happened to me. I was about fourteen and was on the beach with my friends . . . All at once, I jumped into the air: someone had put out their cigarette butt on my stomach. You think that I went to the police, or the newspaper? That didn't even occur to me (RD 1998).

While the behavior had not changed—both stories involved cigarettes being put out on someone's body—the context had. The perception of increased violence in society may

[112] Youth crime, of course, is not the only arena in which youth are discussed; problem youth are also discussed in terms of the education system and the job market, as seen in these headlines: "Difficult students must go to a separate facility" (NRC 2004i); "Difficult students may receive forced lessons" (DV 2004g); "Truant student in Twente risks jail time" (DV 2003i); "Raising children is more and more the responsibility of the school: Shift due in part to working mothers" (DV 2004j); "Many youth leave school without diploma" (NRC 2004p); "Businesses turn away drop-outs" (HP 2004b); "Sharp increase in youth unemployment: 60,000 young people unemployed" (NRC 2004o).

well be due to the way in which certain acts are now categorized as violent, and seen to be intolerable. Such changing perceptions can be mirrored in, and even strengthened by, changes in the official definitions of crimes; for example, purse-snatching used to be categorized as simple theft, but now is a violent crime.

"Senseless Violence"

At the public level, the problem of "senseless violence" (*zinloos geweld*) has assumed great importance in recent years, particularly after the deaths of Joes Kloppenburg in 1996 and Meindert Tjoelker in 1997. Kloppenburg, a young man in his twenties, was attacked by other youths after the bars had closed; Tjoelker died after being hit forcefully by other youths whom he had criticized for their aggressive behavior. The concept of senseless violence, imagined as a physical attack on someone "for no reason," couples together a perception of increasingly unsafe public space with a perception of totally random violence, especially among young males. Anton Blok, a prominent Dutch anthropologist, has argued that no violent act is ever truly senseless: "Violence is not an unchanging, 'natural' fact but a historically developed cultural category that we have to understand primarily as symbolic activity, as meaningful social action" (Blok 2000, 33). Even if such violence is universally condemned, the way in which it is categorized and understood can tell us about its social meaning. "Senseless violence" may be less random than it appears, for there may be a pattern in which violence erupts after people are publicly "corrected" (*corregiren*) or "spoken to" (*aanspreken*)[113] about their behavior.

[113] Dutch speakers will notice that I do not properly conjugate the Dutch verbs in this study, but restrict my use to the infinitive; while most likely an eyesore to those who understand the language, I think it important to minimize any potential confusion among non-Dutch speakers that might be caused by the use of many different forms of the same word. Thus, for example, I use "*aanspreken*" where it might be proper to write "*aangesproken*," "*aan te spreken*," "*spreek iemand aan*," and so forth.

During the research, for example, an incident that was characterized as "senseless violence" took place in the town of Venlo between three young men. Reportedly, two young men (18 years old) on a motorbike drove recklessly into the parking lot of a shopping center, almost injuring an older woman who was loading her groceries onto her bicycle. Another young man, René Steegmans (22), confronted them about their behavior by stating that they should have more respect for older people, and an altercation ensued. One of the young men on the motorbike repeatedly hit and kicked Steegmans, who later died as a result of those injuries. There was also an ethnic aspect to this incident, at least in the way it was covered in the media: the man who had delivered the physical blows was Moroccan, a point which was noted repeatedly, while the other two young men were White; representatives from the local Moroccan community came forward to condemn the event. The public was shocked not only by the excessive reaction of the young men to being criticized, but also by the non-intervention of the bystanders, none of whom stopped the altercation.

The category of "senseless violence" seems inapt in this situation, for there appears to be a clear reason why the altercation took place. While not excusing the violent response, it is not unreasonable to assume that the young man who hit Steegmans was reacting to being "spoken to" (*aanspreken*). Throughout the research, there appeared to be a strong value placed on being able to do as one wishes, without interference. This desire can be seen in the expectation that one should be able to traverse public spaces without having to avoid groups of youths on the street as well as in the belief that one should be able to watch television without having to turn up the volume due to noise from neighborhood youth. I also noted, in other types of instances,

that some people seemed very sensitive to any suggestion that someone was telling them what to do or criticizing their behavior. In one case, I witnessed someone littering, who was then reprimanded by a stranger for doing so. The litterer angrily yelled "Why are you interfering with me? Screw you!" It is possible that a similar sensitivity could have motivated the youths' reaction in this case, the criticism serving as a kind of provocation. One might debate whether such violence is in fact "senseless," but it is clear that the term itself marks and enables a current discourse about violence in public, and demonstrates a concern with potentially violent interactions, particularly involving young males, in the public sphere.

In response to incidents such as these, organizations such as "Tolerance Unlimited" (now defunct) and "National Organization against Senseless Violence" have been established. These groups engaged in public education campaigns through presentations at schools and through public advertisements. In addition, small signs declaring "Violence-Free Zone" have been hung up in symbolic places, such as the entrance to the small street where Kloppenburg was attacked, and small ladybug symbols, the icon of the National Organization against Senseless Violence are scattered in public spaces, as well. Such signs may inadvertently increase fearfulness, as they are visual reminders of the senseless violence they condemn.

Figure 14. Tolerance Unlimited street sign, "Violence-free Zone," Spui, Amsterdam.

The Feedback Loop

Throughout Amsterdam North, the municipal government has established Neighborhood Safety Stations (w*ijkveiligheidsposten*), which are staffed by civil servants who regularly patrol the neighborhood and take down complaints from residents. Residents call up or stop by the office with complaints about such things about motorbike noise or unsightly trash. Dressed in a variation of the police uniforms, these civil servants appear quite official as they walk through the streets, noting down irregularities on municipal forms. They most commonly report improper garbage disposal—if a resident has left their garbage bags on the street on the wrong day or disposed of garbage in the wrong place, or if trash has somehow become loose in the street. While they usually report problems to various authorities (trash collection, police officers), the civil servants also sometimes try to mediate conflicts between neighbors, or help residents navigate bureaucratic procedures.

In my first weeks of research, I met a few elderly ladies at the Safety Station of one neighborhood, and spoke with them with the help of one of the civil servants there. I was trying to ascertain how much I should focus on this particular neighborhood, and asked the women, long-time residents of the neighborhood, how the area had changed over the years, and what they thought of the neighborhood these days. It became immediately clear that the women felt the neighborhood had become much less safe. But this feeling of being unsafe seemed to have little connection to their direct experience. Neither had ever been the victim of a crime, nor did they know anyone who had ever been robbed, assaulted or even threatened. That fact did not seem to mitigate their sense of being unsafe, however. I was told by one woman that she sometimes sees suspicious people in the neighborhood; once, for example, she said there was a young man who slowly walked by her house and looked in her window. When I asked why she felt certain that the neighborhood was dangerous, she responded that she hears police sirens and sees police cars riding through the streets—and that is how she knows that there is a problem. And I realized, talking to her, that a kind of feedback loop was in operation: feeling unsafe, people call on the police to be more visible on the streets, which adds to their perception that the streets are dangerous, and that problems are occurring all around them—even if not to them, directly. Never having witnessed or had any personal connection to any local crimes, these women were convinced that the neighborhood was growing more dangerous in part because of the increased police presence—a presence for which she was partly responsible.

The Politics of Prevention and Repression

Before turning to the larger anxieties that underlie the current concern with safety, it is important to also note the way that safety has become a political issue, highlighted in political platforms. This was, of course, also related to the fears of terrorism that became greatly amplified in the wake of the attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001. "Safety" became a kind of catch-all word that invoked notions of disorderliness, fears of youth, and fears of terrorists; as we saw in Chapter Three, the media's use of "terrorist" in conjunction with youthful misbehavior did little to tamp down the conflation of the two. While the specter of terrorism was only very rarely discussed by my interviewees, it makes sense to assume that a generally heightened sense of insecurity was operative.

Safety played a big role in the 2002 elections, as each party made their promises. For example, in (now Premier) Jan Peter Balkenende's treatise *Different and Better*, published prior to the 2002 elections, he notes "safety" as one of the failures of the previous administration. In the platform for the Christian Democratic party, the issue of safety is summarized as "a government that sets boundaries and guarantees safety" and is listed a top priority, following only "freedom of choice in society: reduction of rules and bureaucracy" and "a social income [and taxation] policy that improves financial strength" (Balkenende 2002, 13-5). Safety is clearly articulated as a matter of personal freedom:

> Safety concerns the freedom of people. The freedom, for example, to have a stroll in the evenings or to get money from an ATM. The freedom to let your children play on the street, without worry. The government must protect this freedom. That means, in the first place, that the government must provide a good example by no longer being permissive. There must also be attention paid to the interests of society. In our country we are often too concerned with the privacy of the offender. The coming four years must instead be about the rights of the victim. Or even better, about the right to not be a victim at all (Balkenende 2002, 15).

While characterized as "prevention," many new policies—and the political platforms that support them—may also be thought of as "repressive," in that they seek to catch and punish those who infringe on personal freedoms.

It is clear that in the context of fearfulness, and particularly after the murder of Theo van Gogh by a Dutch-born Islamic fundamentalist, much of the public in the Netherlands is willing to accept new policing, correctional, and "security" measures. Some of the new measures in recent years, in addition to the Streetwise policing strategy discussed above, include "preventive searching" (*preventief fouilleren*) (DV 2002b),[114] closed circuit television surveillance (DV 2001), mandatory national identification cards (NRC 2005b), prohibition of gatherings of groups of youth (*samenscholingsverbod*),[115] and sentencing youth to "resocialization" schools and work-camps (HP 2003d). Targets of these measures oscillate between the public at large and youth in particular. Preventive searching became a fairly common occurrence during my year of fieldwork, where entire city blocks or train station corridors would be blocked off, and everyone inside would be searched. In one newspaper article, entitled "Searching Pays Off," the success of this measure was described explicitly in terms of feelings of being unsafe: "In Rotterdam, it has been a success, as seen in a report from jurists, police and the municipality. Rotterdammers feel safer on the street" (TR 2003a). Much later in the article, it was also noted that the searches resulted in the confiscation of weapons and the

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[114] I would like to note the linguistic artfulness of the adjective "preventive"; it makes an implicit contrast with "repressive," which, it could be argued on the basis of racial profiling, such searches are.

[115] In some places, small groups are "moved along" by the police. The grounds upon which this action takes place are less than clear; I was given varying responses to my inquiries as to whether such a ban on congregating was an official or unofficial policing practice. More recently, the Mayor of Amsterdam has called for "temporary bans" on individuals which forbid them to travel down certain streets or frequent certain street corners (HP 2005b).

arrest of many individuals for carrying weapons. Out of 18,697 Rotterdammers who were searched, 23 guns and 353 knives were confiscated.[116] Additionally, 84% of Whites were reported to agree with the new measure, substantially more than the 58% of *allochtonen*. Interestingly, the article also states that even though the level of feeling safe had increased in the city in general, it had decreased in the neighborhood that had been subject to preventive searching repeatedly over five months. The article also reports that such searching has been met with controversy by some academics and law experts, who note, among other things, that the definition of a "weapon" in these searches is less than clear.

Analyzing Anxiety

In Chapter Four, I traced how the concern with crime prevention has been manifested in youth policy, particularly around "at-risk youth." Rather than primarily chasing down criminals by being "on the beat," police have increasingly turned toward monitoring potentially problematic groups, using electronic surveillance through closed-circuit television, and collecting information about individuals, even those never convicted or suspected of crimes. Under this policing regime, nearly everyone is a potential criminal, and nearly every place is a potential crime scene. Politicians support this definition of the situation not only with increased funding for such measures, thereby expanding police power, but with their campaign promises about "reducing feelings of being unsafe." Danger, in this era, is expanded, diffuse. Hans-Jörg Albrecht characterizes the contemporary period as less concerned with "folk devils" and "demonization" than with

[116] The article does not clarify the nature of these weapons; when similar searches were done in Amsterdam during my research, there were reports of Swiss Army knives and cheese knives being confiscated from picnic baskets.

"risks" and "dangerization"; he writes, "political power, and its establishment, as well as its preservation, are today dependent on carefully selected campaign issues, among which safety (and feelings of unsafety) is paramount" (2002, 162). In this section, I examine some of the ways in which the politics and the perception of danger have been theoretically explained in recent years, with particular attention to the larger social anxieties connected to global capitalism, the influence of the media, and the social dynamics of talking about crime.

Global Insecurity

Zygmunt Baumann, in his article "Violence in an Age of Insecurity," writes that "the perception of rising violence reflects all too often a sharp rise in general insecurity which only marginally, if at all, can be blamed 'objectively' on the swelling volume of violent acts and actors" (2002, 54). This argument relates a larger turn toward neoliberal policies and discourses of the last two decades—deregulation, personal responsibility, and reliance on the market rather than social welfare—with the current sense of insecurity. The government, in this vision, is relatively powerless to address the anxieties that are experienced by people who once were assured of employment, stable incomes and benefits, and a comfortable retirement. The personal "flexibility" required to be successful in this age only further contributes to people's sense of insecurity, as do the opportunities to divorce, remarry, and relocate:

> It so happens that ours are times of profound and rapid change; no wonder that we all, in some degree or other and for one reason or another, feel insecure. Even those among us who, thus far, sit firmly in our respective saddles have no way of knowing what tomorrow will bring. Jobs, factories, whole companies disappear without warning and so does the demand for skills meant to serve the whole of working life, while the governments left or right call us to be more 'flexible' and so promise more change and yet more agonising uncertainty. Neither are the family homes the shelters of confidence and tranquility we once expected them to be. Few people can be sure to live all their lives in the company of the same partners. Neighbourhoods change too; familiar signs vanish without trace and new ones – unknown, unheard of and barely legible – appear in their place (Bauman 2002, 54).

Hans Boutellier, following Ulrich Beck's characterization of postmodernity as a "risk society," argues that these radical changes have together created a longing for "meaning and moral boundaries" within Dutch society (2002, 17). While this desire for "safety" is perhaps understandable, it lies in conflict, he argues, with the fundamental ideal of the risk society: total freedom. The "safety utopia" (*veiligheidsutopie*) is that desire for total safety within a risk-culture of total personal freedom, a situation which can never be achieved (Boutellier 2002). The desire for safety, according to Jock Young, is a product of a society shaped by an ideology of the market: "the same market forces which have made our identity precarious and our future unsure have generated a constant rise in our expectations of citizenship, and most importantly, have engendered a widespread sense of demands frustrated and desires unmet" (1998, 64). Those who desire safety are practicing a kind of consumer-driven citizenship, where "security has come to be perceived as a social service amongst other services (health, transportation, and so on)" (Roche 2002, 214; see also Taylor 1998). In Amsterdam, the police appear to be contributing to this situation through advertisements that encourage people to report all offenses, no matter how small, and by establishing central telephone lines through which to do so.

Media

Sensitivity to violence and feelings of being unsafe are commonly thought to be linked to media consumption. Many of the adults I interviewed made reference to the representation of violence in the news media, and often placed blame on the media for creating an exaggerated sense of insecurity. In his book, *The Culture of Fear*, sociologist Barry Glassner discusses the relationship between people's consumption of news media in the United States and their level of fear (1999). Citing the findings of a national poll on why people believe the United States has a significant crime problem—76 percent referred to news stories, while only 22 percent based their response on personal experience—he argues that news media is often both the source of fears as well as the source that legitimates those fears (Glassner 1999, xxi).

News stories are not the only type of media that are thought to affect people's perception of danger. Bauman writes that crime thrillers and cop and court dramas contribute to "the worldview held by growing sections of humankind, [that] crime and violence are no more deviations from the norm, but the norm itself" (2002, 60). Citing the work of the late George Gerbner, former Dean of the Annenberg School of Communication at the University of Pennsylvania, Glassner also discusses "the mean-world syndrome," in which "people who watch a lot of TV are more likely than others to believe that their neighborhoods are unsafe, to assume that crime rates are rising, and to overestimate their own odds of becoming a victim" (1999, 40).[117] (We can only assume,

[117]According to the Dutch Central Bureau for Statistics, in 2004 33% of the population watched more than 20 hours of television per week, 38% watched between 10 and 20 hours per week, and 29% watched less than 10 hours per week (www.statline.cbs.nl). While not directly comparable, since the figures are not broken down by category but only averaged, the United States Census Bureau projects that the average American watches 32 hours of television per week (USGov 2004).

that if such a syndrome exists, that most people tend to see the world a little more darkly after the constant barrage of images of the terrorist attacks in New York, Madrid, Bali, and London.) Attention to extremely unlikely situations or problems, such as the plethora of stories in the 1990s about "road rage" in the United States, further works to deflect attention from more complicated, less sensational issues. Glassner argues that such "pseudodangers" "represent further opportunities to avoid problems we do not want to confront, such as overcrowded roads and the superabundance of guns, as well as those we have grown tired of confronting" (1999, 8). Similarly, time spent focused on *hangjongeren* and "train terrorists," it could be argued, is time not spent talking about a declining public infrastructure, reduced educational and employment opportunities for young people, and persistent ethnic tensions. Instead, such language evokes fears of nameless, placeless beings who wish us harm, and who could strike anywhere at any time.

Crime Talk

In contrast to Glassner's work, Malin Åkeström (1998) argues that the media play a much more nuanced role in the public's perception of danger. Many "moral panic" studies, in her analysis, attend more to news stories and the attitude of politicians than they do to actual attitudes held by the public. I found that many of my interviewees held complicated and sometimes contradictory views about youth, views that were generally not encapsulated in the more simplistic reporting in the media. In Åkeström's work on crime, fear and the media in Sweden, she examined the relationship between representations about crime and people's perceptions—not only of their own fear of crime, but of their perception of others' fear of crime—and arrived at a very interesting

conclusion: "so-called moral panics above all inform us about other people's attitudes, emotions, and behaviour" (1998, 325). Media attention does not necessarily make people more afraid, she found; rather, such attention makes people simply more aware of certain topics:

> As the objects of attention were disseminated through different forums, they were transformed into topics of shared concern. Not only were they made into phenomena ('unprovoked violence', 'meaningless violence', 'youth violence') that people were distinctly aware of – people were aware of others being aware of them, too (Akeström 1998, 329).

Even more interesting is Åkeström's finding that many people believed that others were afraid, even if they were not themselves afraid: "In Helsingborg, 75 per cent believed that 'many' and 20 per cent believed that 'some' were afraid of becoming victims of violence, while only 6 per cent reported that they themselves were 'often' afraid and 39 per cent reported that they were 'sometimes' afraid of this" (1998, 330). The "moral panic" then is more indicative of what people—including politicians and journalists, it would seem—think that other people fear, rather than an indication of their actual fears.

Talk about crime, then, is just one of many other conversational topics: "the climate of opinion in itself creates issues which are functional on a level of 'social conversation.' At such a level one can include conversational topics such as the weather, high food prices, crime . . . These are topics in which everyone can be included and upon which everyone can agree" (Akeström 1998, 333). From Åkeström's work, we can extrapolate that talk about *onveiligheidsgevoelens*—and youth *overlast*—is a kind of

social script that brings people together through its non-controversial nature.[118] In this context, it is possible to conclude that talk about crime and *onveiligheidsgevoelens* is, at least in part, a discourse through which people complain about the limits of the social welfare state to ensure their personal freedoms, and express their desire for a more "livable" social world. The media still plays a role, to be sure, in creating the awareness that "people are afraid," and, in this climate, politicians capitalize on the contemporary discourse about "safety" because it allows them to promise to "do something" about "the crime problem" and "the youth problem," while simultaneously deflecting attention from other serious social problems. In a time when the Netherlands is increasingly troubled by growing ethnic diversity, fragmented neighborhoods, budget shortfalls, and the "graying" of the population, the "need to increase safety" strikes a resounding chord with almost everyone. "Preventing youth crime" sounds rather easy, in comparison to some of the other current challenges.

Feeling Safe and Unsafe in Amsterdam North

In national politics, there has been a great deal of attention spent on safety policy, increasing the amount of "blue [uniforms] on the street" ("*blauw op straat*"), reducing feelings of being unsafe, and stricter crime prevention measures—particularly with youth—but among residents the subject of safety was met with a variety of responses, a finding in line with Åkeström's study. Many adults reported that they felt perfectly safe in their neighborhoods, and felt that the political concern with safety was exaggerated by

[118] Theresa P.R. Caldeira's work on crime in Brazil is particularly notable for her analysis of the way in which talk of crime can also be productive, creating order through the act of narration: "[I]t reorganizes and resignifies not only the individual experience but also the social context in which it occurs . . . Narratives of crime . . . attempt to establish order in a universe that seems to have lost coherence" (2000, 20). Elijah Anderson (1990) also discusses how talk of crime works to solidify in-group feeling among middle-class residents in an urban neighborhood in Philadelphia, PA.

the media and by politicians, while other individuals were afraid to walk alone in the dark, especially past groups of youths. Perhaps unsurprisingly, those individuals who had personal relations with youths had little fear of them. Mieke and Hans, a couple in their sixties, have a long history of being active community leaders and volunteers, and believe that their participation has contributed to feeling safer in the neighborhood.

> Mieke: *I* feel perfectly safe here. Other people don't. But the statistics show that it isn't less safe, it's just that some people experience some things as threatening.
>
> Erin: You mean, it's their perception?
>
> Mieke: Yes, it's also a perception. Look at the IJplein (Smith Street area) problem. Those are sweet kids [who hang around there], and I know them all, and I know the worst one. I know him from [a long time ago]. But the whole situation is being blown out of proportion. Being made bigger than it is.
>
> Hans: That's an advantage [of volunteering in the neighborhood], that the kids know us from the parents' committee at school, and we know their parents too.

Others, having less personal contact with local youth and only a little contact with their neighbors, have a quite different perception of the neighborhood. This is especially so if they have felt threatened in the past, even from incidents occurring in a different neighborhood. Jana, a woman in her sixties, responded to my question "Why are adults afraid of youth?" with the following answer:

> Where I lived before, the outside storage area was broken into. My husband went in, saw a couple of boys—they didn't live there, had nothing to do with the space, and he said "Can I get in?" And then the boy said "What are you doing?" and my husband said "I live here, this is my storage space." And the next day we had a big scratch on our car, because he told them to leave.[119] I don't say anything because you don't know [what will happen]. Most people don't dare, maybe [the youth] will break your things or scratch your car. Youth have sworn at me. I stand here, I can talk to whomever I want. I talk to Helena (the most vocal complainer in the neighborhood, who has a long-standing conflict with some youths), and I get garbage thrown in my garden. I know who did it, but I have no proof. You have to watch out!

[119] It is a bit hard to believe that the youths, who, if as she claimed, didn't live there, knew which car belonged to them; the youths probably did live in the area, and were thus able to see which car they owned, or the car was scratched in some other way.

Drawing on her experiences in these two neighborhoods, Jana surmises that youth will retaliate if you speak to them, and she fears that any complaint she makes will result in reprisals.[120] Another older woman, Geertje, who is in her early seventies, said that she had been cursed at by one of the youths in the neighborhood one time "for no reason," which has caused her to avoid passing by the hang-out spot. She said that she had been walking by, and had heard some noise, and looked over at him, at which point he cursed at her. This experience has affected how she sees the other people who hang around at that spot, sometimes with that youth, and her overall willingness to go out at night.

> Geertje: I don't remember [what he said to me], it was three and a half years ago. But it was incomprehensible, I never did anything to him! I only looked around.[121] So then you get to despise such a youth. And then I began to see him, all the time busy with motorbikes, with all these other youth. They never said anything to me, but I still really despise them. And they're there during the day, and I don't walk past there at night. I don't feel safe, during the day it's fine, but not at night.
>
> Erin: During the summer, when it's still light, do you feel safe? Is it the darkness or the time of day?
>
> Geertje: Both. I mean, I rarely go out in the evening, anyway. I go to those community meetings, not so much because I have complaints like the others, but because sometimes the youths ride their motorbikes at 11:30 p.m. They're doing repairs and riding around until midnight, 12:30 a.m. But that's stopped, I haven't had any more complaints since our second meeting. I take the ferry, if I go to the city. I walk fast, and although it's not nice, but they—I prefer to take the ferry than walk past [the hang-out spot]. Those kids, I'm not strong, and if they wanted to hurt me, they could.
>
> Erin: Do you know other people who feel unsafe?

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[120] She may be right, of course, as "speaking to someone" appears to be considered overly intrusive by many; however, other examples of adult-youth interaction show that much depends on the manner in which one engages in such conversations.

[121] "Only looking around" can, of course, be interpreted as being nosy or projecting disapproval, a silent kind of interference.

> Geertje: I haven't heard specifically, but people say they take their bikes or cars because it's unsafe to walk. Then you can use the middle of the street, and stay away from the sides—that's where [the youth] mostly hang out. A hang-out spot! That sounds to crazy to me now. We didn't have that when I was growing up, we did things! We didn't have any money, we didn't have our own transportation. But we did things, we walked, or went outside the city. But that doesn't happen anymore. And that mentality, to not do anything at all—I find that so empty. But that's their way of doing things. For me it's very strange. I've heard so many things that I didn't know or never heard of at all.

Geertje's words illustrate a few important points: she feels weak ("I'm not strong"), she sees the youth as potentially violent ("If they wanted to hurt me, they could"), she relies on others' advice on how to keep safe (avoiding the sides of the street), and she cannot comprehend the hang-around behavior and "empty mentality" of local youths ("We did things!"). But to local youth, this adult's perceptions appear equally incomprehensible. At one community meeting, a youth in his early twenties, Klaas, made this statement, in response to the continuation of adult complaints after the youth had stopped playing soccer in the area, and to an adult's suggestion that the municipality provide an alternate hang-out spot for the local youth:

> I don't need anything else. There were complaints about the soccer, so we stopped playing soccer [at that spot], and then there were complaints about the hanging around. Now we're not even supposed to stand there. And we got fined for hanging around. That's why I am here [at this meeting]. We don't yell, swear, talk back. I am always polite. Adults have to do that for me, too. But for me, having these meetings is fine. I hear that some people are afraid of us. I come here, and I've never seen these people before. How can they be scared? Maybe they hear stories.

At another time, he repeated the claim that he had never seen the adults who were complaining about him: "There were older women at the meeting who I had never seen in my life. I thought, 'what are you doing here?' But, it seems they live right here and there (he points to nearby apartments)." He had never seen those adults before, he surmised, probably because: "Those people always sit home, inside. House mice (*thuismuis*) . . . It's just Dutch, I think. In Spain, Turkey, France, Greece . . . everyone is

outside. Here, always inside. People do get happier when the sun shines." While the weather can certainly account for the tendency to stay indoors, it hardly is a determining factor: adults still do not spend much time in outdoor public spaces in the summer months, while youth hang around outside even in inclement weather.

What Is Everyone So Afraid of?

Fear of Groups

The youths with whom I spoke were surprised to hear that some of their adult neighbors were frightened, and one suggested that the media and stereotypes about groups of youths had something to do with it:

> Adults have gotten scared of youth. Some people here also say they're scared. I say, "Of what? What have you seen that made you scared?" (He mimics a whiny reply:) "You're all in a group!" . . . You see it on TV, that they have a ban on groups congregating in the city. A friend of mine had that once, one time they were standing around in a group, having a cigarette. A police officer on a bike got off, and said, "You can't stand there." When he turned around, a junkie had stolen his bike (laughing). That is how the city is.

Sociological and psychological theories are often employed by police officers and other professionals to explain why youth hang around in groups. In my first conversation with Christiaan, a local, high-ranking police officer, he explained that when youths are in a group, they "feel bigger," and tend to show off to each other.[122] Norms and social pressures, he stated, are felt more when youths are alone; they can more easily shrug off the social pressure to act properly when in a group. Hanging around in groups is also a result, in part, of having a lower socio-economic background: such youth don't have money to join sports clubs and, because they aren't strong students, they don't have

[122] Interestingly, the presence of girls is thought to both improve boys' behavior (girls have a moderating, calming influence) and make it worse (boys compete with each other for girls' attentions); parents, social workers, and police officers held contradictory popular-social psychological theories about mixed-gender groups of youth.

homework to occupy them. These youth join groups, I was told, because they haven't developed their individual "character"; this is especially a problem because some youths can be a "bad influence" on the others.

The idea that groups of youth are perceived as threatening by adults was a kind of common wisdom among the social workers, police officers and policy makers with whom I spoke. Willem, a police officer and a "Neighborhood Director" in charge of youth issues, told me:

> *Hangjongeren* frequently appear unsafe—it's a little group, and a little group becomes stronger, and that creates a sense of being unsafe. Youth—people often feel unsafe around them. They make a ruckus, standing by each other, and people are scared to walk past. Through community meetings we try to show that it isn't all like that, that you can just talk to these youth.

It is interesting that many adults complain about the loss of neighborhood cohesion, seeing groups of youths as a threat—rather than seeing in them the very expression of neighborhood cohesion. One survey conducted in one of the neighborhoods of my field site showed that most children and young people feel very safe in the neighborhood, in part because they know most everyone on their street (Tudjman et al. 2003). A study by Lia Karsten, Els Kuiper, and Hennie Reubsaet notes that *onveiligheidsgevoelens* surveys focus on adults; the authors also cite a study from a different neighborhood in Amsterdam, De Baarsjes, that showed that many youth do not feel safe because of fights between youth and because boys were bothering girls (Karsten, Kuiper, and Reubsaet 2001, 112). While the findings of these reports stand in conflict with one another, the scarcity of research on this subject highlights the fact that little is known about how youth experience the public space in general, and that talk about "feelings of being unsafe" is overwhelmingly focused on adults.

Invasion

Elderly people's feelings of being unsafe were addressed, in one neighborhood, by the creation of a "Safety Day" at the local community center, led by the Neighborhood Police Director. As an invitation to attend this event, residents were sent a letter that began with the words "Preventing Break-ins" in a large size font. The text continued: "From research and the experience of the police in (the local neighborhoods), residential break-ins have increased by 141% from 2001 to 2002." After this frightening statistic, residents were informed that stolen bikes should be reported to the police, that theft out of cars has increased and that people should not leave things behind in their cars. People were invited to bring their questions, and told that they could ask for a prevention specialist to come to their house to help them make their houses safer. "A great deal of criminality is preventable," read the tagline, suggesting, however unintentionally, that victims of crime have themselves to blame.

The invitation letter was accompanied by a brochure: "Safe Living, Comfortable Living" (NPI n.d.) The brochure begins:

> Safe living. It should be obvious, but it isn't. Each year there are more than 100,000 break-ins. Maybe it's happened to you. And you probably know someone who's had that experience. Windows or doors vandalized. Treasured possessions, vanished just like that. But the worst is probably that a stranger has been in your house. Someone who snuffled around in your private domain, while you weren't home, or while you lay sleeping. Gone is your security. Gone is the feeling of being 'safe at home.' For a long time. Sometimes for good. That is a painful experience.

Residents are encouraged to ask their landlords to sign up for a "Safe House Certificate," or better yet, a "Safe Complex Certificate," and, if all improvements are made to the environment, including well-lighted streets, secure parking for bikes and cars, and maintained public spaces, the neighborhood can get the "Safe Environment Certificate."

The document appears quite official, as it bears the symbols for the National Police Corps, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Domestic Affairs and Relations, and the Organization of Insurers. Recalling the earlier discussion of the causes of fear, it is clear that some organizations, institutions and even individuals have a vested interest in fostering a certain level of fear; for private security companies, or those that "certify" safe places, generating fear works to generate business, for the police, a fearful public means greater budgetary allocations from the government and more latitude. In addition, a certain level of fear works to help the police do their job, because no matter how well funded or how much latitude they have, they still require citizens to be vigilant, to take preventive measures, and to see to their own safety. The title of another police brochure, specifically for senior citizens, illustrates this point, as it proclaims: "Also Working on Your Own Safety: That is wisdom!" (Politie 2002).

Parental Worries

Parents, like many police officers and professionals, typically view hanging around in groups as "normal" behavior, but parents tend to be, unsurprisingly, more afraid *for* their children than they are concerned about other adults' fears. One parent with teenagers, Marijke, explained to me that she often hosted her son and his friends inside her house: "They all hang out here, it doesn't matter. They come because they are welcome. Some parents won't allow that. Some want their kids out of the house. It makes me a little scared if they are out. I prefer that the kids go to someone else's house [rather than be out], but . . . (trails off)." In part her statement is a critique of other parents, who don't provide space for their children and their children's friends, but it also functions as a way of showing that her son and his friends are "good kids," who pose no danger. Instead, the

"real" danger is depicted as "out there"; she believes they are safer if they are in her home.

Parents also worry about their standing in the community; when adult neighbors called the police on the young son of Froukje, she was embarrassed and angry. She could not comprehend why someone with a complaint would not speak to her first, and was anxious that her son not be stereotyped as a "problem kid," even though, she readily admitted, he does get into mischief from time to time:

> What I mean is, the things that [my son] does, I did myself, as a kid. But people came and spoke to my parents—if you don't know, you can't do anything. I just saw something on TV that showed that what once used to be mischief is now considered criminal. We used to do all that, and adults would say, "Come now, calm down a little." But today people just say, "Oh they're criminals." This is a really big problem. Thirty years ago, kids did the same thing, but it wasn't considered such a problem . . . .
>
> I talk every day with my son, he knows I'm noticing what he does. Look, you can't keep kids inside all day, they've got to be able to go outside and spend their energy. Inside, there's only the computer or the television. When I was a kid, we played games. Now, I have a rule, dinner together, at the table, every night, and we talk about our days. That's really important. Nowadays, if father's not home until five and mother too, then shopping, cooking, cleaning, people don't have any time. And that's a big problem, earlier there was more *sociale controle*[123] in the neighborhood. We have one man here, he was one of the first residents here. He knows everything that goes on in the neighborhood, and he reprimands/corrects (*aanspreken*) the kids. If my kids do something, he comes to me to tell me. That's what it was like when I grew up—my mother knew everyone, and if I did something then my mother knew 5 minutes later. . . .
>
> And I think that people talk much too quickly about criminality. If my son steals something, then he's a criminal. But before, your mother had to come get you, get a slap on the wrist, and you had to apologize. But now you are immediately a criminal. Now, the kid is taken to the police bureau, and has to be there three hours before his mother comes. I think they've got to find another way to solve this.

For Froukje, the current focus on youth *overlast*, youth crime, and feelings of being unsafe pose a challenge to her ability to raise her son without interference from justice

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[123] *Sociale controle* means tight neighborhood bonds, and the collective disciplining and socialization of children; this concept is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Seven.

authorities; she is afraid that such interference might further isolate him and contribute to worse misbehavior. Froukje's perspective on the situation may also color her relations with other neighbors, allowing her to commiserate with other parents, but creating more distance between her and the neighbors who complain. Such complaints—whether about litter, youth noise, or adults' feeling unsafe—are, in a way, concerned with parents and parenting, as much as they are concerned with youth.

Anonymity, Aggression and Ethnic Difference

In the following conversation, another mother, Heinke, explains why people are have become so afraid of youths in general, linking the problem to a lack of knowledge about ethnic minorities, an increased level of anonymity in the neighborhood and excessive individualization in society. Heinke has two teenaged sons, and their father is of Surinamese descent; the boys have darker eyes, hair and skin. I began by asking her about the neighborhood, how long she had lived in the area, and whether she felt safe.

> Heinke: I lived before [in the eastern part of town]. When I was 12, 13, in the late 60s and in the 70s. That's when things were going so well here, and they brought in all the guestworkers. But where I lived, it was only White Dutch. That was a different atmosphere, more people on the street, even the parents, playing cards, sitting outside in the summer. [Then I moved to Amsterdam North, I've been here for many years now.] And the kids here have grown up together. I know the other women, parents in this neighborhood.
>
> Erin: Do you notice, in the last year since Pim Fortuyn, that more people "say what they think" and that more people feel unsafe? Why do you think they feel like that?

Heinke: I think it has to do with media. I heard yesterday that criminality has not gone up, but that aggression has, that people are more easily ready to fight, and now it's more common that people have knives, or pistols. Everywhere you go, people are walking around with knives. Before, it was only with fists, not like now. Here in IJplein, in broad daylight, I heard there was someone who threw a grenade into a car. I don't think that there is more criminality, but more aggression. In the winter, I go to the city center by bus, in the dark, but in the summer, I [walk through the neighborhood and] take the ferry. There are so many junkies on the ferry, so I feel very unsafe when it's dark, in the winter.[124] So I can understand that people are scared to cross the [neighborhood's main avenue] after 8 p.m. Lots of stuff happens on that street. So I understand that people feel unsafe. That also has to do with *sociale control*. This neighbor here doesn't know that one over there. Before, my mother could ask a neighbor to walk with her [if she felt unsafe], but people don't do that anymore.

(short pause while she pours more tea)

Erin: Do you think people are afraid of young people?

Heinke: Yeah, I think so. That's because they're often in groups hanging around, groups of seven or eight.

(Her narrative shifts from youth in general to ethnic difference and fear of ethnic minorities.)

And, what the Dutch government has done—(pause). Look, integration doesn't happen in only one direction. It has also to come from the native Dutch. So what happens is we know so little about those cultures—we know they've got the Sugar Feast ("*Suikerfeest*," or Eid) and Ramadan, and besides that, very little. And my own son, [he] has very dark eyes, and a long, narrow face. And if he puts on a Surinamese style cap and a puffy jacket, and he's standing and looking at you, you could become afraid thinking, "Why is he looking at me?"

And so if you see a group, and you've got to walk past, you think "How are they going to react to me?" And that comes because we know too little of the society, of the culture. And that's what the government really has to work on, they've got to make sure that integration happens both ways. In the 70s, there were problems with the Surinamese, the Antilleans, and now you don't hear anything [about them]. Take the Chinese—they came in the 1930s, they made their own

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[124] Some drug users take the free ferry from Amsterdam Center, traveling to squat houses and public parks where they can rest, and panhandling in front of the discount grocery store. Heinke, above, was the only person who mentioned being afraid of them; most other interviewees expressed little or no irritation with them. When one resident worried at a neighborhood meeting (separate from Smith Street) about "needles," the police officer in attendance objected strongly, stating that there hadn't been any needles found in the area "for a long time." Needles are, however, a persistent fear for some residents; one community leader objected to having the youth engage in a "neighborhood clean-up" for fear that they might find a stray needle and hurt themselves. A more commonly held fear was the amount of alcohol consumed by young people, particularly in the form of "Breezers" (Bacardi Breezers), a sweet carbonated drink that also has hard alcohol. The amount of youthful drinking appeared to be a greater concern, often reported on in the media, than other drugs.

> businesses, their own neighborhoods, and you never hear of any problems. They're very separate, they have their own world. That's great—but then you shouldn't say, the Dutch government doesn't do anything for us. It will get a lot better if people take steps to make sure we get to know other cultures, then White Dutch won't be afraid of Moroccan youth, who look a little different, their dark eyes, dark skin, people are afraid of that. I can imagine.
>
> Erin: Are people also afraid of White youth?
>
> Heinke: Yeah, if you see eight youths, you also don't want to walk by them.
>
> Erin: Do you think people were afraid of youth when you were 16?
>
> Heinke: No, I think it really is something new. It's got something to do with this time. If I look back, there were lots of us who hung out in the area, it was a mixed group, boys and girls, and that's ok. That doesn't seem bad. No one felt scared of us. Now if it's a group of boys, they're so aggressive! When I was young, I had respect for my parents, and also my neighbors. There's not that level of *sociale controle* anymore, and so people are scared.
>
> We don't know the youth, that's the biggest problem. They knew who we were when I was young. I think the fault lies with us adults, we could get to know them.

This conversation with Heinke shows the ways in which multiple factors affect people's perception of youth: growing anonymity, aggressiveness, lack of knowledge about ethnically different neighbors, changes in intergenerational relations. The problem with "hang-around youth," in this context, is not so much in the youth behavior itself, but in the insecurity, isolation, unfamiliarity, and over-individualization of adults: as this mother puts it, "We don't know the youth."

Conclusion: Presence and absence

Chapters Three and Four demonstrated that neither the presence of youth in public space nor adult anxieties about such are new phenomena in the Netherlands. Yet, within the parameters of the discussion of *onveiligheidsgevoelens*—in which new statistical measurements are established, new youth policies are created, and new policing strategies are implemented—these long-time tensions are made to seem radically different than

what has come before. Clearly, Dutch society has changed a great deal in the last decades; it had, however, changed a great deal in the decades preceding, as well, and in the decades before that. To ask: "What is different about youth today?" is perhaps less useful than asking the question "Why do adults react negatively to youth today?" I would argue that a confluence of social changes have affected what youth hanging around in public space has currently come to signify. The presence of these youths makes visible the increasing anonymity of society, in that many of their adult neighbors do not know them or each other. Their presence reveals high levels of individualization, as both adults and youth, each feel that they should be able to do as they wish, without interruption. Youths' appearance, largely adhering to a working class aesthetic, clearly displays to adults a growing differentiation by social class and material wealth. Groups of darker skinned youths standing around together are, as well, a visual reminder of an increasingly ethnically diverse population. Finally, the presence of these youths makes manifest the limited influence of the social welfare state in fully "civilizing" all of its citizens, ensuring livable spaces, and creating an egalitarian society.

But perhaps most of all, their presence makes visible adults' absence. In the Netherlands, many adults long for greater *sociale controle* (discussed in greater depth in Chapter Seven), but given the general absence of adults in neighborhood public space—in contrast to the public cultures of Mediterranean countries—such wishes for *sociale controle* remain only wishes. Of course, "spending time in public space" encompasses many different types of activities. Many adults do spend time—holding picnics, sitting on benches, and patronizing trendy cafés—in middle-class parks such as Vondelpark, at the wading pool and the playgrounds in Amsterdam North, and the shopping centers and

outdoor markets; it is inaccurate to say that adults are wholly absent from public space. But adults are much less visible in *neighborhood* public spaces, whether in the center of the city or in the quasi-suburbs of Amsterdam North. In thinking back on the working-class neighborhoods of their childhoods, many interviewees recollected that adults used to spend more time in public spaces, sitting and chatting on stoops, and setting up card tables on the sidewalks. One police officer attributed some of the change to the emergence of the two-income household: "Look, we are in a wholly different time, and lots of people, parents, they both work. What you used to see a lot was the mother, with the kids, in the park, all on the bench, with the kids playing on the grass. You see that less now, because both parents work." His explanation resonates with the oft-repeated observation that people today are simply too busy and too tired, one of the reasons given for adults' short-tempered responses to youth *overlast*.

It is difficult to discern the extent to which adult presence in neighborhood public spaces has declined, but it is interesting that so many interviewees—parents, adults with complaints, social workers, and police officers—remember a time when adults were less irritated, when they had more *sociale controle*, and, by extension, when they were more present. I believe the decline in neighborhood cohesion and *sociale controle* is attributable to many factors, including a more hectic pace of life, growing ethnic heterogeneity, and a largely consumerist orientation to the services of the welfare state. Perhaps most in understanding the withdrawal of adults from neighborhood public spaces, however, is the individualization that has developed since the 1960s. Now adults are insisting that "there are limits," but they are not sure who should be responsible for

setting or enforcing them. They remain withdrawn, out of fear, discomfort, uncertainty, and a tendency to delegate neighborly engagement to the social welfare state.

Adults' *onveiligheidsgevoelens* betray a desire for clean, ordered public space, an anxiety about the role of adults in society, a mourning of close-knit community, a fear about the parenting being done by others, and a disappointment in the social welfare state. Retreating behind closed doors, registering their fears through telephone calls to the police, it would appear that many adults doubt their ability to resolve problems on their own, or that they expect such resolution to be handled by the social welfare state. When adults abdicate interacting with youth, leaving it to professionals such as police officers and social workers, could that exacerbate their fear, making them feel less in control of their surroundings, and by extension less secure in the direction of society? The fear of youth in public space may, above all, stand for a larger fear that society is headed down the wrong track; adults' complaints about feeling unsafe are critiques of the government and pleas to get things back on course. In the next chapter, I examine another aspect of society that is thought to be on the wrong track: the lack of integration of ethnic minorities. Like the discourse of *onveiligheidsgevoelens*, talk about integration also registers a profound sense of unease about the present state of society. In both of these frameworks, the problem is located both in the deficiencies of the social welfare state and in the targeted groups—the youth and the ethnic minorities—rather than arising out of a complex of ideologies about personal freedom, the role of government, and the desired orderliness of the social world.

Chapter Six – The Politics of Ethnic Difference

Introduction

When visiting Amsterdam in December 2004, I had a striking, silent encounter with a young boy, probably of Moroccan descent, about 11 or 12 years old. I was seated on a tram, and gazing out the window at the passersby and the familiar buildings. As the tram stopped by the Nieuwe Kerk, just off of Dam Square, my eyes alighted upon this boy. I wondered if he was accompanied by the young woman in a headscarf, perhaps his older sister, who had just passed by my window. But he walked away from her, with a confident, bouncy stride, as if trying to look bigger and taller than he really was. His eyes caught mine, and he seemed to interpret my gaze as judging, intrusive, although I was not appraising him negatively. He angrily shrugged his shoulders and cast his arms out, away from his torso, as if to say: "What the hell are you looking at?" He glared at me; I looked away. But I could still see in my peripheral vision that he was agitated, and continuing to gesture at me. I looked back to him, wanting to reassure him that I had meant no harm, but I didn't know what I could do to convey that sentiment. Holding his arm down by his side, just as the tram slowly started to move forward again, he furtively flashed his middle finger at me. I felt my face flush red, not out of anger, but shame.

Why did I feel shame? Why was I embarrassed? In this small scene, in this everyday interaction, I was embarrassed because I believed that this boy thought I was just another White Dutch person who looked down upon him. The reasons why I thought this have to do both with the politics of ethnicity in the Netherlands today, and my social and ethnic location as a White American. At one level, this incident is emblematic of the larger ethnic tensions in the Netherlands. When I retold the story to White Dutch

acquaintances, some interrupted to remark that the boy was a "punk" or to shake their head in disapproval. The discrepancy between their reaction and my interpretation of the incident was telling: for me, the point of the story was that I felt badly that he had misinterpreted my gaze, assuming racism on my part. My White Dutch acquaintances, on the other hand, assumed that the story was about the insolent misbehavior of Moroccan boys. In this way, the incident highlights current tensions in the Netherlands: everyday interactions are often seen through an ethnic lens. I believed the boy assumed racism on my part, seeing in my gaze and skin color a negative appraisal; my acquaintances assumed that his aggression is derived from his ethnicity, rather than arising out of a reaction to racism, or of a larger pattern of rejecting the criticism or interference of others.

At another level, this incident is emblematic of the difficulties involved in studying ethnicity across cultures, for I don't actually know what the boy assumed, I only know what I assume the boy assumed. I imagined that he thought I was White Dutch, and read his behavior as a reaction to racism. My interpretation of his behavior was based on my own cultural baggage: by my experience of racial relations in the United States, by my consciousness of the privileges accorded me as a White person in America, by my discomfort with the privileges accorded me as a White American in the Netherlands. In that moment, I was ashamed because I imagined that I had added to his feelings of anger and estrangement, feelings with which I, as a White American, had little experience. From my perspective, how could he not have read my gaze as anything but judgmental, given the current political rhetoric about ethnicity, the negative discourses

about ethnic minorities, especially youth, and the growing demand that minorities "integrate"?

Situating Incidents

In this chapter, I try to describe how the politics of ethnicity have become increasingly extreme in recent years. My examination of the ways in which ethnic difference is discussed and understood, however, is necessarily a partial one. Each time I have come to revise this chapter, I have struggled over whether to include new material, to describe the most recent conflict; it seems that nearly every month, some new policy or speech or crime has enabled extremist politicians to further polarize ethnic relations. For example, just a few weeks before my interaction with the boy by the tram, television stations and newspapers were abuzz with the story of a visit by Rita Verdonk, the Minister for Integration and Immigration, to an imam; she extended her hand in greeting, television cameras rolling, knowing that he would refuse to shake a woman's hand (NRC 2004g). That story had its own context, coming just a few weeks after Theo van Gogh, the iconoclastic provocateur, filmmaker and columnist, known in recent years for publicly calling Muslims "goat fuckers" (*geitenneukers*), was murdered by a Dutch-born Islamic fundamentalist of Moroccan descent. In the weeks between Van Gogh's murder and Verdonk's visit, national and international papers were filled with stories about mosques being set ablaze, and churches firebombed in retaliation. Then, just a month after my encounter with the boy by the tram, a White Dutch woman killed a Moroccan boy after he stole her purse out of her car; she ran him down with her car as he rode away on a bike. In her defense, she stated she "only wanted to tap" him (NRC 2005d). Perhaps because he had a record of purse-snatching, or because his family defended him and said

he was not a criminal, or because of prevailing ideas about Moroccans and crime, her action was thought to be justified by many. One headline captured that sentiment: "'It's sickening. They're making a martyr of that boy.' Vigil for purse-snatcher leads to enraged reactions" (AD 2005b).

No bright line leads straightforwardly from these three incidents to my encounter with the boy, nor are they directly connected to the adult-youth conflicts over public space that I studied. As I noted in Chapter Two, my field research dealt principally with conflicts between White adults and White youth. One might ask, then, why is a discussion of the politics of ethnicity necessary? My answer is that it is incredibly difficult to talk about nearly any topic in the Netherlands today without addressing how ideas about ethnicity and difference shade that topic. The pervasive salience of ethnicity affects most current issues in Western Europe, as recently evident in the rioting in the *banlieus* of France. The incidents noted above, and many more like them, are relevant, for they together electrify the public political environment in the Netherlands, where so much is seen through a lens of ethnicity. Incidents do not stand alone; they are embedded in layers upon layers of outrage, exclusion, provocation, dismissal, doubt and fear, all of which feed off of and amplify each other, making it nearly impossible to isolate any one event from others.

It is also important to note how often ethnicity is presumed to be linked to the topic of "problem youth." When I interviewed White residents about conflicts with White youth in their neighborhoods, the conversations almost invariably turned to ethnicity. This default linkage between adult-youth conflicts and ethnicity was not limited my encounters at my field site; even today, when I speak with academics both in

the Netherlands and in the United States about my research, many initially assume that *hangjongeren* are necessarily ethnic minority youth. The perceived problem of *hangjongeren*, then, must be placed in relation to the current politics of ethnicity.

Situating Myself

Alongside the difficulty of capturing the complexity of indirect and presumed connections lays the challenge of talking about ethnicity across cultural contexts. Much of what appeared to me as overt and pervasive racism seemed insignificant to many of the people I interviewed. Their non-reactions forced me to ask: How much of my observations are attributable to having been raised in the United States, with its specific history of slavery and racism and civil rights struggles? To having studied the social construction of "race" and "Whiteness"? To having participated protests against police brutality in New York City? These experiences have certainly given me a particular perspective on ethnic relations and conflicts, one which perhaps is not easily translatable or transferable. When I raised concerns about racism and discrimination in the Netherlands, I was sometimes perceived as having an overdeveloped American sensitivity to racial issues. For example, when I suggested that "racial profiling" might explain, at least in part, why so many Moroccan boys were being picked up by the police in recent years, my comments were simply dismissed; I was told repeatedly that "the police just do their job." How much of my "sensitivity" is due to my American-ness? To my anthropological perspective? To my activism?

In part, I was more sensitive to inter-ethnic dynamics because I was perceived by many as White Dutch, and this misperception was often discomfiting. Because I am White and have blue eyes, I was sometimes considered "one of us" by people who

criticized immigrants and ethnic minorities. For example, when, in a café, the White owner looked over to me and rolled her eyes, to disparage a Moroccan patron, she expected me to smile in complicity with her displeasure at him. Similarly, I was sometimes perceived as "one of them" by people from ethnic minority groups, who assumed that I was Dutch. Being, actually, not truly "one of us" or "one of them," I had a heightened awareness of the ways in which Whiteness and Dutchness were assumed and employed in different situations. I was, of course, both "one of us" and "one of them" at some level because I was accorded the privileges of Whiteness, but my constant in-between-ness caused me to be considerably sensitive to matters of ethnic difference.

Discrimination and Anti-Muslim Sentiment

My perception of ethnic tensions and discrimination against ethnic minorities was not solely the product of my personal sensitivity, of course. There are many indicators of widespread discrimination and ethnic inequality; as discussed in Chapter Two, these patterns are not new. A report from the Central Bureau of Statistics, released in November 2003, stated that highly educated and less educated ethnic minorities have virtually the same level of unemployment; even among more highly educated ethnic minorities, unemployment is three times higher than among native Dutch (NRC 2003c). Informal research by one young man, who submitted two different résumés simultaneously to multiple part-time job openings, bore out similar results: as "Abdel" he was rejected, while as "Eric" he found interest (NRC 2003c). Such reports seem to have little impact, however, among many Whites from whom I heard the bitter complaint: "With *allochtonen*, the first thing they cry is 'discrimination!'"

Prejudice against some ethnic minorities, namely Moroccans and Turks, is often intertwined with a broader prejudice against Muslims. Research conducted at the request of the newspaper *de Volkskrant* showed that:

> Native Dutch rarely have contact with Muslims, do not wish to know anything about Islam, and about one-third of respondents think negatively about this population. Only 14 percent judge Muslims positively. One in six feel actually threatened (DV 2004i).

A few months later, the national Commission for Equal Treatment (*Commissie Gelijke Behandeling*) reported that it had received twice as many complaints about religious discrimination in the workplace in 2003 than it had in 2002 (NRC 2004j). Another study conducted in the beginning of 2005 showed that White Dutch are twice as negative about Islam as Spaniards and Italians; only 19 percent of those polled responded that they did not experience the presence of Muslims as threatening (DV 2005a). According to Human Rights First, 254 bias crimes against Muslims and immigrants were reported in 2003 in the Netherlands; in the month after the murder of Theo van Gogh, 174 attacks occurred (HRF 2005).

This chapter does not set out to prove the existence of anti-minority sentiment and discrimination, although I should mention that racism is strongly denied by many. I take as a given that such racism and discrimination exist; what is more illuminating, perhaps, is fleshing out the factors that contribute to today's charged environment. In particular, I wish to emphasize the importance of distinguishing between official political rhetoric and the multiple meanings of racial speech at the neighborhood level. These two, of course, resonate with one another, but they also have distinct qualities and dynamics. It is important to recognize the way in which politicians and public intellectuals have recently utilized extreme rhetoric in their efforts to reshape policy and gain power, but it is,

secondly, equally important to recognize the nuanced reactions to those efforts among many Dutch. In my neighborhood-based interviews, I found that people's reactions ranged from outright dismissal of such extremism, on the basis of racism or grandstanding, to lukewarm agreement that "something has to be done," typically tempered by caveats. I believe it is productive to think of the seeming surge in racist sentiment as partly a dual criticism of government: 1) displeasure with ethnic difference is a way of criticizing the state's inability to properly incorporate ethnic minorities, and 2) complaining about the benefits given to ethnic minorities is a way to voice displeasure with the state's inability to provide the quality of life to which many Whites feel entitled. As I argued in Chapter Two, I believe that some of the attraction of Pim Fortuyn and Theo van Gogh was that they were essentially outside the political establishment, and voiced tremendous criticisms of government. Before I continue, I should note that my attempt to nuance the contemporary politics of ethnicity is not intended to discount the very real, virulent racism that does exist; I wish merely to say that such racism has long existed, and that not all racist sentiments are meaningful solely at the level of race.

I believe that today's tensions are in part a result of public political rhetoric, and the lack of condemnation thereof, which have increased the acceptability of racist speech. Political rhetoric has become so extreme that in March of 2004 the National Intelligence and Security Agency (AIVD) issued a statement asking columnists and politicians to refrain from right-wing speech, indicating that such speech can increase feelings of isolation and exclusion among youth, and make Islamic fundamentalism more attractive. Without irony, one newspaper's headline read: "'Youth driven toward jihad'" (HP

2004a). Enduring so much publicly voiced racism, many ethnic minorities feel, justifiably, under attack and increasingly marginalized.

Today, ethnic tension in the Netherlands is palpable, so much so that the discourse of "the need for integration" spills over onto other issues, and seems to color just about everything in the public realm. Ethnic difference is being portrayed as a problem to be managed, rather than as a fact of plural society. In the following sections, I attempt to show how the politics of ethnicity have become increasingly more extreme, first by examining how racist and provocative speech appears to garner little condemnation by official bodies, then turning to the origins of the ideology that "multiculturalism has failed," and finally looking at the convergence of populist and "integrationist" politics.

On Politicians and Rap Musicians

In March of 2002, the leader of the Labor Party in Amsterdam, Rob Oudkerk, made headlines when he uttered the phrase "*kut marokkanen*" ("fucking Moroccans"[125]), which was caught on television. Oudkerk was chatting with Mayor Job Cohen after an election campaign event, and their conversation was broadcast by a program (*2Vandaag,* or "Channel 2 Today") on one of the national public television stations. Cohen asked Oudkerk whether he thought Pim Fortuyn, then a rising star in politics and an anti-immigrant populist from Rotterdam, could have garnered as many votes in Amsterdam. Oudkerk replied affirmatively: "We also have *kut marokkanen* here, too" (DV 2002a). The incident was widely reported; in the aftermath, Oudkerk apologized, while also defending himself: "without falling into stigmatizing, it must be able to be said that

[125] The literal translation is "cunt Moroccan," but the word "*kut*" is a bit more common and less shocking than "cunt" is in the United States; "fucking" in this way is a more equivalent translation.

'rotten boys of Moroccan-Amsterdammer background' cause a lot of annoyance on the streets."[126] In a later interview, Oudkerk claimed that he did not "slip" in using the term: "The term *kut Marokkanen* was not just a slip of the tongue, it is everyday Amsterdam-speak. It describes how people in this city think about a small group of people who pester the public" (AD 2002b).

The incident might have been completely forgotten (or at least by most public officials and journalists), until the words were used later that year in the title and lyrics of an infectious rap song, "Kutmarokkanen??!," created and performed by a Moroccan young man with the stage name of Raymzter (pronounced Rhyme-ster). The song became an instant hit, as did the video, which employed appositional images of windmills and mosques, and referenced the style of Delft blue and white pottery. In the opening sequence, young White Dutch women are turned away from the entrance to a nightclub; the bouncer says "Full is full, eh?!" These first few seconds of the video position the song within a landscape of racism and exclusion, deftly commenting on anti-immigration sentiment and everyday forms of discrimination. Many ethnic minority young men complain that they are consistently refused entry to nightclubs; in this video, White women are turned away. In addition, the bouncer's words appear to make reference to the common populist slogan "Full is full!"; this phrase is typically employed to speak about limiting immigration and restricting refugee policy.

Lyrically, the song critiques the way in which Moroccans are lumped together and stereotyped. In an interview, Raymzter explained, "Moroccans are often only seen in a

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[126] The phrase "able to be said" deserves a moment's consideration, as it seems to be linked to a larger concern with the restrictiveness of "politically correct" speech; the discourse about "being able to name" social problems will be explored in more depth later in this chapter.

negative light . . . If someone does something, then the whole population group is immediately criticized. I hope that this song makes people think more consciously before they say something" (AD 2002b).

> It's time to pay some attention to real problems, mathematically described,
> About what goes on for Moroccans here. Unjustly we are hated and feared.
> The papers play a role in it and so does TV,
> But I'm still surprised that you did it too
> I'm civil on the avenue, but, man, don't get me started talking
> Because I can't keep it in anymore
> What I say might sound simple,
> But they look at me as if I flew in the Twin Towers
> We came here as guest workers, on the down low pretty good hash dealers
> I still know what they used to call me then, even though I was smaller
> *Kut* Moroccan, that's what they said.

Refrain:

> When they talk about us, they defame us (*zwartmaken*, literally, "make black")
> We haven't done anything, but they still hate us anyway
> When they talk about us, they want to run us down
> It's time this changed, don't you realize? [127]

The song became a kind of anthem against racism in Dutch society, at least for Moroccans and other ethnic minorities. The catchy tune from the refrain was made, as with many songs, into a "ring tone" for mobile phones. Many Moroccan youths adopted this particular ring tone for their phones; on public transport, I witnessed youths receiving nasty looks from fellow travelers when the tune would spring into the air. To have such a ring tone became a kind of identity marker, one with a politically defiant posture. The song seemed to be the kind of pregnant popular culture artifact that could stimulate discussion and create controversy, as Public Enemy did in 1990 in the United States, with

[127] Het is nu tijd om wat aandacht te besteden aan actuele problemen mathematisch beschreven/ Over wat er onder Marokkanen hier leeft. Onterecht worden we gehaat en gevreesd./ De krant speelt er op in en met name tv maar dat jij er aan mee deed verbaast me nog steeds/ Ik ben aardig op dreef en als ik eenmaal begin ouwe moet niemand me stoppen want ik kan me niet meer inhouden./ Wat ik zeg klinkt misschien eenvoudig maar ze kijken me aan alsof ik vloog in de Twin Towers./ We kwamen hier als gastarbeiders; On the downlow wat goede hash-verspreiders./ Ik weet nog hoe ze me noemden vroeger, ik was wat kleiner; kutmarokkaan, dat is wat ze zeiden. Refrain: Ze willen ons zwartmaken als ze over ons praten/ We hebben ze niks gedaan en alsnog willen ze ons haten/ Ze willen ons zwartmaken als ze over ons praten/ Tijd dat dit verandert heb je dat niet in de gaten?

their rap "Fight the Power." That song served as a kind of revolutionary anthem for many, highlighting racism in American music, movies, and history:

> Fight the power! We got to fight the powers that be!
> Elvis was a hero to most--But he never meant shit to me, you see
> Straight up racist that sucker was--Simple and plain
> Mother, fuck him and John Wayne
> Cause I'm Black and I'm proud--I'm ready and hyped plus I'm amped
> Most of my heroes don't appear on no stamps
> Sample a look back, you look and find nothing but rednecks
> For 400 years if you check.

Like Public Enemy's overtly political raps, Raymzter's song speaks to long histories of inequality and racism:

> Shit, it ruins my day when I walk past a woman and she hides her bag
> But my dad had it much worse, he was a Berber,
> a guest [worker] from the mountains
> But I was born here and you can take it from me,
> That you give me dirty looks behind my back,
> But respectable ones to my face.

In the weeks after the song was released Raymzter was interviewed on national television programs, sometimes in conjunction with Rob Oudkerk, and he became one of the video-jocks for the Dutch hip-hop hour on music television. Yet, as far as I could observe, the song seemed to really only have lasting impact with ethnic minority youth, in contrast with the large following of White American youths garnered by Public Enemy. I did not hear Raymzter's song played in the youth centers frequented by White youth; some Whites told me they found the attention to the song excessive, ridiculous. Instead of sparking discussion about discrimination, the initial momentum of the song appeared to come to rest as another manifestation of ethnic division in the Netherlands.

Moroccan Boys

There was a wide consensus among many of the White people whom I interviewed that Moroccan youths have, in contrast to Raymzter's lyrics, "done something wrong."[128] During the first few months of my research, it became clear that "Moroccan boys" had become a kind of commonly understood signifier, invoking a set of ideas about difference and danger. When telling White adults that I was also visiting the predominantly Moroccan youth center as part of my research, many advised me to be careful, because "Moroccans do not treat women with respect." People reasoned to me that the Dutch have been able to get along with people from all different nationalities, from all around the world, but because there were so many problems with Moroccan youth, the problem must lie within Moroccan culture. Stereotypes about Moroccan boys were frequently repeated to me, centering on themes of the boys' aggressiveness, lack of self-control, ubiquitous knife violence, verbal abuse, and lack of respect for others, especially women. I was told many times that Moroccan boys cause problems at public pools because they "just don't know how to behave properly with girls."

One story in particular was invoked over and over again, almost as a kind of "proof," when people tried to explain to me about Moroccan boys. In 1998, there was a series of conflicts between White police officers and Moroccan youths in a borough called Old West. These conflicts escalated into a violent incident in which youths threw stones and bottles at the police, and the police responded, in riot gear, with tear gas. The

[128] In Amsterdam, prejudicial and stereotypical remarks against Moroccans were predominant in my research area; in other municipalities, Turks and Antilleans receive the brunt of negative attention. In decades past, Surinamese were popularly perceived as the biggest problem group. In this section, I write mostly about Moroccans, for that is the group most prominent both in the media and in the minds of those I interviewed; negative perceptions about different ethnic minority groups vary from place to place and over time.

events shocked many Amsterdammers, and that neighborhood acquired a negative reputation as a problem area, one that lingers to this day. The city government commissioned an investigation into the events, in an attempt to understand how the situation got out of hand (COT 1998). Both the resulting report and explanations given me by youths who had lived in the area at the time situate the incident in a longer context of many months of increasing tension between the police and the youth. The youth center had been shut down, residents were complaining about youth *overlast*, and the police were monitoring the youth in ways that the youth found heavy-handed. While few people who were cognizant of the increasing tensions would have been surprised by the clash, most of the general public was shocked by the story, covered for days in the news. While the Moroccan youths with whom I spoke saw this incident as an example of the way in which White police order them around in "their own neighborhood," and saw the news coverage as an example of stigmatizing media hype, many White adults employed it to describe the aggressiveness and out-of-control nature of Moroccan boys.

Both during the field research and since my return to the States, I have observed the emergence of a kind of meta-narrative about the "problem with Moroccans" and other ethnic minority youth. Reading the major daily newspapers, one finds headlines such as "Migrant children receive less love: Vocational school teacher Okcuoglu explains why *allochtoon* students cause so much trouble" (DV 2004h), "Students still look upon homosexuals as strange; problems greatest by *allochtonen*" (HP 2003f), "Soccer club refuses to allow *allochtoon* youth to join, unless parents actively participate" (DV 2003c), and "City borough government wants a family coach for *allochtonen*" (DT 2005). As discussed in Chapter Three, the newspapers have also periodically been filled with stories

about young "train terrorists" and youth who "drive out" residents from their homes. Such news coverage demonstrates that anxiety about youth and anxiety about ethnic difference intersect in powerful ways.

Less than ten years before the politician Rob Oudkerk uttered the words "*kut Marokkanen*," a famous White soccer player, Jan Wouters, did the same. In the middle of a match, Wouters swore at one of his opponents, Yassine Abdellaoui, saying: "*Kut* Moroccan, go back to your own country." At that time, his utterance provoked a flurry of criticism, from his coach to the anti-racism organization "The Netherlands Means Color" (*Nederland Betekent Kleur*), and Wouters apologized immediately. He and his opponent even appeared on an anti-racism poster shortly thereafter (HP 1995). Yet, only a few years later, a prominent Labor Party politician speaks those same words but loses little face.[129] Why did Oudkerk not face the same degree of public outcry? How has it become more acceptable in recent years to use ethnic slurs, and how is such speech rationalized? The next section explores how concerns with combating racism have been overshadowed by a "realist" discourse about "naming the problem."

The "Failure of Multiculturalism" and the Death of "Political Correctness"

In early 2000, an article entitled "The Multicultural Drama" appeared in the one of the nation's most respected newspapers, *NRC Handelsblad*, sparking an intense public debate about "multiculturalism" and "integration," and their conflicting approaches to social policy concerning *allochtonen* (Scheffer 2000a).[130] The article was authored by Paul

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[129] Oudkerk was eventually forced to resign, after it was publicized that he used governmental computers to look at pornography and that he visited illegal prostitution areas (*tippelzones*).

[130] I should note that Frits Bolkestein, former leader of the VVD party, had voiced arguments similar to Scheffer in the early 1990s, which were, at the time, largely seen as racist and were strongly criticized. This turnabout was reported on in the newspaper article, "Bolkestein was calling out in the desert: European Commissioner said more than 10 years ago that integration had failed" (DV 2003a).

Scheffer, who now tours internationally giving talks about this topic; he has worked previously as a journalist in Paris and Warsaw, been a commentator for *NRC Handelsblad*, and taught modern history at the University of Amsterdam and Groningen. In this piece, he argued that multiculturalist approaches to ethnic difference have led to the creation of an ethnic underclass. Referencing American neo-conservative Norman Podheretz, he argued that immigration entails a "brutal bargain," meaning the sacrifice of one's previous ethnicity.[131] Rather than "celebrating diversity" and permitting the existence of majority-*allochtoon* schools and neighborhoods, he maintained that the Dutch government should create a strict program for integration, and insist that *allochtonen* learn Dutch history and language. For weeks following the appearance of Scheffer's article, responses from prominent scholars and politicians were published. The impact of the article has been long lived; until 2005, *NRC Handelsblad* kept a free-access dossier on its website containing the original article, the responses to it, news articles about the political debates that made use of Scheffer's piece, and public discussion. (Today, access to the archives is limited to paying customers.) The phrase "multicultural drama" has become a common, short-hand way to reference this issue, and often is used in discussions about *allochtonen*. Because this article, and the debate that it catalyzed, were and continue to be so important in the landscape of ethnic politics in the Netherlands, this section provides an overview of the main points of Scheffer's piece. While his article was criticized by many at the time for being too nationalistic, inaccurate, and shrill, his framing of the problem has become the dominant way in which ethnic

[131] I am grateful to Marnie Bjornson for highlighting this intellectual genealogy to me.

difference is approached today in the political realm. Currently, the "need for integration" is a largely uncontested idea.

The article opens up by sardonically suggesting that the police department will soon have recruitment posters that say, "The turban fits us all," making reference to a proposal to allow ethnic minority officers to choose to wear a headscarf or turban instead of a cap.[132] The controversy around the wearing of such items has been a hot-button issue in the Netherlands just as in Germany and France, and continues to escalate: in the spring of 2003, some Muslim girls attempted to attend classes wearing the full veil, and were suspended from school. Any proposal to allow the headscarf or turban, Scheffer argues, demonstrates the "uncertainty" in the Netherlands that is created by the "presence of more and more migrants." He suggests that while such a proposal is well intentioned, people should question whether the "nurturing of identity goes together well with goal of emancipation."[133] In the Dutch context, the word "*emancipatie*" is used in the same way that "women's liberation" was used in the feminist movements of the 1960s, to indicate the process of participating equally in society. *Allochtoon* women are, in particular, thought to need emancipation, and their emancipation is seen as an "integration" strategy.

Scheffer states that social inequality has been largely erased (quite an assertion!), but now a more "poisonous division" has come to exist in the form of an ethnic underclass, complete with unemployment, poverty, early school leaving, and

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[132] Of course, this image stimulates the anxiety of a not-insignificant number of Whites who fear that somehow Islamic law and foreign customs will be imposed upon them.

[133] The word retains, in some ways, patriarchal overtones, as it references the prior state of being un-emancipated, or subject to an authority.

criminality.[134] He frames the situation of ethnic minorities along the lines of a "clash of civilizations," where cultures are incommensurable, and where migrants *must* "integrate"; not forcing people to integrate has led, in his view, to an underclass. Citing the 1999 Report on Minorities published by the Social and Cultural Planning Office, Scheffer states that the position of minorities in the labor market and in education is troubling, and that *allochtoon* children have a noticeable deficiency in cognitive development and language ability. Reciting statistics about the number of *allochtonen* in Nederland, he tells us that about 12 percent of the population will be *allochtonen* by 2015. He clarifies the term for the reader, to make sure we know which groups are the problem: "So then we're talking about countries of origin such as Turkey, Morocco, Suriname and the Antilles, and not about America or Sweden." He continues, stating that by 2015 more than half of the population in the large cities will also be *allochtonen*: "No one can find this a comforting idea. Because it is clear that such an extremely fast demographic change poses a huge adjustment problem." Listing different sectors, such as education, housing, justice, and healthcare, he draws a picture of an extremely taxed welfare state.

Comparing multiculturalists with those who called for neutrality in the lead-up to World War II, he argues that it is irresponsible to not act. The current situation is not comparable to the earlier co-existence of different groups under pillarization, for those groups all shared the same language and history. He writes: "Comparisons with pillarization don't work. Segregation in education in the form of black (ethnic minority)

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[134] Interestingly, housing conditions are not included in this description of the problem, even though many ethnic minorities live in subsidized housing areas inhabited mostly by other minorities. In his response to his critics, a few months later, he does write that in addition to controlling immigration and integrating ethnic minority children through the school system, ethnic minorities should be "dispersed" throughout residential neighborhoods (Scheffer 2000b).

schools is naturally of an entirely different order than the distinction between public and special schools." Interestingly, Scheffer does not detail the specific problems presented by such schools, and simply moves on to discuss the problem of Islam; this is one way in which the issue of ethnicity ("black" schools) is conflated with religion (Islamic schools). Citing the fact that approximately one million people in the Netherlands will be Muslim in the near future, he suggests that this religious difference is far greater than any difference between Christian religions. The situation, according to Scheffer is that "there are cultural differences that are simply not amenable to the politics of accommodation."

Scheffer notes that the feelings of resentment and isolation found within *allochtonen* communities have to be recognized; he then couples this statement with a quick wordplay, claiming that many of the so-called victims turn out to make their careers as perpetrators. He states that the claim by multiculturalists that integration will just take time has not been confirmed, and that problems are actually getting worse. Criticizing the "apologists for diversity" who "are not interested" in the growing anonymity of urban centers, he writes: "The fear of Moroccan youth in a city like Amsterdam is now proverbial." The multicultural society, in which people are encouraged to retain their cultural identities and in which programs such as bilingual education are encouraged, has proven to be "a house of cards."

Critiquing tolerance as antithetical to integration, he argues that it results in a "distant" and "neglectful" society. He then links this "lazy" multiculturalism to passivity in articulating what constitutes Dutch society: "we say too little about our own limits, don't nurture a relationship to our own past, and treat our language in a nonchalant manner . . . A majority that denies being a majority is not prepared for the harshness of

integration, which always means the loss of individual traditions." Scheffer offers some specific remedies for education policy: halt the education of students in non-Dutch languages; mandate that students only speak Dutch to each other while at school; and spread out *allochtonen* students to reflect city demographics. These are necessary because it is a "pious lie" to act as if integration can occur with the retention of one's ethnic identity. Scheffer concludes that the presence of *allochtonen* is not only a drain on state resources, but one that sets back the modernization progress made in the Netherlands. To make this argument, he quotes the Dutch sociologist J.A.A. van Doorn: "the presence of *allochtonen*, from an evolutionary perspective, has set back the clock of Dutch history fifty years or more."

As mentioned above, this article was criticized by many when first published, but the broad strokes of its arguments are now widely accepted. Alongside the change in reactions to the slur "*kut marokkaan*" by Wouters and Oudkerk, it would appear that negative ethnic generalizations have become more acceptable, or at least less heavily contested. In Scheffer's call for a strict integration program, we can see that his vision of integration closely mirrors the idea of assimilation. This is an integration in which the government needs to take a more active role, where certain ethnic differences are not only defined as backward, but as a threat to the progress of society. Characterizing multiculturalism as leading to both the oppression of minorities and the weakening of Dutch culture, his framing of the problem also served as a more acceptable way to express already existing anti-minority sentiment.

An important piece of this shift is the negative characterization of "political correctness," (*politiek-correctheid*) and its perceived limit on the freedom of expression.

In the United States in the 1980s, at universities in particular, there was a great deal of attention to the politics of language use, an effort to increase awareness of the workings of power, an assertion of the value of "identity," and a flourishing of critiques of literary and historical "canons." Diverse theoretical strands arising from work done by feminists, post-structuralists, and others helped shape various campaigns: changing linguistic practices (e.g. "chairperson" instead of "chairman"), revising core curricula, pressures to hire women and minorities as faculty, and using consensus governance in social change groups. Under the banner of "multiculturalism," some in the Netherlands, as in the United States, proposed policies that had an affinity with these developments, such as the incorporation of bi-lingual education for non-native language speakers. While the term "political correctness" is thought by those on the left to have been used by progressives in the 1980s in a joking self-critical fashion, it is believed by conservatives to have been part of an organized, radical movement to remake American politics. No matter its origins, it quickly gained a strong negative valence by the early 1990s, as conservatives sought to counter changes in academia, a movement perhaps most notably associated with Dinesh D'Souza's work, *Illiberal Education: The Politics of Race and Sex on Campus* (1991).

In my view, the pejorative use of "political correctness" serves to reduce the nuanced intent and theoretical richness underlying arguments about the importance of language and representation to a simple caricature. If one believes that the world is socially constructed, it follows that language is a powerful tool in the making of that reality, and deserving of conscious consideration of its implications. Instead, those who characterize this theoretical view as "political correctness" invoke censorship. Imagine if

the term had been envisioned as "political awareness," invoking one's agency and one's responsibility to be aware of power dynamics and the importance of language. The term "correctness," instead, suggests that one is hampered and therefore cannot be truthful; similarly, it suggests that criticisms are based on the appearance of things—like labels—rather than their essence. Someone who rejects political correctness, then, is framed as an honest person, a realist and a truth-sayer, rather than someone who is committed to an ideological "correctness."

In the Netherlands, this use of "political correctness" as a term of derision and dismissal has been extremely influential, especially in the way it has been taken up as a means to defend speech that probably would have been condemned only a decade ago. We can see, in the recent global controversy over the soliciting and publishing of political cartoons of Mohammed by a Danish newspaper, that "protecting free speech" has become a widely used justification for making provocative, divisive statements. What emerges from such controversies is that such provocations are excellent fodder for all sorts of political campaigns: the condemnation of such cartoons leads some to vociferously defend "our" Western values and to demand that "they" be taught a lesson; the easy dismissal of protests against such cartoons only help the work of radicals who hope to create more division between all Muslims and "the West."

To criticize Rob Oudkerk today for using the phrase "*kut marokkaan*" is to align yourself with political correctness; after all, it would be reasoned, "realists" all know that many Moroccan boys are a problem, "realists" aren't hampered in stating the truth. Employing stereotypes like this only reflects reality, according to this logic, and plays no role in perpetuating the image that such boys are a problem. Baukje Prins, professor of

Social Philosophy and editor of *Migrantenstudies: Journal of Migration and Ethnic Studies*, has recently published an accounting of this "new realism," in her book: *Voorbij de Onschuld: Het debat over de multiculturele samenleving* (*The End of Innocence: The debate over the multicultural society*) (2000). In the introduction, she writes: "Realists in contrast (to those concerned with power and language) regard language as a neutral instrument, a means to talk about reality, to make problems say-able (*bespreekbaar*), so that they can be controlled and solved" (Prins 2000, 14).

This idea of the "say-ableness" of problems is an important link. As politicians and columnists have tried to legitimize neo-conservative views, particularly in regard to "integrating" ethnic minorities, with the argument that "we need to be able to name the problem," issues of ethnic difference have become increasingly politicized. Although respected scholars argue that integration takes time, even multiple generations (Lucassen and Penninx 1997), realists insist that it is obvious that "multiculturalism has failed." What I find most interesting in the "realists'" framing of "the problem" is the fact that White Dutch are absent in the equation, save for their role in creating "politically correct," weak policy (*knuffelbeleid*, or "hugging policies").[135] "The problem" in this view is not racism, discrimination on the job market, or the limited representation of ethnic minorities in government, high-level corporate positions, and academia. "The problem" is not wide—even growing—income differentials. "The problem" is not rooted in histories of colonialism, post-colonialism, and the recruitment of foreign manual laborers. "The problem" is the ethnic difference itself. Criminal and irritating behavior

[135] This coupling of weakness with political correctness, in opposition to a logical, hard-headed realism, calls forth stereotypical notions about masculinity (rational, hard) and femininity (emotional, soft), and serves to further diminish those who would critique realist argumentation.

among ethnic minority youth is thought to derive from culture, rather than being attributed to the social, educational, occupational and political marginalization of minority youth, to their being relatively poor with few real prospects. In contrast, of course, criminal and irritating behavior among White youth is not attributed to being White. "The problem" seems to reside within the ethnic minorities themselves, rather than arising from the interrelationships of groups and classes, from the uneven playing field, even from the possibility of process, of change over time. The "realist" characterization of the failure of multiculturalism is a profound example of "cultural fundamentalism" (Stolcke 1999), the characterization of cultures as immutable and cultural differences as insurmountable. This is clear to see in Scheffer's own words: "there are cultural differences that are simply not amenable to the politics of accommodation" (Scheffer 2000a). While those words generated significant disagreement among public intellectuals when first published, they are countered with little resistance in the public political sphere today.

How did this change come about? I would argue that there has been a convergence of multiple factors, beginning with the deprecation of multiculturalist policy approaches as mere "political correctness," a political strategy that frames "realist" policy as pragmatic, sensible, and necessary. The rise of the realist discourse must be placed alongside, and seen as resonating against, the rise of populism and anti-immigrant sentiment under Pim Fortuyn. Fortuyn, as discussed further below, capitalized upon the larger frustration with the limits of social welfare state as well as a feeling of entitlement to the resources being allocated to immigrants, asylum seekers, and ethnic minorities. This real and apparent anti-immigrant populism must itself be situated in an international

context, alongside, especially, Jörg Haider of Austria, Filip Dewinter of Belgium, and Jean-Marie Le Pen in France. The international wave of anti-immigrant political movements is buttressed, in turn, by a larger neo-conservative discourse about the "clash of cultures," and the global specter of Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism as a hidden but omnipresent threat. This chapter, of course, cannot adequately address all of these factors; the following section will consider only with the particularly Dutch context of the impact of Pim Fortuyn and the rise of "integrationist" politics in the Netherlands.

Pim Fortuyn, Populism and Integration Policy

In my interviews, what was most noticeable when talk turned to matters of ethnicity was the high level of frustration voiced by many Whites. Two somewhat contradictory themes often arose. People would claim that the Dutch government had done too little to make immigrants and ethnic minorities integrate; this was most frequently spoken about in terms of language, as people told me in incredulous tones about neighbors who have lived in the Netherlands for decades and "who still don't speak Dutch." On the other hand, often within the same interview, people would claim that the Dutch government had given too many preferences to immigrants and ethnic minorities, essentially discriminating against Whites. In both claims, there was often a sense of urgency, the feeling that opportunities to "get it right" had been lost, and that drastic changes needed to be made, to get the country back on track. Very few people with whom I spoke could be characterized as simply racist; there remained, however, an insistence that the "problem with integration" was attributable to governmental policy and, sometimes, a lack of desire on the part of ethnic minorities themselves. The notion of systematic and everyday discrimination was hotly contested.

To help situate the rise of Pim Fortuyn, I have provided the lengthy excerpt below. It comes from an interview that I had with an elderly woman who was born in the early 1930s, quit school in her early teens, and held working class jobs all her life. She treated our interviews rather formally, wearing a somber dress and serving me tea in a delicate cup; she kept her home impeccably tidy, and, rather than stubbing out her cigarettes, she placed them in a small brass cone which served to snuff them out. She spoke the following words without interruption, except for pausing near the end to remark, rather nervously, "I shouldn't really be talking like this." She was afraid, I believe, to appear a racist. I responded that I wanted to hear what she really thought, and that since I had only been visiting the Netherlands since 1999, I did not really have much historical experience and appreciated her perspective. After this response, she continued on, without appearing to censor herself.

Just prior to this excerpt, which was about an hour into our conversation, we had been talking about neighborhoods. She had been speaking about how increased neighborhood heterogeneity leads to a loss in social cohesion, and gave an example of how things changed when office workers moved into a neighborhood previously inhabited only by shipyard workers. Then, suddenly, she began talking about immigrants and ethnic minorities:

> I've got nothing against foreigners. People are people. But the government has put all these people from the same country into the same area. When I lived in Old West, at one point a Turkish family came, and then there were always babies, so there were 12 kids and four adults. So the people who lived beneath them had a lot of *last* (nuisance[136]), and there were bicycles and everything on the stairs. The neighbors couldn't reach their apartment in the normal manner, so they asked, "Can't you do it differently? (*Kan je niet het anders doen*?)

[136] See Chapter Three for an in-depth explanation of the terms *last* and *overlast*.

> At first [the Turks] didn't understand. So they asked again, and eventually there was fighting between them, and so the people below moved out, and one of the Turkish families from that apartment above moved below. And in each of these apartments came a second family, so there were four families in two apartments, and more and more kids. And the people below them had tremendous *last*, from all the noise, and they moved out. So the people got that apartment too. On the first floor, there was an old woman, she had lived there 30 years and it was perfect for her, she didn't need assistance from anyone. And then [the Turks] began bothering her, leaving garbage in front of the door. So she fled to an old people's home.

There is an interesting contradiction here in relation her previous comment about the supposed desirability of homogenous neighborhoods. The Dutch government is faulted for putting "all these people from the same country into the same area"; it would appear that homogeneity is less desirable if all the residents are ethnic minorities. I would also like to point out that the onus quickly shifted from the Dutch government's role in housing policy to the actions of ethnic minorities who end up creating disorder and "invading" the neighborhood.

> So they got her apartment too. The women always knew—only the men worked—when a new apartment opened up. So eventually there was a whole side of the street that was all Turks. And the other side there was a Moroccan family, and I've heard that it has gone in the same way. They take over a whole neighborhood. I've lived in East Amsterdam before, it was beautiful. It's now Turkey. And I went there a while back to see my dentist, and now it's all Turkish stores. You can't see hardly any Dutch stores there.
>
> One time, I went there, I wanted to get some fruit. There were women with headscarves on and they had their backs to me. The pears I wanted were over there, and as soon as I reached there, the women closed in, my arm was between them. I couldn't get the fruit. I didn't feel like a fight, so I pulled my arm back and I left. But it is my country, my city, my former, fine neighborhood where I had lived a long time—and I can't buy anything! (She became visibly emotional at this point, and raised her voice slightly.) Those are things—this is how Pim Fortuyn gets a political opportunity—people don't want this anymore.
>
> [In the past,] We had to be tolerant. That's how it was through the government, the municipalities, and the Netherlands was very tolerant. Now, if you say anything [against ethnic minorities], the first thing you hear is "discrimination," but who's discriminated against? We are! We can't get a residence, but foreigners have the shortest time getting housing.

> Before, after the war (World War II), Dutch were advised to move, to emigrate because the country was full. They left for America, Canada, New Zealand. Most did well, but they still left their country. And they had to learn the language, and find work.
>
> Then we were told to have fewer children, and then came TVs, with antennas on the roof, and that wasn't pretty, so we all got the central antenna system. Then the Indonesians had to come here, they had helped us, that made sense. But there weren't residences for the Dutch—they were set back on the waiting lists. Some lived in refurbished chicken coops. Then we got Hungarian refugees, that was right, they needed it. But they were higher up on the waiting lists. And then we got the guestworkers, with the Spanish and Italians. That went great, they came for a number of years, then went back to their own countries.[137]
>
> Then we got the Turks, and they brought their families. Now these people can have as many children as they want. They can put satellite dishes up, while we couldn't put up antennas![138] So you see, people get angry. Not because it is a Turk or Moroccan, but because Dutch people were set aside and still are, for the others. Now in your own neighborhood, you can't buy your things there, they are all Turkish. So it's not only the youth, the whole society has changed, all that has been permitted . . .
>
> They provide for all these other people, and forget that the Dutch are here. It's not our country any more, and that's difficult. And so you get extreme right groups. It's not good. I would never vote for such a party, but that's how they come about . . .

I have reproduced this excerpt at length because I believe it makes visible the palpable frustration felt by many Whites toward the social welfare state and their sense of being limited in their personal freedom; while these sentiments intersect with anti-minority feeling, it is not wholly generated out of racist attitudes. It is certainly true that the ethnic makeup of the Netherlands has changed a great deal in the last half century, an evolution mirrored throughout Western Europe, and in many other states. Neighborhoods do not

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[137] This is true only in part: compared with the other guestworkers, Italians and Spaniards did return migrate in much higher numbers. As of 1999, however, there still remained more than 145,000 "Southern Europeans" in the Netherlands (Vermeulen and Penninx 2000, 12). The different patterns for various immigrant groups are discussed in depth in Chapter Two.

[138] I do not know whether this was an official governmental policy, or a rule set by housing corporations over the buildings that they owned. Today, however, the presence of large numbers of satellite dishes is seen to indicate the presence of ethnic minorities; for some, satellite dishes have come to represent a refusal to integrate, learn Dutch, and watch Dutch television.

look the same, stores sell different products, and satellite dishes carry shows from far away places into ethnic minority homes. What is interesting, and most relevant to this study, is the way in which these changes are approached, both in terms of political speech and public policy.

"I Say What I Think": The populism of Pim Fortuyn

Pim Fortuyn was the leader of an upstart political party, the Lijst Pim Fortuyn (LPF, or the Pim Fortuyn Slate), formed in the fall of 2001.[139] A charismatic and flamboyant man, Fortuyn turned the typically staid Dutch political season into a media circus, and his party—filled with people without any prior experience in government—was poised to become a powerful, perhaps even dominant, player in the May 2002 elections. While some, as a form of criticism, compared him to Austria's Jörg Haider, his populist rhetoric, like Haider's, galvanized many others to support him. He was able to artfully link prejudices against ethnic others with criticisms of establishment politics. Using slogans like "The Netherlands is full!" Fortuyn was able to paint the state as simply unable to take in any more people, whether they were asylum seekers or immigrants, due to both economic strain and the need to "adjust" to the ethnic minorities already resident. Fortuyn, of course, did not create anti-minority sentiment in the Netherlands, but as a former sociology professor and Marxist, his views were inoculated against a certain range of criticism. Notoriously anti-Islam, Fortuyn published a book entitled *Against the Islamicization of Our Culture* (1997). His nationalistic and anti-Muslim views came together quite easily: "It's not very smart to make the problems bigger by letting in

[139] Fortuyn entered electoral politics first as a member of the "Liveable Netherlands" (*Leefbaar Nederland*) party, but was pressured to leave after straying from their official platform and after becoming primarily associated with anti-immigration policy.

millions more immigrants from rural Muslim cultures that don't assimilate. This country is bursting. I think 16 million people are quite enough" (CNN 2002).

Fortuyn was also openly, even spectacularly, gay; his homosexuality was often invoked in a way to defend him from the charge of being a bigot. In calling Islam backwards (*achterlijk*),[140] particularly in regard to homosexuality, Fortuyn was able to portray himself as a defender of Enlightenment values and the tolerant society. Similar to those who defend publishing cartoons of Mohammed, clearly offensive to whole religious groups, with the argument that Islamic intolerance for critique has no place in the West, Fortuyn argued that "we" must not tolerate intolerance.[141] Although homosexuals have been defined by the Vatican as "inherently disordered," and most protestant and Jewish spiritual leaders do not condone homosexuality, and women are prevented from serving in political office in the Orthodox Reformed Party, Fortuyn's rhetoric focused on the intolerances of Islam; such a focus worked to attract many unhappy Whites. It is probable that his standing would have declined, had he campaigned stating that most religions have "backward" attitudes toward the equality of women and homosexuals.

A little more than a week before the national elections, Fortuyn was assassinated by a White animal-rights and environmental activist; many, including myself, were relieved that the killer was not a Moroccan or Turk, for that would have sparked the ethnic tensions already inflamed by Fortuyn's campaign. The nation was shocked at the murder, and Fortuyn's popularity became visible as thousands of mourners left flowers at

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[140] *Achterlijk* also has the meaning of mental retardation.

[141] Mayanthi L. Fernando, a Ph.D. candidate in Anthropology at the University of Chicago, has persuasively argued that the tension related to tolerating that which is intolerant is inherent within the liberal concept of tolerance itself; the current politics of ethnicity places the burden of working out that tension onto Islam (2005).

his Rotterdam house. Fortuyn's assassination assured him an important place in Dutch history, and a seemingly endless amount of news coverage and commentary. His party, even without Fortuyn, went on to be a major member of the ruling coalition; however, infighting and inexperience led to that coalition's collapse within just a few months.

In many of my interviews, even those who strongly disagreed with Fortuyn's views and condemned his racism and Islamophobia expressed respect for his insistence on "naming the problem." In his speeches, he often used a line that conjured up criticisms of both political correctness and the ineffectiveness of government: "I say what I think, and I do what I say!" One White woman, Froukje, a mother in her forties, summed up the attitude of many of the White people whom I interviewed toward the politics of Fortuyn:

> In general, I can find some things [I agree with] in the Lijst Pim Fortuyn. I didn't vote for them, certainly not after Pim Fortuyn's murder, but there were some things I liked, and others that seemed just off track. But I'm really happy that he, at a certain point, said, "We're not going to take any more and we're going to say what we think!" I really agreed with that, and I think most White Dutch agreed with that, because really we feel like we're in a corner and we can't say anything because we're accused of discrimination immediately, and that can't be. We can say what we think! And you can also say what you think.

One of the local police officers, Willem, a man in his early forties and in a position of some seniority, talked about the changing, less "sensitive" political climate:

> The police are very happy because we're getting more credit, we've expelled a lot of Bulgarians, even without any due process, which actually can't be done, but it's now being accepted by the political realm. If you did that eight years ago, you would have had a big protest in the government. But now the public is with us, it's not for nothing that Lijst Pim Fortuyn got so many votes . . .
>
> People don't feel happy in their own country. And now all the parties agree, something has to be done, because everyone is being robbed by illegal immigrants, new things have to be done. I'm happy that it's changed, before everyone was sensitive, afraid to discriminate . . .

It was not unusual to hear someone opine that Pim Fortuyn was too extreme, but that what he said was necessary. He was admired in many ways, even though those who admired him stated, emphatically, that they did not vote for him; some even intimated that his popularity was rather frightening, and indicated that they had no respect for his followers. Willem, the police officer above, exemplified this sentiment in the following quotes:

> I agreed with a lot of what he had to say, but at points I thought he was too racist. Many ideas were good, but not his expression of them. He was the one who said Moroccan boys cause a lot of crime, we, the police had been saying that for 10 years but no one would listen . . .

A few minutes later, he explained to me:

> But Pim was not racist . . . he named the problems as they were. He didn't hate Moroccans. It was bad, all those people who were attracted to him, that was scary. But I didn't vote for him.

Clearly, even those who admitted they agreed with some of Fortuyn's ideas were less than fully enthusiastic about him, and the virulent populism he inspired. What was appreciated by many, however, was his insistence on "naming the problem." In this way, Fortuyn had an affinity with the "realists." The language that people such as Scheffer used focused on "emancipating" ethnic minorities and saving them from becoming an "underclass" coalesced with Fortuyn's promises to halt immigration and his denigration of Islam as being "backward." Both of these political strains insisted that the social welfare state had failed.

Integration Policies and the Blok Commission

After a failed attempt to form a governing coalition with the Lijst Pim Fortuyn (LPF), new elections were held and in the spring of 2003 the Christian Democratic party (CDA) created a new coalition with the Liberal Party (the VVD, focused on free market

economics and minimal government intervention), and a small center-right party, Democrats 66 (D66). This coalition has been a principal actor in contributing to a highly polarized political environment, to the point of provoking one of the former leaders of the VVD, Hans Dijkstal, to publicly denounce and leave his party. The *NRC Handelsblad* summarized his critique: "The current politics sows hate, criminalizes *allochtonen*, and makes the Netherlands ungovernable. This is attributable in part to the hard line that the VVD fraction is pushing" (NRC 2004c). He was also quoted as saying that it was "a huge mistake" to move integration policy to the Ministry of Justice's portfolio, and that current political rhetoric is "macho talk" (NRC 2004c). A selection of newspaper stories hints at some of that "macho talk":

> CDA: "*Allochtonen* to be checked by two doctors before receiving disability benefits" (DV 2003b)
>
> CDA: "Integration policy must become stricter" (NRC 2004a)
>
> VVD: "Extra inspection necessary to prevent female circumcision" (DV 2004k)
>
> Strict Demands Placed on New Islamic Schools (NRC 2004e)
>
> Cabinet Wants to Halt Foreign Imams (NRC 2004h)
>
> "Migrants not to Immediately Have Rights to Welfare Benefits": New Cabinet proposal (NRC 2004k)
>
> "Migrants under 65 Must Complete Integration Course" (NRC 2004m)
>
> Mandatory Language and Culture Course Requirements for 755,000: Fees partly refunded after exam (DV 2004e)
>
> "Cultural Canon Needed in Schools" (NRC 2005a).

In the spring of 2004, building on earlier policies that required new *allochtonen* to complete language courses, the Cabinet voted to set before the Parliament a set of new, stricter integration policy proposals:

> The Cabinet proposed to make *inburgering* (passing language and culture courses) required for all migrants, for newcomers as well as those who have been in the Netherlands longer. Illegal immigrants and people who profit from them would be more strongly targeted. In the deprived neighborhoods (*achterstandswijken*) of the four large cities it will become more difficult for opportunity-poor (*kansarme*) *allochtonen* to rent a house. The assignment of houses will be linked to income requirements. Businesses that locate in these neighborhoods will receive tax breaks. . . Excepted from these requirements are newcomers from the European Union and so-called contract countries such as Canada, the United States, Japan and Australia (NRC 2004l).

This newspaper article also noted that migrants would now be made responsible for paying for these required courses, with the "exception of unemployed migrants and *allochtoon* women without their own income," and that, before arriving, new migrants immigrating "because of marriage or family reunion must first pass an exam in their home country" (NRC 2004l). If, after five years in the Netherlands, migrants have not passed the integration exam they would be denied permanent resident status; people who have been resident in the Netherlands for a long time but still do not have proficiency in the language must also pass the integration exam within five years, or receive a yearly fine from the government (NRC 2004l).

This set of proposals makes clear that proficiency in the Dutch language is seen as an integral element of integration. While many "Western" immigrants[142] to the Netherlands are not fluent in Dutch, it is the language abilities of "*allochtonen*" that are of particular concern in the public imagination, and in policymaking. In early 2004, the leader of the Christian Democrat party's delegation, Maxime Verhagen, contrasted the current focus on language with the earlier focus in the 1990s (headed by the coalition between the Labor and Socialist parties) on getting immigrants and minorities into the job market: "Not 'work, work, work,' but 'language, language, language' . . . [Parents] of

[142] See discussion of the different categories of *allochtonen* in Chapter Two.

allochtoon children must both have proficiency in Dutch" (NRC 2004a). Since 2002, designing and implementing the policy regarding "*inburgering*" (literally, naturalization, but referring to successfully passing an exam after completing a series of language instruction and Dutch culture courses) has been one of the primary tasks of the Ministry of Integration and Immigration. In the fall of 2004, the proposals described above began to be debated, and there was serious objection to the new definition of the target group for *inburgering* requirements: all new migrants and all long-time residents of immigrant origin up to the age of 65 (NRC 2004m).

This policy proposal raised a number of criticisms, for being too broad and for not being broad enough; the requirement was estimated to apply to 755,000 people, nearly five percent of the population (DV 2004e). Minister Verdonk had first suggested distinguishing between three groups: "those naturalized before April 1, 2003, those born outside the European Union (including Antilleans), and those born in the European Union" (NRC 2004n). The first two groups would be subject to *inburgering* requirements. This was found to be "legally unsupportable" by the Advisory Committee for Immigration Affairs (*Adviescommissie voor Vreemdelingenzaken*), who recommended that the standard "not be based on nationality or place of birth, but whether someone has spent at least eight years of the mandatory education period (until 16 years of age) in the Netherlands" (NRC 2004n). The Minister acceded to this advice, declaring that all migrants—no matter their nationality—had to fulfill language requirements. The change in criteria from nationality to time spent in the Dutch education system provoked an uproar; the purpose of the policy was not, it appeared, simply to make sure that every migrant knew Dutch, but to target immigrants from certain countries. By basing the

criteria on length of education in the Netherlands, new immigrants from Italy or Japan, for example, would be subject to the policy. This was objectionable to some politicians because although such immigrants might not know Dutch, they are not thought to have a problem integrating; criticisms of the recommended criteria show that it is particular kinds of ethnic difference that are considered to be the true problem, not linguistic capability.

Politicians debated other criteria for defining the target population for this policy. One Labor party politician argued, as summarized in an article in *de Volkskrant*, that "only people seeking unemployment benefits and women in deprived situations [*achterstandsituaties*] need to take an *inburgering* exam"(DV 2004a) . The Socialist party "argued that *inburgering* should not only be required for people receiving welfare benefits, but also for their partners," and that long-time residents should not be forced to undergo the *inburgering* requirements. To the far right, one member of the Lijst Pim Fortuyn critiqued the criteria as being too broad; his response was summarized as arguing that "differentiation should be made between residents and residents without Dutch nationality." While critiques were made about the definition of the target group for the proposal, the general assumptions regarding the necessity of acquiring proficiency in Dutch are clearly uncontested; even the Green-Left party's main critique was that insufficient funding was being made available, and that waiting lists to get into these courses was continuing to grow.

The main outlines for a new policy have been agreed upon, and, in 2006, a new *inburgering* policy will come into effect. On the website that explains the new policy framework, the policy is introduced with the following text:

> *Inburgering* forms the first part of the integration process. In the Outline of Agreement, the Cabinet has stated how ethnic minorities in Dutch society should integrate. The Cabinet calls, as well, on the own responsibility of the *inburgering* person and on the environment wherein the integration is taking place. Integration is a two-sided process. A command of the language is most important to be able to fully participate in the Dutch society. Next to that, an elementary knowledge of the norms and values is essential (KGS 2004).

As part of this new proposal, the costs for *inburgering* courses will be paid by the people taking them, rather than the government as was previously done, and people wishing to migrate for family formation or family reunification must pass an examination in basic Dutch language and society before they are allowed to migrate. For many, these requirements form a serious hardship, either due to lack of funds or lack of available preparatory courses. People required to *inburger*are those: who are between 16 and 65 years old; who plan on staying in the Netherlands for the long-term either as a naturalized Dutch citizen or a legal resident; who have not lived in the Netherlands at least eight years of the mandatory education period; who are not able to produce diplomas or certificates; and who have not completed mandatory educational requirements. For those already long-resident in the Netherlands, they may be excused from *inburgering* if they can show they have the knowledge and skills at the level required to pass the *inburgering* exam. From the time the law goes into effect, both new migrants and long-time residents will have five years to complete the required courses and pass the exam. The language level that will be required is low- to medium-intermediate Dutch.

The political debate around this policy shows the particular way that ethnic difference is imagined to be a major obstacle to integration. It is rarely noted in the debates that there have always been waiting lists of people wanting to take language courses; the policy is framed as if people must be "forced" to integrate. What seems to be important is the political posture of "being tough" on integration, just as the

appearance of "being tough on crime" has become an essential political stance in the United States. Language, in this environment, is not simply a means to communicate, something necessary to get hired for most jobs, to succeed in the school system, to interact with the government—all of which are legitimate arguments for making language instruction available. Instead, language operates as a symbol of Dutchness, within a politics of ethnicity which particularly denigrates immigrants from Morocco, Turkey, Suriname and the Antilles. This politics of ethnicity is also particularly focused on emancipating Muslim women. The Minister for Integration and Immigration stated, for example: "This requirement can be the coercive measure (*de stok achter de deur*, literally, the stick behind the door) for women to come out of the house," a statement which intimates at the need for force (DV 2004e).

In addition to the focus on the language abilities of particular groups of migrants and long-term residents, the clustering of ethnic minorities is seen as an obstacle to proper integration. Politicians have sought to set limits on the percentage of ethnic minority students in a school, so as to prevent the existence of "black schools" (*zwarte scholen*). Attempts have also been made to "spread out" ethnic minority families, to prevent the existence of "black neighborhoods" (*zwarte wijken*). These efforts have failed, either because they are unconstitutional or simply impractical. For example, early attempts by the city of Rotterdam, having one of the most conservative and populist governments, to limit residency on the basis of ethnicity were not permitted on the basis of anti-discrimination law. The city has, instead, recently tried another tack, by establishing "income limits" for those seeking residence in neighborhoods with high levels of ethnic minorities ("*hotspot-areas*"); in order to be permitted to move into these

districts, one must earn 120% of the minimum wage (DV 2005b). Since many ethnic minorities fall under this income level, the policy in effect works to shape the ethnic makeup of a neighborhood. Of course, it does nothing to raise the standard of living for those who are too poor to move into the neighborhood, nor does it provide an incentive for wealthier people to move to these districts. Even students and other young people who are not considered "opportunity-poor" (*kansarm*) are refused. Some apartments are going unoccupied and building owners have begun to complain about the policy.

Another hot issue for policy makers is "family reunification" and "family formation" policy. Family reunification applies to those immigrants who were married or were parents prior to emigrating to the Netherlands, and who wish to bring those relatives to join them. Family formation refers to relationships begun after the immigrant has arrived in the Netherlands. Family formation is of great concern in the integration debate because the "importation" of spouses is seen as an obstacle to integration; even marrying a spouse within one's own ethnic group is hurting the integration process, as seen in a recent headline: "Integration Stagnates Due to Partner Choice" (NRC 2005c). Within this realm, a particular threat is perceived in the continued migration of poor, traditional spouses from Morocco and Turkey, for "integration" must begin anew with these people. As of November 1, 2004, the government revised its policy for family forming, raising the minimum age from 18 to 21 years (for both parties), and raising the salary requirement for the person responsible for bringing the new immigrant from minimum wage to 120% of the minimum wage (MinJustitie n.d.).

Such attention to the "need for integration," with all of its tough interventionist overtones, is unlikely to subside anytime soon. This is the primary way that politicians

speak about ethnic difference and how they characterize the problems facing Dutch society. Perhaps most telling is the political reaction to the findings of the Blok Commission, a parliamentary commission headed by a member of the VVD which was charged with examining integration policy over the last 30 years. In its report, released January 19, 2004, the Commission found that most ethnic minorities have been "completely or partially successful" in integrating, despite governmental policy (NRC 2004b). The report criticized past policy measures for having little coherence and a lack of clear goals, and stated that "discrimination in the public sphere is a reality, unfortunately," and recommended that "fighting discrimination and prejudices by native Dutch and *allochtonen* become an active effort" (NRC 2004b).

In response, the leader of the CDA stated that the Commission "nowhere appeared to *or dared to* draw the conclusion that integration policy had failed" (emphasis mine) while the VVD characterized it as "unbelievably naïve" (NRC 2004f). These responses characterize the Commission as weak (they don't dare) and unrealistic (naïve), and as such connote the specter of "political correctness." More plainly, the Lijst Pim Fortuyn delegation stated that "the recommendations and conclusions look to be written in the spirit of political correctness that has characterized the integration debate for decades" (NRC 2004f). Ayaan Hirsi Ali, perhaps the most polarizing figure in Dutch politics[143] and particularly remembered for calling the prophet Mohammed "perverse" (NRC 2003d), angrily responded that the report was "worthless" and "broke with all sense of reality" (NRC 2004f). Not only did the Commission's findings fail to sway the current political leadership to look at the integration issue differently, and see that the

[143] She is most known for her insistent criticism of Islam and for authoring the script for the film "Submission," which she made with Theo van Gogh.

situation was not as dire as they were painting it, but just a few months later they supported the even stricter policy measures put forward by Minister Verdonk.

Almost all of those who dominate the public political discussion about the "need for integration" and the "emancipation of *allochtoon* women" are White. As Halleh Ghorashi, an Iranian refugee and professor of Intercultural Management at the University of Amsterdam, points out, there is little to no presence of ethnic minorities in these debates (Ghorashi 2005). Although Hirsi Ali, herself a Somali immigrant, is held up as a representative for ethnic minority women by some, Ghorashi argues that the White, liberal, Enlightenment position Hirsi Ali represents ignores the established post-colonial criticism of second-wave feminism. The lack of acknowledgement of the "double emancipation" process for ethnic minority women serves only to create further distance between those women and the White feminists who claim to represent their interests. The integration discussion, then, is being held in an echo chamber (Ghorashi 2005).

It might be tempting to conceptualize this political environment as "polarized," but that term is not quite accurate. For something to be truly polarized, there must be two poles, two extreme points. In fact, what has happened in the last five years is a movement by most public figures to the hard right. While many of the academics, social workers, and neighborhood residents I met with were critical of the harsh new tone and thought many of the recent policies excessive, there was no substantial, organized pole that regularly and vocally opposed what was taking place in the political realm. I saw, on occasion, notices about protests, for example against the new mandatory national identity card and against the expulsion of refugees, but these were few and far between, and they garnered little attention in the mainstream media. Efforts have been made to criticize the

conflation of Islam with terrorism, principally by small, independent organizations. This poster, for example, was created by the group "Together Against Racism," and distributed after the murder of Theo van Gogh:

Figure 15. Anti-racism poster: "Together against racism. Islam is not the enemy. Hate is not the solution. www.stopdehetze.nl (www.stop the witch hunt.nl)."

Despite grassroots organizing efforts, there is a near total absence of politicians and prominent public intellectuals who critique policies and speeches as racist and politically opportunistic, and the ones who do step forward receive little media attention.[144] The political environment is less polarized perhaps than simply competitive, as politicians strive to be tougher and more "realistic" than each other.

Without public outcry in the face of ethnic epithets, the existence of daily discrimination and exclusion is no longer cast as unjust and anti-social. In this milieu, Theo van Gogh can call Muslims "goatfuckers," Ayaan Hirsi Ali can call Mohammed "perverse," and Rob Oudkerk can laugh about using the phrase "*kut Marokkanen*" in Amsterdam, all without much condemnation on the part of public figures. It may be

[144] The contributors to the progressive intellectual journal *Eutopia* are notable exceptions. These writers, however, cannot counter the sheer volume of political speech within this framework of consensus politics.

relevant to note, at this point, that Verdonk's policy proposals were not a reaction to the murder of Theo van Gogh and the discovery of Islamic radicalism in the Netherlands, among born and raised Dutch Muslims. They were put forth and approved by the Cabinet, and sent to the Parliament to become law, a full six months before his murder. While the international press reacted with shock to "the loss of innocence" in the "tolerant Netherlands" (discussed again in Chapter Nine), an examination of the politics of ethnicity in the last five years shows that whatever innocence and tolerance there may have been prior to 2000, the political realm has since become divisive and extremely negative toward ethnic difference. The death of Theo van Gogh by the hand of a Muslim extremist was simply an event that made the long-simmering tension plain to the rest of the world. His death makes clear that the intentionally provocative use of pejorative language, in an arena of political extremism, is not simply the exercise of "free speech"; like the violence following the publication of the Danish cartoons, such "free speech" comes at the cost of civility, and an equally accessible public sphere. The language used by politicians, populists and "realists" has led only to division; in their demands that ethnic minorities "integrate," they have only expanded the gap between "us" and "them."

Conclusion: Linking "problem," "youth," and "ethnic difference"

As I discussed in Chapter Two, my research at the neighborhood level focused on conflicts between White adults and White youth. But the politics of ethnicity, and the ways in which social problems were being imagined, spilled over as does a boiling pot left unattended, its contents no longer containable. Conversations about neighborhood conflicts often slipped into talk about ethnicity; adults asserting that youth need to change their behavior used phrases that are also used to talk about the need for integration.

Similarly, the statement that there had been "too much tolerance" in social policy was applied to problems with youth and to problems with ethnic minorities, albeit in contradictory and complex ways. When I told people that I was studying the problems with *hangjongeren*, many, if not most, first assumed that I was studying ethnic minority youth, partly because problems with those youth are so much the object of academics, journalists, policy makers, and the various organs of the social welfare state.

In an initial conversation with Christiaan, a senior police officer, for example, he began explaining to me that Moroccans and other ethnic minorities are *buitenmensen*, or "outside people," while White Dutch are *binnenmensen*, or "inside people." Outdoor socializing is a carry-over, according to this logic, from southern countries and climates. It was a curious explanation, given that one of the most pressing adult-youth conflicts at the time of our conversation, and in his precinct, was the one I began studying, between White adults and White youth. The common linkage between "problem" and "youth" and "ethnic minority" suggested to me that the abstract image of *hangjongeren* is often an image of non-White youth, and that the presence of youth in public space has come to represent a larger problem in society, one somehow related to the ideas involved in the notion of the "multicultural drama."

This seeming conflation of hanging around behavior with ethnic difference sparked my curiosity, and I began to inquire into the White residents' experiences in their own youth, to see how people remembered hanging around in a less ethnically diverse Netherlands. What became clear, as discussed in Chapter Three, was that most White adults fondly remembered hanging around in their own youth. They distinguished their youthful behavior from that of today's youth, most often by recalling that they would

listen when adults told them to stop being loud; everyone knew each other, and one's parents would be informed if one continued to misbehave. Today, however, many White adults did not know the names of the youth they encountered, nor who their parents were. Many clearly experience the presence of youth in public space as threatening, and especially so if the youth are not speaking Dutch. On multiple occasions, adults expressed concern that youths might be talking about them, fearing that the youth were planning to "do something" to them as they passed by; such anxieties are heightened, of course, if a foreign language is being spoken. Fears about youth and fears about ethnic minority youth resonate off each other.

Common ideas about the improper parenting practices of ethnic minorities also appeared in White adults' explanations of the *hangjongeren* problem. For example, I was told that ethnic minority parents make their children feel unwelcome at home, that inside the house is an "adults' space," which was meant to explain why their children are out on the street and why they get into trouble. Similarly, I was told by police officers that Moroccan parents don't take responsibility for their children's behavior outside the house, only what happens inside their house: "Inside the father is the boss, but outside they think we are the boss." Moroccan mothers, thought to be "un-emancipated," are described as bullied by their young male children; Mieke, a White female leader in neighborhood committees and service work, had this to say: "What worries me is the number of families with lots of kids, who are not raised properly . . . Boys of three years who think they are the boss . . . that's part of Moroccan culture, the man is the boss, no matter what the age." Here, in addition to ethnicity, the size of the family is taken as a

sign of probable deficiency and thought to lead to eventual problems with "hanging around" or worse.

As the above examples show, in some ways hanging around is seen as an ethnic behavior. Interestingly, talk about youth problems and talk ethnic minority problems are linked in a complex discourse about "too much tolerance." Indeed, there was a felt sense among most people I interviewed that the problems of today could be traced back to the limits of the social welfare state and the increasing individualization of the last few decades. In the last decade, the emergence of an upstart political party led by Pim Fortuyn coalesced with efforts of the Christian Democrats and Liberals to regain political power: together, in different registers, they critiqued "soft" multiculturalist policies, an approached that resonated with a broad and deep dissatisfaction with the social welfare state. These multiple political strands, in different registers, all asserted the need to "name the problem," variously defined as incompatibility of certain kinds of ethnic difference, the "refusal" of ethnic minorities to "integrate," and the lack of explicitness about Dutch "norms and values." As discussed in Chapter Three, conflicts between adults and youth over youth behavior in public space have a long history that predates the arrival of immigrants from Morocco, Turkey, Suriname and the Antilles. Yet the current politics of ethnicity—and the discourse of "too much tolerance"—are in play when the subject of youth arises, even when the conflict is between White adults and White youth. To make clear the ways in which speech about the problem of ethnic difference mirrors the speech about the problem of *hangjongeren*, I turn in the next chapter to the discourse about "the need for norms and values," and "the loss of *sociale controle*."

Chapter Seven – The Need for "Norms and Values"

> In the Netherlands, the whole tenor has changed a bit. We, the country, we've moved away from the previous decades of tolerance, from permissiveness, and, now, it can be said: "There are norms, and there are values."
>
> —Thomas, civil servant

Introduction

The murder of filmmaker Theo van Gogh in the fall of 2004 was followed by a spate of violent bias crimes throughout the Netherlands, as mosques were firebombed and churches attacked in retaliation. Journalists in the United States and England penned pieces, as if in shock, asking: "What happened to Dutch tolerance?" Yet the events were less surprising to close observers of ethnic tensions in the Netherlands. As elaborated in Chapter Six, in recent years immigrants and ethnic minorities have been under mounting pressure to assimilate, and Islam has been intensely scrutinized, even attacked, by politicians and public intellectuals. Such tensions are clearly manifest in talk about "failed multiculturalism" and in condemnations of political correctness. Yet there is another, less explicit, way in which ethnic difference and Dutch identity are discussed: the assertion that Dutch people and politicians have been too tolerant, which has resulted in a need for clear "norms and values."

"Too much tolerance," however, has at least four separate registers: in politics, such speech is employed by some politicians in their efforts to capture electoral power; among civil servants and police officers, it is an assertion of their authority, and an explanation of why their task of creating order is so difficult; among Dutch citizens, it is an condemnation that people have become too individualized and that their personal

freedoms are being infringed upon; and among parents, it is a complaint about the new extremism in politics as well as about a loss of social cohesion, a longing for a time when neighborhood adults collectively helped in disciplining children. Understanding these distinct deployments of this discourse helps to trouble the simple characterization of a contemporary "rejection of tolerance," and to identify the ways in which efforts in the political realm are differently refracted at the neighborhood level.

It is also important to explain that the multiple articulations of the concept of "tolerance" and their different nuances. A number of terms are closely related: "*tolerantie*" meaning both disapproving forbearance and acceptance of difference, "*verdraagzaamheid*" or forbearance, "*vrijblijvenheid*" or permissiveness, and "*gedogen*," the practice of permitting things technically disallowed, such as soft drugs. When people spoke about "too much tolerance" they generally used the formulation "We have been too tolerant," or "There has been too much tolerance," which can indicate: "we have put up with too much," "we have too often permitted different ways of being," and "we have interacted too little with one another." This discourse was used to talk about ethnic difference, drug policy, not ticketing people who drive through red lights, immigration policy, the loss of respect for adult authority, over-individualization, youth *overlast* (excessive nuisance, see Chapter Three), and overblown complaints about youth. In this way, "too much tolerance" refers to a range of social attitudes and policies, and resonates at multiple levels.

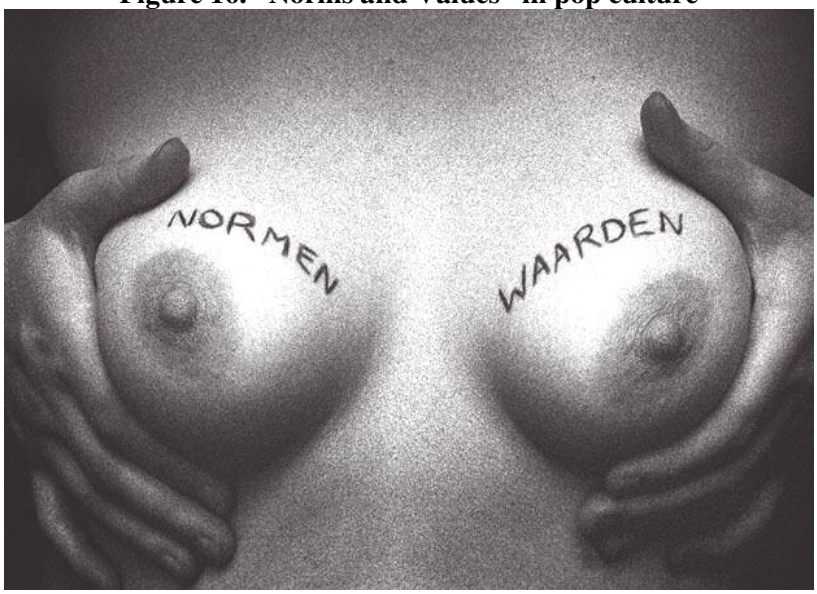
The phrase "norms and values" may bring to mind the discourse about "family values" that arose in the United States in the 1980s, which, although having some similarities to "norms and values," was much more focused on issues pertaining to sex,

such as abortion and homosexuality, and traditional gender roles. In the Netherlands, "norms and values" originates in the public political sphere, in the writings of Jan Peter Balkenende of the Christian Democrats, and is directly related to the problem of ethnic difference and the desire to set limits on how much difference is allowable. In its Balkenende's writing, the phrase conjures up a sense of something lost, a sense that something has gone awry—something that a Christian Democratic approach can fix—and a concern with articulating what constitutes Dutch identity. As will become clear, the phrase is an expression of a tough liberalism, in which it is believed that once social rules are made clear, individuals will be responsible for regulating themselves. In many ways, the use of this phrase suggests a kind of parental attitude toward those not-yet-fully socialized: they require explanations about how to behave.

But the discourse of norms and values has not been contained to the political realm, nor has it solely been applied to ethnic minorities; the same language is employed to talk about behavior seen as uncivil, inconsiderate or disrespectful of authority. I came to notice the phrase early on in my research when it was used in a number of interviews about neighborhood conflicts between White adults and White youth, which highlighted the ways that the politics of ethnicity seemed to bleed over into other spheres. The phrase was in the papers on a regular basis, it came up in casual conversation, and it was even a topic for public forums and scholarly panels. In fact, the phrase "norms and values" was used in so many situations that it came to seem almost ubiquitous; it was even employed ironically to poke fun at the overuse of the phrase, at its moralistic overtones, as in the image below. An advertiser used this image of a naked female torso for a free postcard, copies of which are left in restaurants for patrons; here, "norms" are

written on one breast, and "values" on the other. The breasts are each cupped underneath by a hand, and the tagline on the flipside of the postcard reads that the advertiser "supports norms and values."

Figure 16. "Norms and Values" in pop culture



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This chapter explores the discursive regime of "norms and values," how the phrase is used and to what ends, and why the ideas it encapsulates resonate so fiercely. My analysis suggests that all this talk and activity around "norms and values" together operate as a kind of frame through which social problems and conflicts are interpreted. The first part of this chapter examines the use of this phrase in the politics of Premier Jan Peter Balkenende of the Christian Democrats, or CDA, and its deployment as a way of signifying a return in politics to the "moral aspect of social issues" (Balkenende 2002, 13). I then look at the way in which the discourse of norms and values is related to fears about declining social cohesion. Ethnographic research makes clear that the rhetorical frame of norms and values is activated by and intertwined with the concepts of *sociale*

controle (discipline through tight community bonds), *aanpassen* (adjust, or fit in), and *aanspreken* (speak to, or admonish), all of which are used to describe, and prescribe, how people should behave. After demonstrating how these terms are used to cast certain behavior as moral or ethical, I examine the recent trend in creating "conduct rules," and discuss two examples—the "Golden Rules" of Gouda and the Respect Project of the Playground Association of Amsterdam North—as well as a slightly different take on the regulation of public space and behavior: the Green-Left Party's "Greeting Zones."

I try in this chapter to delineate how separate concerns about improper public behavior and excessive ethnic difference together work to shape how the "*hangjongeren* problem" is understood, specifically through this framing discourse of "norms and values." As I have noted in previous chapters, I found on many occasions that talk about proper behavior, ethnicity, or *hangjongeren* often moved between these topics, folding them in on one another. Many conversations that began with a discussion about annoying White youths hanging around in a neighborhood would slide into talk about ethnic difference. Public discussions about norms and values would almost immediately reference problems with Moroccan youths. In this way, my attempt to distinguish these topics from one another for the sake of clarity is a bit contrived, although perhaps necessary. What my research shows, however, is that talk about norms and values simultaneously invokes multiple threats, threats that are at once embodied in groups of people, such as White and ethnic minority youth, people who won't "adjust," and people who don't "take others into account." At the same time, other threats are more abstract: a loss of connectedness, too little community supervision, too much tolerance. The

gauzy, shifting contours of this discourse are what make it so powerful, as it is activated in different ways by different contexts, and toward different ends.

In drawing together the concerns about social cohesion and the examples of conduct rules, I want to suggest that there is a contemporary crisis of "Dutchness." Clearly, no stable, timeless Dutch identity has ever actually existed. The social and societal changes of the last half century are, however, currently being interpreted and experienced as a threat to an idealized sense of Dutchness. The discourses of norms and values, failed integration, and feelings of being unsafe together give the "crisis" its particular shape and tone, intersecting with a deep and more general dissatisfaction with the social welfare state. The proliferation of conduct rules that target both White and ethnic minority youth, and their parents in some cases, is an attempt to counter this crisis—to get not only individual youth, but the larger social reproduction of Dutchness "back on track." I argue that the discourse of "norms and values" and its related move toward conduct rules work to frame both ethnic minorities and youth as insufficiently socialized, not-yet-Dutch.

Jan Peter Balkenende, the "Norms and Values" Premier

Jan Peter Balkenende has been most prominent in arguing that the political realm must attend to the question of "norms and values." Appointed Special Professor of Christian-Social Thought on Economy and Society at the Free University in Amsterdam in 1993, and serving as a parliamentary representative for the Christian Democrats since 1998, Balkenende became a leader of the party in 2001. In the fall of 2002, he used his position to call for the creation of a "Norms and Values Commission," which would be charged with determining, as one newspaper put it, "what is and what is not permissible" (*wat kan*

en kan niet) (AD 2002c). At a conference about Christian-social thought in September 2002, Balkenende stated that politics must reclaim "a moral dimension":

> How do we get along with each other? That question does deserve to be a question of political debate. The government must set moral boundaries. Where these limits lie and how they should be protected is a political question. This question has been too often ignored in the last years. To great consequence. Our society appears to be a pressure cooker in which the tension is growing (HP 2002).

At the time, the proposal met with negative reactions; anecdotally speaking, acquaintances of mine derided the idea, and found Balkenende's moralizing approach ridiculous. None of the other political parties supported it, many argued that such a commission did not belong to the role of government, and the idea was eventually dropped. Balkenende's earnest religiosity was even ridiculed by journalists and critics, who nicknamed him "Harry Potter." But, still, the phrase "norms and values" took firmer root in both popular and official political discourse, particularly in discussions about ethnic difference. For example, a few years later in her 2004 annual address, Queen Beatrix stated that in a plural society, the constitution and the rule of law must be respected by everyone, and, she emphasized, that included both native Dutch and immigrants. She then asserted that "a communal language base, active citizenship, and shared norms and values will strengthen respect" for law, adding that "integration policy must work toward that end" (DV 2004b).

The notion of bringing norms and values into the political realm was not new for Balkenende or the CDA, as seen in the title of their 1995 report "New Paths, Firm Values," (*Nieuwe Wegen, Vaste Waarden*) (Balkenende 2002, 21). But as a minority party, in the 1990s the CDA had little power to influence the terms of debate. In the 2002 election, the CDA capitalized on discontent with the Labor-Liberal Coalition (PvdA-

VVD, called the Purple Coalition, the mixture of red Labor and blue Liberals); at the same time, Premier Wim Kok and his Cabinet decided to step down over the failure of Dutch peacekeepers to stop a massacre in Bosnia, and Pim Fortuyn was riling up populist sentiment. With these developments, the 2002 elections were predicted to be an opening for the CDA to regain prominence; prior to the Purple Coalition, they had been the dominant member of the ruling coalition for decades. It was a moment of political opportunity for the CDA to reestablish itself by adopting a hard center-right tone; by focusing on personal responsibility and the norms and values of Dutch culture, the CDA could position itself as tough, particularly on the matter of integration.

In the lead up to the elections, Balkenende published the book *Different and Better: A plea for a different political approach from a Christian-Democratic vision of society*, *government and politics*, in which he outlined the new approach he sought to establish. At the end of the introductory chapter, he writes that his platform addresses the "five foundations for a healthy society":

1. the culture and the values and norms of Dutch society
2. the role of the family in the lives of people
3. a healthy and strong economy
4. the role of civil society (*middenveld en de maatschappelijke onderneming*)
5. the tasks of the government (2002, 17).

After a chapter in which he critiques the policies and focus of the Kok administration (employment, articulated as "work, work, work"), Balkenende dedicates each of the following chapters to a discussion of each of these five foundations. In the chapter, "What Binds Us: The foundations of the Dutch society," Balkenende explicitly lays out the CDA perspective on the problem with pluralism, framing this within the notion of norms and values. Because this discourse has become so powerful and so pervasive, I think it important to examine the CDA perspective in depth; in the next pages, I have

reproduced lengthy excerpts from Balkenende's second chapter. What I wish to highlight in so doing is the artful way in which ethnic difference becomes the primary source of inequality and conflict, a turnabout from the left's emphasis on employment and education. In some ways, there exists a kind of cultural fundamentalism (Stolcke 1999), however, while cultural differences are profound, this discourse of norms and values also asserts that some differences can be overcome through learning about Dutch culture. For this to occur, Dutch norms and values must be made explicit to ethnic others. Nowhere is it acknowledged that there exists heterogeneity within "Dutch culture," or that legitimate conflicts of interest might exist between ethnic minorities and White Dutch. Nowhere are problems of political inequities or power acknowledged. Problems are seen to arise only because of a lack of clarity on the part of ethnic minorities, a lack of clarity which is blamed on the "softness" of multiculturalist politics.

In the beginning of the chapter, Balkenende quickly names a list of social policy areas—welfare, work opportunities, education and health care—and states that all of these must be improved. But then he continues:

> Are these the issues that determine, in the end, the quality of Dutch society? No, there is more. A debate must begin. It concerns the enduring (*dragende*) values of the society. The values that make possible "living with each other" (leven *met elkaar*) and that determine the culture and identity of Dutch society (Balkenende 2002, 52).

These values are characterized as deriving from a long-standing culture, of which people are often unaware:

> Each society has its own culture with underlying values. Culture not in the sense of art or "the high, the spiritual, and the beautiful." Rather, culture as the entirety of views (*opvattingen*) in relation to the meaning of existence; the values, norms and meanings that inspire and activate people. The culture of a society is formed through history, religion, philosophy, and is influenced by an interplay of geographic, economic and political circumstances.

> Culturedetermines the functioning of the society. Frequently this occurs unconsciously. Norms of behavior, which humor is or isn't permissible, everyday manners, such as the way people greet each other, these are implicit, where people are only aware of them if someone doesn't adhere to them. People have a certain pattern of expectations with each other. "So are our customs." These customs, this pattern of expectations and these ways of getting along are based on a frequently unconsciously shared pattern of values and norms (Balkenende 2002, 52).

In the next paragraph, Balkenende puts forward three ideas that later become very important, forming the central threads with which he ties together his argument for the need for making Dutch norms and values explicit. The first is that the implicit nature of culture makes it difficult for outsiders to know how to act. The second is his focus on family, school, church and children: norms and values are learned early on in life, they are supposed to be modeled by adults with authority. Finally, at the end of the following paragraph, he puts forward the idea that although cultures are influenced and change with contact with other cultures, there are some particular values cannot be put aside without threatening the culture as a whole. He writes:

> How people think, behave, and feel are partly determined by the culture in which they are raised. The culture is internalized from the social environment (family, school, church, friends). The core of these form the values. This is also the first thing that children learn—frequently unconsciously and implicitly. Values have relationship to what is good and what is bad. These values determine much of our behavior and are frequently difficult for outsiders (*buitenstaanders*) to see. They must be deduced from behavior and norms for getting along. The culture of a society is an answer to the question of how people can live together and form a functioning community. This question is answered differently in different cultures. Above all, cultures are always in movement; we can speak about cultural development through, for example, contact with other cultures. There is however a number of values that are so interwoven in our cultural identity, rooted in century old traditions, that it is impossible to put these aside without harming the foundation of the social framework (Balkenende 2002, 53).

A few paragraphs later, Balkenende critiques "political correctness" and then reframes tolerance as intolerance; the ability to "name the problem" by "evaluating" or criticizing ethnic differences becomes a foundation for the debate on norms and values:

> Tolerance, in the sense of respect for others and other opinions, has become an ideological dogma. It has led, paradoxically enough, to the opinion that placing a value on differences cannot be tolerated. Tolerance as an ideological dogma is therefore intolerant. It is also significant that the biggest proponents of the tolerant multicultural society are those that are prominent in protests against the speech of an imam. The naming of problems (*benoemen*) that are caused by cultural differences has been, in this manner, very difficult for a long time. Also the debate over values and norms in our society has been halted in this way (2002, 56).

We finally arrive at the crux of the matter: it is important to make explicit Dutch norms and values to immigrants. The failure to do so has created "all the consequences" that followed:

> In the last decades the Netherlands increasingly has had to deal with the immigration of people from other cultures. With the arrival of people with other cultural backgrounds in a society, it is important to be clear about the values and norms upon which the society in which people are entering is based. Then it becomes clear where the differences are and which *aanpassingen* (adjustments, adaptations)[145] are necessary. For a long time in the Netherlands, a signal was given to immigrants that morality belonged in the private sphere. It was therefore unclear which responsibilities, rights, and duties people had in relation to each other and to society. For people from more closed societies, where religion controls both the private and the public domains, that was confusing. With all the consequences that followed. Insecurity and a loss in footing about which behavior on the street and in the school is permitted, and which isn't, can more quickly lead to undesirable behavior or trespassing of rules. The news about the formation of youth gangs in Rotterdam proves, alas, the correctness of this position. Also the *achterstand* (negative position, "behind-ness") of large groups of *allochtonen* in education, labor participation, and standard of living speaks for itself (Balkenende 2002, 56-7).

The building blocks of Balkenende's position—that culture is implicit, learned, and changeable but only to an extent, and that tolerance is actually intolerant—are then combined with the final argument: uncertainty about norms and values has led to the problems with *allochtonen*, including crime, a low level of education, joblessness, and a low standard of living.

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[145] The use of "*aanpassen*" will be discussed in greater length in the second section of this chapter.

Subsidies and anti-discrimination policies as pursued by previous administrations, according to Balkenende, have not yet addressed the "structural cause" of this problem:

> A riddled tolerance has led to the relativizing of our own culture and norms and values. It has above all led to a great measure of understanding and also acceptance (*gedogen*) of deviant behavior. In politics and the media there has been little criticism thereof. The debate over problems that are paired to the arrival of immigrants were for too long and too strictly held in the framework of equal treatment and emancipation. Because of this, the integration and immigration debate has been very limited to a discussion over instruments: subsidies, anti-discrimination laws, preference policies, and the skills of people in terms of work, and income. The structural causes remained under-examined and as a result the problems were unsolved. Proceeding in this way is not without risk. Living together is, so it happens, not a self-evident affair. A society cannot function well if there are groups who do not fully know the fundamental values (*basiswaarden*) and make them their own (2002, 58).

Balkenende's book makes clear that the issue of "norms and values" is related to the problem of ethnic minorities. These minorities, it is claimed, are "confused" about how to live in Dutch society; they must be given explicit knowledge through *inburgering* courses, schooling, and clarification of what is permitted and what is not. Although he does not focus specifically on the Dutch soft drugs policy, where marijuana and hashish are not legal but are "*gedogen*" or tolerated in small quantities, he states that this kind of toleration has contributed to the problem:

> Behavior that before now was considered a threat must now be reduced and punished. This applies to behavioral norms such as decency (*fatsoen*) and respect for others and other opinions. The government must therefore act to set and maintain norms. The policy of toleration (*gedoogbeleid*) is in conflict with this, and challenges the credibility of the constitutional state. And that is no longer allowable (Balkenende 2002, 60).

What emerges from this chapter is a picture of a strict, interventionist state project, where ethnic minorities and those who engage in deviant behavior need to be taught how to behave in Dutch society, and to be punished when they transgress. This project positions itself in part by criticizing previous administrations for their too-permissive policies, for not upholding the proper, fundamental, "real" Dutch norms. Balkenende maintains that

"freedom and responsibility" are the "balance of our society," and that "for too long, the scales were tipped toward individual freedom" (2002, 60). In his vision, the responsibility of the state will no longer be shunned, and the individual will be made responsible for his/her behavior, in contrast to the policies of the past decades.

The Loss of *Sociale Controle*

While Balkenende's formulation of the need for norms and values clearly focuses on ethnic minorities, it also has the potential to be applied to anyone who does not act "decently." In the next paragraphs, I examine how the discourse of norms and values arose in discussions about adult-youth conflicts at the neighborhood level. Residents, police officers, social workers and policy makers pointed to a lack of cohesion, which they talked about in terms of norms and values and in terms of a loss of *sociale controle* (discipline through tight community bonds). Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the pervasive critiques of political correctness, and multiculturalism, many interviewees also cited "too much tolerance" as a cause of today's social problems. Excessive tolerance, according to this argument, has resulted in hyper-individualized citizens, disrespectful youths, and non-integrated ethnic minorities. *Hangjongeren* are, as seen through the framing discourses of norms and values and "too much tolerance," a physical manifestation of the changes in society. In contrast, those who spend a lot of time with youth, such as parents and youth workers, countered that society has grown less tolerant toward youth. In the next paragraphs, I provide examples of the ways in which people spoke to me about *sociale controle*, and demonstrate how this theme resonates with the discourse of norms and values.

Anonymity and "Sociale controle"

Many of the adults I spoke with complained about the lack of *sociale controle* in their neighborhoods, which they often blamed on a high level of anonymity. *Sociale controle* can be translated as "community supervision," a kind of oversight that is based on strong community ties that have the power to make someone behave through social pressure. When people use this phrase, they invoke a picture of a tight-knit community, in which neighbors know each other, and each other's children. In Dutch, the word *controle* has the sense of oversight, monitoring or surveillance. If everyone knows each other, and keeps an eye on each other, then misbehavior will be admonished, or reported to parents and then punished. In this way, *sociale controle* indicates both neighborhood bonds, or connectedness, and a disciplinary gaze (Foucault 1995). While nostalgia may play some role in people's recollections of their childhoods, the following laments about the loss of *sociale controle* were made both by younger parents and elderly residents. It is arguable, given this range in age, that talk about *sociale controle* resonates with the larger discourse about norms and values, extending far beyond individual memories.

In the previous chapter, I discussed how Froukje, a White woman in her early forties and a mother of two, described to me how people are quick to associate misbehavior with criminality. I quote her words again here, as they also speak to the commonly held idea that one should speak to the parents of children first before calling the police, if one has complaints. Froukje here invokes the concept of *sociale controle* to talk about how neighbors should interact with one another, and to critique the self-involvement of adults today:

> Earlier, there was more *sociale controle* in the neighborhood . . . That's what it was like when I grew up—my mother knew everyone, and if I did something wrong, then my mother knew about it five minutes later! But now, it's just: "Watch out for yourself, you watch your own kid, I've got enough to do."

Her perception of adults as being overly self-absorbed was echoed by another mother in the neighborhood, Marijke, who complained that one of her neighbors had planted thorn bushes to keep the youth away from his garden. She confided, "It's a little too individualistic here. The next neighborhood down the road is a little bit more community oriented. People watch out for each other's kids, and that's more *controle*. Here there is no *controle*; first they call the police, not the parents! It's really not pleasant here."

Other residents linked the loss of *sociale controle* to changed parenting practices, and specifically to a lack of parental discipline. Hein, a man in his late sixties, described his youth:

> *Sociale controle*, that's what they call it. If you did something as a kid, your neighbor talked to you about your behavior. But today, I'm not impressed how parents relate to their kids. As I said, I had a lot of freedom, but I also had rights and responsibilities. I see some today who could use a few swats on the butt—that doesn't happen.

A youth center worker, aged 40, told me that when he was young, "you had to come home on time, and if you were late, you were in trouble! And if your father didn't know, he found out from your neighbor—that was *sociale controle*."

The loss of *sociale controle* was often connected to an increase in anonymity by those whom I interviewed. Neighbor-to-neighbor communication has become more limited, in part, because of increased mobility, as people move more frequently from place to place and neighborhood networks fracture. Youths also are more mobile, and sometimes hang around in places where they aren't known. Police officers see their role as helping to reduce anonymity, as Cornelius put it: by "getting to know people, and

getting known by them." He explained that "Some youth hang around in the entrances to apartment buildings because they don't know the people there. If they did, their parents would be called." In addition to the overall problem of mobility, many Whites and ethnic minorities do not come into frequent contact with one another. For example, one study found that 67% of White Dutch had no Muslim acquaintances in their workplaces, or among their friends and family; that percentage grew to 80% for Whites 55 years and older (Kanne 2004). It is probable that such separateness continues at the neighborhood level in many places.

The problem of anonymity has been taken up by the social welfare state through the creation of organizations such as "At Home on the Street," touted by policy makers as a means of *binding*, or "creating bonds," and "reducing anonymity."[146] Anna, a senior staff person for "At Home on the Street," who hires adults to visit public playgrounds and courtyards and engage children in games, described the organization's work specifically in terms of increasing neighborhood cohesion and ensuring the pleasantness and peacefulness of public space: "The play activities are actually just a means toward *binding*. The purpose is*binding* , and ultimately to create safety and livability (*leefbaarheid*) on the street." If youths don't know their adult neighbors, it was assumed, they feel less obligated to respond to adults' complaints. It is important to note, however, that the organization was not bringing together youth and their adult neighbors; instead, it hired professionals from all over Amsterdam North to play with youth in a number of different neighborhoods. Adult-youth bonds were being created, but not between local youth and local adults.

[146] The program *Thuis op Straat*, or "At Home on the Street," is discussed in more detail in Chapter Four.

The Problem of Exhaustion

In explaining why *hangjongeren* are often considered a problem, many also noted the hectic pace of contemporary life. Maike, a neighborhood volunteer in her sixties, depicted a kind of widespread fatigue:

> People are growing less and less tolerant. Everything irritates them. Because they have way to much to do, they are too, too busy. In their heads, they are emotionally tired, they are physically tired. And, then, you can't tolerate as much. And so you get mad at everything, and that is bad.

Some parents further claimed that conflicts between youth and adults originate, at least in part, from adults being already aggravated even prior to any youthful disturbance. Froukje, one such parent, described her frustration with other adults in the neighborhood:

> What I don't like is that, at present, people get irritated so easily. They can't take it anymore. What I mean is, the things my son does, I did myself as a kid. But people came and spoke to my parents—if you don't know, you can't do anything about it. I just saw something on TV that said that what once used to be thought of as mischief is now considered criminal. On "Netwerk" (a television news journal), it was about *overlast* and youth, *hangjongeren*. We used to to do all that, and adults would say, "Come now, calm down a little." But today people just say, "Oh, they're criminals." This is a really big problem. Thirty years ago, kids did the same thing, but it wasn't considered such a problem. I think it has to do with society. People are so busy, they've got work, sports, classes. 24 hours is too short.

Another mother, Hanneke, in her mid-thirties, concurred: "People get angry faster. Come home, you've got to clean up, cook, eat—and here comes a kid and a ball against your door. People just can't take it." These quotes all speak to the deep frustration felt by some adults when they encounter youth playing or being disorderly in public spaces, suggest that many look to their homes as a refuge from the outside world.

This exhaustion, this inability to tolerate irritation, is blamed for a rise in aggressiveness, both in terms of young people's behavior toward their elders, and in the ways that adult residents react to neighborhood youth and to each other. A police officer explained:

> I think it has to do with the fact that there is less mutual respect. Older people have the idea that the youth don't listen, that they just talk back, that there is no respect. But, it's not just the youth, it's the tendency in the whole society. People are less tolerant toward each other, and they feel unsafe more quickly, even though that's not justified. It's as safe, even more safe than 10 years ago.

Recalling adult-youth relations in their childhood, older residents spoke about how they used the formal "U" verb conjugation when speaking to their elders, and criticized today's convention of using first names, even when students address their teachers. Some older residents told me that they had been called names by local youth, such as "rotten fish" or "old dick", and were confounded that young people would ever speak to them in such a way.

Interestingly, parents claimed that some adults have also become less respectful toward youth. Marijke, a mother to three teenagers, explained: "Before everyone had a lot more respect. As a kid, you would say hello to your neighbors, and they might ask you to pick something up at the store for them. Now, kids say "Hello, neighbor!" and the adults turn away. It happens a lot, that kids get no response from adults." The problem is made worse, she continued, "by people who have no understanding, who act aggressive—they just yell out the window, instead of acting normally." Marijke fears that adult frustrations may lead to violence, and told me that one of her male neighbors had publicly threatened to kick her son off his motorbike.

Tolerance and "Setting Limits"

While Marijke spoke at length about adults' aggressiveness toward youth, most of the residents and municipal officials I interviewed were more concerned with youth behavior. In casual conversations and in formal interviews, people talked about the need for youth to be given explicit conduct rules. Their statements revealed a desire for revitalized *sociale controle* in the form of explicit expectations about proper behavior. One civil

servant, a woman named Janneke who worked with the municipal playgrounds, talked about the rise of aggressive behavior there, and connected it to "too much tolerance": "We have been much too permissive. It's no longer clear to kids what they can and cannot do in the playground. I think that's one of the biggest problems: not setting boundaries." Another youth worker agreed: "If no one speaks to youth about their behavior, then the boundaries disappear." These statements make clear that this notion of "too much tolerance" is connected to a lack of interaction, and to over-individualization, rather than to the acceptance of or respect for cultural differences.

Anna, from the organization At Home on the Street, suggested that boundaries were needed throughout society, not just for youth: "I think that the Netherlands, in a certain sense, was too tolerant for a time with a number of things, and not just with youth. In general, too few boundaries were laid down." The current preoccupation with setting limits was noted by many others, sometimes in a joking fashion, as in this comment by one mother: "Well, I think right now [tolerance is] hard to find! Last year, everything was permitted, and today nothing can be permitted!" Hanneke, one of the younger mothers whom I interviewed, spoke about the difficulties of parenting in a political environment that is trying to "turn back the clock":

> Too much is allowed, too much can be done here in the Netherlands . . . Look, father works, mother works. Because everyone wants too many things. And so there are latch-key kids . . . I think the morals, the values have changed too much. They aren't worth anything. And now [the politicians] want to change things, they want everyone to have the same morals, they want mothers to stay home. But it's too late to turn back the clock.

Here, "too much tolerance" is lamented as an obstacle to parenting, both in the fact that it is difficult to set limits for children—as is being increasingly demanded—in a largely

permissive society, and as a critique of a political crack-down that sets unrealistic expectations for youth and parents.

The problem of "too much tolerance" was also linked to ethnic difference and getting ethnic minority parents to set limits for their children. One community worker, Anton, who provides sport activities for youth, stated:

> Many youth get too little direction from their parents. At a certain age, they are told to go play outside, and take care of yourself. Sometimes parents don't even give a curfew to kids, especially with boys. This has to do with culture, Islamic culture. These neighborhoods have become Islamicized, they (Muslims) are taking over. But that's not the way. We live together, and we solve problems together.

This criticism of ethnic minority children not having curfews was an oft-repeated one. It was assumed by many that those children were either not welcome at home or that they were being neglected; in any case, the presence of children outside at night was seen as evidence of improper parenting, and a lack of adherence to Dutch norms.

Anxieties about ethnic difference extend beyond the realm of parenting, as cultural differences were seen as a general obstacle to social cohesion, and therefore to *sociale controle*. Speaking about the increased number of ethnic minorities in the neighborhood, Mieke, a community volunteer, exclaimed: "Now the neighborhood is 70% *allochtonen*, and 30% Dutch, and that's scary. Because where do you get the norms and values then? It's a problem!"[147] Ethnic homogeneity, here, is seen as an essential component for shared norms and values. The framing discourse of norms and values depicts ethnic difference as a problem, resonating with the notion of failed integration.

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[147] The government's estimate, as discussed in Chapter Two, is just over 40% White, and just under 60% non-White and non-native ethnic minorities. What is more important, however, is the palpable sense of anxiety expressed about the fact that the neighborhood has a "majority minority" population.

Mieke went on to criticize the Netherlands for being too tolerant, for not requiring much of citizenship:

> Look, there are women here for 35, 40 years who still don't speak Dutch. They get pregnant, have to stop their language classes, and no one can make them go back [to class]. It's gone bad here. For so many years, we said, "You can do anything here, but you don't *have* to do anything.

Many of those I interviewed believe that Dutch norms and values are in a state of crisis, brought on by a lack of cohesion in modern society. Talk about "norms and values" is, in part, a coded discourse that critiques recent changes in Dutch society thought to be responsible for this lack of cohesion. Discussions about *sociale controle* and the irritation and hectic pace of modern life obliquely criticize the two-parent working household, where mother is no longer home to socialize with the neighbors and watch the children. Comments on the "need for boundaries" are at the same time claims on generational authority, as adults seek to regulate the public behavior of young people. Declarations about the "end of political correctness" and "too much tolerance" place a particular frame around the problem of difference, as Whites attempt to articulate what is, and what is not, properly Dutch. In order to further delineate how the "*hangjongeren* problem" is interpreted through the norms and values discourse, I next discuss three important concepts: *rekening houden* (taking others into account), *aanpassen* (to adjust, fit in), and *aanspreken* (to approach, admonish).

Norms in the Neighborhood

"You Have to Take Others into Account"

As discussed in Chapter Three, *overlast* is a keyword to understanding adult-youth conflicts; it signifies repeated, excessively irritating behavior that typically does not stop upon complaint, and it is the principal way that adults assert that youth behavior is

intolerable. An often used counterpart to *overlast* is the phrase "*rekening houden met anderen*," which means "taking others into account." A person who is causing *overlast* is, by default, not taking others into account. For example, Geertje, an elderly woman, complained: "The area is so loud here, with all the loud music. People don't take each other into account. Everyone does exactly what they want." Interestingly, parents tended to emphasize the mutuality of "taking each other into account," as seen in this statement by Sophie, a mother in her forties: "I don't know why some people complain. I see kids hanging out, playing soccer. But I think that you have to take each other into account. Kids can't go too far, but *that's got to come from both sides*" (emphasis mine).

On the surface, the use of these phrases seems rather straightforward. People can be annoying (*overlast*), but people should be considerate (*rekening houden*); everyone should be less self-absorbed. Within a larger context of anxiety about norms and values, however, the problem of *overlast* can come to take on additional meanings. Among many of the people I interviewed, *overlast*—not taking others into account—was linked to deficient parenting, indifference to others, and a loss of respect for authority and for elders. When adults complained about the youth in the neighborhood, they were also faulting both parents and the larger society for allowing such behavior. In describing her complaints about the neighborhood youth, one woman cried in exasperation: "If parents don't teach their kids to take others into account, how will they learn?" Some adults recalled how conflicts were solved in their youth. Hein, an older man in his late sixties, contrasted his youthful behavior with what he sees around him:

> Of course, look, you are young [and youth misbehave]! But if an adult reprimanded you, you would never talk back to them. I never had a curfew. I asked my father why not, and he said "Do you need one?" And that was the end of the conversation. That's how I was raised. Well, I was no darling, but we did have respect . . . Look, there were norms and values, and that was at home, too.

In their comments about the loss of *sociale controle* and the need for norms and values, adults weave their presentation of local, personal conflicts into a larger narrative about individualization and the loss of traditional forms of authority. Youth *overlast*, then, is seen as a result of late-modern social relations; at the same time, adults' complaints about youth behavior can be understood as a result of their own feelings of entitlement to live without disturbance, another late-modern ideology.

Aanpassen: Adjusting to others

In addition to the idea of "taking others into account," the norms and values discourse is linked to the notion of *aanpassen*, or "adjusting" to one's surroundings. In interviews, this word was used both to argue that youth should "*aanpassen* with the neighborhood," and that ethnic minorities should "*aanpassen* to Dutch culture." The use of *aanpassen* signifies that the behavior of a person or a group is infringing on others. In the Smith Street neighborhood, local authorities moderated a series of meetings between adult residents and youth, on the subject of youth behavior. One of the women who initiated and helped organize these meetings, Helena, explained:

> After the adults met on our own the first time, and we saw that there were a lot of complaints, we had another meeting and we wanted the youth to come too. To get them to *aanpassen* to the residential surroundings, to prevent them from playing soccer, hanging around.

In this statement, we can see how the use of *aanpassen* allows Helena to assert that there are coherent, agreed-upon, and already existing standards for behavior, and to make claims that those standards are being trespassed. Ethnographic research in the neighborhood, however, reveals the contested nature of such assertions. The youth who hung out in the area had a much longer familiarity with the neighborhood's standards, as most of them had played and hung around in the neighborhood for more than 15 years,

while Helena had moved there only months before the conflict began. Helena's assertions were also contested by some parents, who, as shown above, asserted that they enjoy "a lively neighborhood," preferring the youths' noise to living in a neighborhood that is like an "old-age home." We can see, in this example, that the use of *aanpassen* can be read as a kind of political move, one that allows the speaker to assert power, claim authority, and establish precedence; it can also indicate that the speaker believes that he or she has certain rights which are being trespassed.

The use of *aanpassen* is also noticeable in discussions about the "integration" of ethnic minorities, as we saw in Balkenende's discussion about norms and values. Certain ethnic minority groups are widely thought to not have integrated, or to have integrated badly, and are the target of much social policy.[148] In interviews, some suggested that there exists a struggle over who has to *aanpassen*, Whites or ethnic minorities; such statements reveal a feeling of being "put upon." As Hans, a White man in his fifties and a community leader, who told me how tolerant the Netherlands has always been, explained to me: "There are the traditions of Holland. You (ethnic minorities) have to participate in those, too. But these people want *us* to change. [They]'ve got to *aanpassen*." At another point in the interview, he explained to me that some ethnic groups *aanpassen* better than others:

> Hans: All Dutch think, if you come here, you should learn Dutch because you want to. But these people don't want to integrate. They live here in the Netherlands, but actually they live in Morocco, in their own life world.
>
> Erin: What about people from Suriname?

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[148] "Integration," in its current meaning in the Netherlands, may be more accurately translated as "assimilation." Such a translation is supported by the use of *aanpassen*, meaning to adjust oneself or to fit in, as a related, sometimes interchangeable concept. The politics of ethnicity and current integration policies, such as obligatory language classes, are discussed in detail in Chapter Six.

Hans: Well, no. That's different. Indonesians *aanpassen* well, and so do Surinamese. Of course, there are some who don't *aanpassen*, but that's true of every sort of people.

Erin: Do you think Whites have to *aanpassen*?

Hans: We do, already! For years, for centuries.

Many of the people I interviewed told me that they think it fine for someone to keep their cultural traditions, that everyone has a right to do so, but they drew the line at knowing the Dutch language. Willem, a police officer in his early forties, explained his view, which echoed the opinion of so many others:

> I think it's really crazy—and it's not just me—if you are here 30 years and you don't speak a word of Dutch. It causes so many problems! If the school sends a letter home, the kid has to translate for the parents, and the kid can totally lie, and say "The letter says I'm wonderful!" That sort of thing happens! The kids have power over the parents! We've missed the boat, when the guest workers came. That's when we should have started the integration programs. That was a big mistake. If you're going to live here, you should speak Dutch!

The perceived loss of parental authority and the potential for disorder here is a notable source of anxiety. In addition, his statement critiques the government's inability to manage cultural difference; less is being said about the content of cultural differences than about how to manage them, how to create order. In most cases, talk about language deficits shifted easily to other kinds of disorder; shortly after the above statement, the conversation slid from talking about the need to know Dutch to crime and the need for ethnic minority parents to take responsibility for their children. Willem continued:

> With all respect, it's the Moroccans and the Algerians who [commit all the crimes]. Maybe it's got something to do with the culture. I know parents think, "At home we're the boss, on the street it's the police who's in charge, and at school it's the teacher." And they shirk from responsibility. They must learn that they are *always* responsible for their kids. But that's part of their culture.

The improper management of ethnic difference, here, has clear results: generational authority is overturned, parents are negligent in their obligations, the duty of raising

children is foisted off on schools and police officers, and the law is defied. In the current context, the term *aanpassen* implies a whole set of notions about the role of the social welfare state in managing ethnic difference.

People must *aanpassen*, or risk further diminishing neighborhood cohesion, *sociale controle* and boundaries; *aanpassen* is cast, as well, as the internalization of dominant norms and values. When the language of *aanpassen* and norms and values are both employed to discuss conflicts between White adults and White youths, this significance of the term becomes prominent. Thomas, a civil servant who was actively involved in moderating the Smith Street neighborhood meetings and creating conduct rules for the White youth there, explained it to me in this way:

> I hope that by creating conduct rules, we can bring a little norms and values in that direction. [We can say:] 'Don't you think that you kids could *aanpassen* a bit? Try to convince us that you could *aanpassen* a bit.' And the rules really are a tool— it's about what happens in your head, you have to internalize it. That's one hope, to have a conversation and change their heads a little bit.

Statements such as this make clear that there is a parallel struggle to get both youth and ethnic minorities to "internalize" proper Dutchness, to get them to "change their heads a little bit," to make rules explicit, and—perhaps most importantly—to get these groups to discipline themselves. If youth "change their heads" then they will not infringe on the personal freedoms and aesthetic expectations of some adults, and they will relieve the organs of the social welfare state from having to intervene.

Not Aanspreekbaar: "You just can't talk to those kids."

In the previous chapter, I discussed the way in which Pim Fortuyn was praised for making certain things "say-able" (*bespreekbaar*); similarly, Jan Peter Balkenende wrote about the need to "name the problem" as discussed above. These sentiments resonate in the next term that I want to discuss: *aanspreekbaar*, which literally means "speakable to,"

or "approachable." If someone can speak to an offending party about a complaint, then the offender is considered "approachable," or "speakable to." Being approachable, however, means more than just being able to be spoken to; the term implies that the person being spoken to will recognize the complaint as valid, and change their behavior. Offenders who won't change their behavior, who ignore or laugh off a complaint, or who respond rudely are typically dismissed with the phrase: "They are not *aanspreekbaar*." It should be clear by now that the combination of a generally diminished respect for authority and the sense that one is entitled to live as one chooses could contribute to a widespread reduction of *aanspreekbaar*-ness.

The ability to *aanspreken* (speak to, admonish someone) is highly valued because it is thought to indicate a certain level of social cohesion and *sociale controle*; I would suggest that the term also carries a whole set of ideas about adult authority and individualization. Jan, youth policy maker in his early forties, explained it this way:

> A lot of *overlast* and criminality exists because no one reacts any more. A sort of no man's land is created. Youth social workers can get a group of youth to stop being bothersome . . . and also get the anonymity of the big city to be reduced. Of course, we can't make it a village, but it's about getting that kind of *sociale controle*. And then I think about what childrearing is, what growing up is, and, I think it is being *aanspreken*[149] if you go over the boundary, if your behavior goes over the boundary. Someone has to approach you, *aanspreken* you.

Police officers often used this term when evaluating neighborhood dynamics. Cornelius, a Neighborhood Director, sought to assure me that the local youth in his district, even though they sometimes engaged in mischief, were *aanspreekbaar* (speakable to). In another neighborhood, his colleague Willem explained why the adult-youth neighborhood meetings were a positive development: "Youth and adults get to know

[149] As noted earlier in this study, I have deliberately chosen to use the infinitive form of all Dutch verbs here, rather than potentially confuse non-Dutch readers with many different forms of the same word.

each other through such a meeting, and now adults can *aanspreken* youth about their behavior. The anonymity is disappearing, and now there is more understanding for each other." Other interviewees suggested that adults have an obligation to *aanspreken* youth and each other, and, further, that many adults are not fulfilling their role. Janneke, a playground worker, told me that aggressive behavior results when there are too few boundaries. There is a need for explicit rules, she argued: "Even for adults. [For example, we could create a rule that] we *aanspreken* everyone. Not tolerate that sort of behavior." Again, here, we see "tolerate" as an indication of a lack of engagement. It is clear that talk about being able to *aanspreken* youth is not simply about being able to converse with youth; it is also a way of talking about authority, compliance, and interaction.

Most telling, perhaps, are efforts to get youth to *aanspreken* each other about their behavior, to discipline themselves without adult intervention. While many criticize the self-absorption of some adults, and long for greater social cohesion, in the end, what is most desired is for youth to regulate themselves. In the next chapter, I discuss in detail the conduct rules posted in the Smith Street neighborhood, which included the following text: "We, the youth in the neighborhood, will *aanspreken* each other about undesirable behavior." Many adults are concerned about reducing *overlast* and getting youth to *aanpassen*, but they appear to be pushing the responsibility of both *aanspreken* and being *aanspreekbaar* onto the youths themselves.

Interventions: The "Golden Rules," the Respect Project, and Greeting Zones

The 10 Golden Rules of Gouda

In the summer of 2002, the city of Gouda invited all its residents to participate in a city-wide initiative to select "10 Golden Rules," which would help improve the quality of life in Gouda.[150] More than 3,800 residents, about 12% of the population, selected 10 rules from a larger list of 35 compiled by city governance departments and civic groups in Gouda. The following rules were selected, listed in the order of the number of votes each received:

> What you break, you have to pay for yourself.
> Don't use violence.
> Clean your garbage up yourself.
> Intimidating hanging around is *asociaal*.[151]
> Speak Dutch, then we understand each other.
> Respect each other always.
> Speeding is deadly, so just act normal.
> Parents raise their own kids.
> Don't taunt, tease or discriminate.
> Police officers are here for all of us—respect, please.

The most famous "golden rule," interestingly enough ("do unto others as you would have them do unto you") is not included. Instead, these rules tend to address more specific behaviors, which can be divided into two broad themes: 1) personal responsibility (pay for what you break, clean up after yourself, and parents raise their own kids), and 2) civil public behavior (don't use violence, speak Dutch, don't hang around in an intimidating

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[150] The use of "Golden" is a word play on the name of the town, Gouda, for "*goud*" means "gold."

[151] The history of "*asociaal*" is complicated, and discussed in more depth in Chapter Two. Meaning simply "not social," the term is used to describe behavior thought to be uncivil or inconsiderate and to chastise ("Don't be so *asociaal*"). While it can be used to mark rather inconsequential behaviors, such as arguing in the street, in the early 1900s certain families were designated "*asociaal*," and segregated into residential camps, where they were trained in hygiene, parenting and household practices (De Regt 1982). Therefore, the use of *asociaal* is rather loaded, and many professional policy makers and social workers became uncomfortable when asked about this term, telling me: "It's not something that we say. You might talk about someone being socially marginalized, but not *asociaal*."

fashion, respect each other, drive normally, don't taunt, tease or discriminate, and respect police officers). It is beyond the scope of this chapter to examine each of these rules in depth, but certain themes clearly resonate with the discussions held in earlier chapters of this study: a focus on parenting, speaking Dutch, acting "normal," and respecting authority. In addition, the rules speak to notions about responsibility, and as such condemn over-individualization; even speeding and littering are commonly seen as anti-social, or self-absorbed, behaviors. With these themes, it is plain to see that some of the rules specifically address ethnic minorities and uncivil youths, although they are ostensibly directed toward everyone. I would like to suggest that these rules are a kind of reaction to a perception of being imposed upon by others; if everyone would just follow these rules, no one would be inconvenienced or bothered.

Most rules include the use of an explicit "you" ("What you break…") or an implied "you" ("Don't use violence"), but two rules are articulated in a more indirect formulation:

> Intimidating hanging around is *asociaal*.
> Parents raise their own kids.

It would have been possible, for example, to phrase the rule about hanging around in this way: "Don't hang around in an intimidating way—that's *asociaal*." The rule about childrearing similarly could have been rephrased as: "You are responsible for raising your own children." Instead these rules are formulated and resonate slightly differently. While the other rules are directives that either state or imply a "you" (Don't use violence), the indirect formulation here works to grant these rules universality, and implicitly marks out a set of others who don't know how to behave, or who don't comply. The rule reads: "Parents raise their own kids"—not parents *should* raise their own kids, or

you should raise your own kids, but parents (always and everywhere) raise their own kids. The meaning is clear: parents raise their own kids—you are responsible, not anyone else. In this way, these two rules claim validity in all times and places, and appear to be extricated from any specific conflict. The problem with this indirect, universal formulation, however, is that both of these rules are very much situated in a particular context.

What makes hanging around appear intimidating? What is perceived as intimidating is perceived as such within a particular context, and right now, the context is twofold: 1) youth are widely perceived, and depicted in the news media, as potentially dangerous, and 2) some ethnic minorities, namely Moroccans and Antilleans, are thought to be more aggressive and potentially more violent than other youth in the Netherlands. While assuming universality and ahistoricity, this rule about "intimidating hanging around" is actually quite pointed. Similarly, the rule "Parents raise their own children" is stated as if this idea were a universal truth. But, as discussed earlier in this chapter, many people long for the days of increased *sociale controle*, when other parents and neighbors intervened, and helped discipline children. The inclusion of this rule tells us less about overall attitudes toward childrearing, and more about the common perception that some ethnic minority parents should take more responsibility for making their children behave properly; it suggests that White Dutch do not want to take responsibility for helping discipline those youth, and that they find the mis-parenting of those youth to be an intrusion on their personal freedoms. Both of these rules, then, speak in an oblique fashion to perceived problems caused by ethnic difference—but do not name them as

such. Instead, the rules are presented as applying to all members of the population, when, in reality, they target specific groups.

The use of "we" also reveals more than the text of the rules might first suggest. In this instance, ethnic difference is invoked more plainly: "Speak Dutch, then we understand each other." As discussed throughout this study, speaking Dutch was quite politicized during my research. English speakers are rarely subjected to "dirty looks" if they speak English in public; in contrast, speaking Arabic, Turkish or Berber often draws negative reactions. The underlying issue here is who is included in "us," and who needs to be able to understand whom. While it is true that when a group of Moroccan boys speak Berber together they understand each other perfectly well, that is not what is meant by this rule. The inclusion of this rule shows that speaking Dutch is considered a moral good, for it allows "us" to understand one another. Not speaking Dutch is a transgression, for it blocks communication (and creates anxiety about what is—perhaps conspiratorially—being said). These rules, read carefully within their current context, reveal a great deal about contemporary ethnic relations in the Netherlands today. Although they are presented as city-wide standards for behavior, it is clear that at least some of the rules speak directly to ethnic minorities. It is worth noting that, rather than articulating common Dutch norms and values—such as "be frank, speak your mind directly, don't talk around the subject" or "don't be a braggart, don't try to stand out"—the rules are a curious mix of specific prohibitions (don't speed) and vague exhortations (respect each other), that address both general and target populations. They appear to be less an articulation of common, agreed-upon "norms and values" that are shared across a diverse, multi- ethnic or even Dutch society, than they are an attempt to name certain

behaviors, and groups, as not-yet-Dutch. There is some contradiction here, because, as I have tried to show, delegating responsibility for ordering the social world to the social welfare state and being heavily concerned with one's personal freedoms are, in fact, important late-modern Dutch norms and values.

The Respect Project

The Respect Project was initiated in the spring of 2003 to address the problem of uncivil and sometimes aggressive behavior at the nine municipally supervised playgrounds in Amsterdam North. Playground leaders had become worried about a rise in aggressive behavior not only between children and playground workers, and between children and other children, but also between the adult staff themselves. Leaders noticed that interactions between the adult staff were becoming emotional, difficult conflicts more easily. The Project planned to organize group discussions and creative endeavors, both among playground workers themselves and with children, about the meaning of "respect," which would lead to the creation of a set of "interaction rules" (*omgangsregels*), or conduct rules. These rules would then be posted both in the adults' workplaces and at the outdoor playgrounds. I was unable to follow up on the process of this project after the end of my fieldwork; the following discussion is based upon an analysis only of the goals of the project, the first draft set of conduct rules, and the final set of conduct rules.

One of the ideas shaping the Respect Project is the idea of "societal childrearing," outlined by Micha de Winter, a prominent educational theorist at the University of Utrecht.[152] De Winter argues that while parents are primarily responsible for raising

[152] De Winter's work and impact is also discussed in Chapter Four.

children, many other adults such as teachers, playground leaders and neighborhood adults can impact how children are raised, and that society should invest in the "social pedagogic infrastructure." While De Winter has offered an eloquent critique of adults' overreactions to hang-around youth, his ideas also resonate with projects to create conduct rules. Both his ideas and these projects call for adults to take more of a part in the lives of youth; in both, the conduct rules themselves can be framed as part of the social pedagogic infrastructure. These ideas also resonate with the discourse of norms and values; in an interview with one of the playground organization workers about the Respect Project and the trend of creating conduct rules, she stated, "It is new, really. In the Netherlands the whole discussion of norms and values has arisen so strongly."

I was able to attend one of the first meetings for a group of professionals who work at the youth centers, playgrounds, schools, and community safety offices, when they were introduced to the Respect Project. During this meeting, a preliminary list of rules, as proposed by the playground staff, was distributed:

1. We do not rant or make annoying remarks about anyone
2. We do not swear
3. We do not use alcohol or drugs
4. We never use violence or the threat thereof. We don't hit or kick or fight.
5. We do not tease or taunt, we do not laugh or swear at anyone
6. We do not gossip
7. We do not bother anyone with sexual remarks or behavior
8. If someone bothers you, ask him to stop. If that does not work, ask for help from a playground worker.
9. We help others keep to these rules
10. We take care that the area remains clean and undamaged
11. We put trash in the garbage can
12. We have respect for the environment

When I returned to the Netherlands in the summer of 2005, I visited one of the playgrounds and noted down the text of the sign posted on the door:

> We find a pleasant atmosphere important on the playground. RESPECT is our code word. Therefore there are rules and agreements that everyone must follow. In the playground everyone is welcome. We treat each other in a respectful manner. We greet each other when we arrive. Let the playground leader know that you are here!
>
> 1. We don't exclude anyone. We don't discriminate, pester, or tease.
> 2. We listen to each other and the playground leader.
> 3. We talk through fights, we don't swear or curse.
> 4. We don't use violence, thus don't hit, kick, or fight.
> 5. We don't harass anyone with sexual remarks or behavior.
> 6. We don't use any alcohol or drugs.
> 7. We keep the playground clean and whole. Garbage goes in the wastebasket and we don't break anything.
> 8. We show respect for nature. Thus we don't harm any plants or trees.
>
> And if you are still pestered or harassed? Do you feel unsafe? Then tell the playground leader!

These rules use "we" in their formulation; they assert that there already exists a common understanding of what is proper behavior, while at the same time they seek to disallow particular behaviors. In the first draft of the rules, playground visitors were encouraged to discipline one another ("we help each other keep to these rules"); this rule is not included in the final version, but there remains the impression that problems should be solved without the help of adults. This impression is established first by the very existence of the rules (each person is responsible for following the rules on his/her own), and, second, by the final text: "And if you are still pestered or harassed? . . . Then tell the playground leader." The "if you are still" formulation suggests that the rules should have solved any misbehavior or conflicts; if any problem remains, *then* one should tell the playground leader.

Many of the rules deal with verbal behavior and verbal aggression. As discussed above, this may be related to a common concern among neighborhood residents and municipal officials about adults' ability to *aanspreken*, or "approach" youth, as well as to a larger pattern of responding to the criticism of others with anger. The attention to verbal interactions may be an attempt to make the youth more "approachable." Reading these rules closely shows that having "respect" for others means being "approachable" and being properly civil in public. As one social worker said:

> I think we have been too tolerant—respect has more value. Respect for people. We have too often been too tolerant of behavior we don't like. It's not that you have to make a judgment, but you *can aanspreken* children. I think, in the Netherlands, tolerance has turned into indifference. With "respect," we can—there are agreements we can make with one another. And every person can be different—not everyone has to eat at six p.m.—but you can agree about behavior in public space.

Here again we can see that "too much tolerance" is not a rejection of the acceptance of cultural difference, as the anti-multiculturalists and "new realists" would like us to believe, but a criticism of the tendency toward self-involvement and the desire to create ordered public spaces. While Paul Scheffer, as discussed in Chapter Six, also criticized tolerance-as-indifference, he did it to argue that cultural differences created problems for society, and that the acceptance of cultural differences in the form of multiculturalism created an underclass. This ethnographic research shows how his critique resonated with, but did not mirror, many people's frustration with the results of intense individualization and the social welfare state's inability to solve social problems.

The Greeting Zone

In addition to publicly posted conduct rules, some neighborhoods have created "Greeting Zones" (*groetzonen*), which are streets or areas marked by signs that encourage people to say hello to each other when they pass on the street. The GroenLinks (Green-Left) Party

began this initiative in 2002 in Rotterdam; below is a picture of the signs sponsored by the party that feature the colors green and red, which are the colors of the party:

Figure 17. Green-Left Party-created street sign: "You can say hello!"

On the Green-Left website, Greeting Zones are introduced with the following words:

> Imagine, you're walking through an unfamiliar street and everyone that you pass, young and old, white and black, man and woman says "hello," "good morning," waves at you, or nods at you in a friendly way.
>
> Too good to be true?
>
> It's worth the effort to try by beginning to say hello!
>
> Green-Left will give a helping hand.[153]

The website continues on, with a link that poses the question: "Why Have a Greeting Zone?" Pressing on the link, one reads:

[153] http://www.groetzone.nl

> *Greeting is normal*. Greeting is normal. That is the conviction of Green-Left. Alas, this normal action is falling by the wayside more and more in the hectic society. We are living next to each other. (*We leven langs elkaar heen.*) Because of this, misunderstandings, prejudices, and feelings of fear and insecurity arise.
>
> Meeting people is of vital importance for everyone to survive (*om te overleven*). Every meeting begins with a greeting.
>
> *Greeting is polite*. Greeting a stranger on the street is a pleasant and simple way to show respect. With a greeting you show that you see the other person. He or she is welcome in your neighborhood. If people return the greeting, it indicates mutual respect. That is the only basis upon which people can dare to speak to each other about positive and negative behavior.
>
> *Greeting is safe*. Safety is the political issue of 2002. The demand for repression and stiffer punishments is great. Green-Left is, in this respect, convinced that without prevention society can never grow safer. One of the ways in which unsafeness can be fought is to have neighbors get to know each other. When people in the street get to know each other (again) there is an atmosphere in which people look out for and attend to one another.
>
> Such a sign shows that in this street, the custom is to greet each other. If it brings passersby but a smile to their face, then something has already been achieved.

The website explains that Greeting Zones were initiated in response to the City Etiquette Project in Rotterdam, which was an effort to create guidelines for how people in Rotterdam should interact with one another; the planning document explicitly related the purpose of the project to the problem of implicit cultural norms and values, and the need to make such explicit (GSB-Sociaal 2001).

Clearly, while the Green-Left initiative was not intended to regulate behavior in the same way as the conduct rules discussed above, nor does it use the same language as the Christian Democrats in describing social problems, it is interesting that the Green-Left party considered this initiative important to pursue. We can perhaps read their efforts as a more progressive response, from a party which has tried to align itself with the rights of ethnic minorities and to call attention to discrimination, to counter the norms and values discourse by placing the onus of "getting along" on everyone, equally. What

remains noticeable, however, is that the norms and values discourse still remains the dominant frame; "Greeting Zones" do not manage to escape the paradigmatic definition of the problem.

Conclusion: "Norms and values," Whiteness and Dutchness

In a public forum on norms and values in 2002, the leader of the Green-Left Party, Femke Halsema, challenged her co-panelists and the members of the audience to name the "norms and values" that were the supposed subject of the forum. The fact that no one could articulate a coherent answer is telling. Scholars of Whiteness (Frankenberg 1993, for example) argue that the power of White identity lies in the fact that its qualities are unnamed. Whiteness is what is unspoken, unmarked; the ethnic or racial other is the one labeled, for example, as "lazy," "violent," or "promiscuous." As in Whiteness, Dutchness is not defined; its qualities are given, it is the norm.

The following example helps to illustrate the workings of Dutchness. As we have seen, problems with young people of ethnic minority background are widely assumed to be rooted in their ethnic difference, rather than in the dynamics and inequities of Dutch society. Disregard for authority is, in this way, often seen through an ethnic lens, although it is arguable that respect for authority has diminished throughout Dutch society. Ibrahim Yerden, an anthropologist who was born and raised in Turkey and who is now employed the Provincial Institute for Societal Development in the Netherlands, gave an interview with d*e Volkskrant* in which he discussed the way in which news reports covered the murder of a White teacher by a Turkish student in an interview. Stating that the reports characterized the student as trying to "defend his honor" and related his crime to traditional Turkish culture, Yerden stated: "But in Turkey respect for teachers is as

important as one's honor. I would say, instead, that this is a Dutch problem. Authority is no longer recognized here, not by Whites and not by *allochtonen*" (DV 2004c). Yerden's words make clear that within the framework of Dutchness, aberrant behavior is attributable to "otherness"—to not-acting-Dutch—rather than to patterns of behavior that are Dutch or that encompass both Dutch people and others.

The discourse about norms and values is based upon two separate but related suppositions. The first is that norms and values must be shared; agreement about what is proper will create cohesion, integrate the population, and discipline disorder. Secondly, norms and values must be made explicit, to make clear what is acceptable and what is not. An assumption underlies both of these suppositions: ethnic others—and those not-yet-adult—need to learn how to behave, while (truly) Dutch people already know how. The norms and values discourse asserts that there are a set of characteristics that form the foundation of Dutch society, which must be adhered to in order for society to function. Conduct rules, arising in relation to the discourse of norms and values, are an attempt to articulate basic guidelines for behavior, and are clearly targeted toward ethnic others and youth. As we have seen, however, such conduct rules are not specific to Dutch culture: prohibitions on speeding or fighting or alcohol, for example, are not particularly Dutch norms. Instead of stating specific Dutch behaviors that all members of Dutch society must practice, these rules reveal themselves as simply crude disciplinary projects. They are an assertion that one standard of behavior, one kind of use of public space, one method for solving conflicts is legitimate. Those who do not adhere, those who are in need of such rules, are cast as somehow pre-social, not yet fully Dutch.

This chapter has shown that the discourse of norms and values, the multiple ideas about tolerance, the problem of individualization, and the disappointment in the efforts of the social welfare state all resonate with and underlie a range of interventions. In the next chapter, I closely examine an extended conflict between White adults and White youth, concerning the behavior of the youth in neighborhood public spaces, and the conduct rules that emerged from a series of *overleggen* (meetings). By examining the perspectives of adults with complaints, parents, youth, police officers, social workers, and civil servants, I show that the definition of the conflict—and the question of whether there even was a problem—was highly contested. While the norms and values discourse asserts that there are obvious, common standards to which everyone can be held, the next chapter makes clear that there are always competing interests, as well as conflicting definitions of proper behavior and "quality of life," even outside of the framework of "failed multiculturalism."

Chapter Eight – Establishing "Rules for Living"

Figure 18. Smith Street "Rules for Living"

It is permitted for youth from the neighborhood to remain in the passageway as long as the following rules for living (*leefregel*) are followed:

Rules for living with each other and for each other

We keep the passageway clean
We don't play soccer in the passageway
We cause no noise-*overlast*
We don't ride motorbikes in the passageway
We speak to each other (*aanspreken*[154]) about undesirable behavior.

Winters, we may be in the passageway until 10 p.m. and summers until 11 p.m.

Introduction: Establishing *leefregels*, or "rules for living"

In this chapter I examine in detail a neighborhood-level conflict that endured, and escalated, over more than a year, and which resulted in the "rules for living" shown above. A couple of adults had complained to the municipality of Amsterdam North that

[154] For more explanation of the use of the term *aanspreken*, see Chapter Seven.

they had *overlast*, or excessive nuisance,[155] from some of the youth in their part of the neighborhood. In response, local authorities moderated a series of meetings between the adults and youth in the hope of resolving the conflict. During these meetings the local authorities initiated the development of a set of rules for living, the text of which was to be posted on a large plaque at a youth hang-out spot, as shown in the photo above. After a year of meetings, the plaque was hung at an unveiling celebration, complete with refreshments and music; within just a few days the summer curfew time (23.00) was scratched off, and the plaque was taken down to be repaired and sealed, to prevent further vandalism. After about a month, the plaque was re-hung without any fanfare, only to be stolen that very night.

This chapter presents a narrative of the events around this neighborhood-based conflict and the establishment of these rules, highlighting the competing claims on neighborhood space, the differing expectations for what was permissible in public space, and the struggle to assert particular sets of norms, as articulated by residents at the meetings and in interviews. Stories about this conflict substantially contradicted one another, making it nearly impossible to piece together a coherent timeline of how events unfolded. Rather than attempting to discern "what really happened," I show in the pages that follow the range of assertions made, and highlight how these assertions are often political moves, or attempts to depict one's actions in a particular light. In their conversations with me and in neighborhood meetings, those involved worked to be read sympathetically, painting themselves as victims, innocents, good parents, active community members, reasonable and normal folks, professionals, no-nonsense

[155] For a more nuanced discussion of the term *overlast*, see Chapter Three.

authorities, and understanding allies. I argue that the "rules for living" project ultimately failed because the meetings worked to create the appearance of consensus, while actually exacerbating neighborhood differences. The plaque, as the symbol of that idealized consensus, was removed altogether by someone in the neighborhood, the blankness of the wall serving to lay bare the conflict that still existed.

Conflict on "Smith Street":[156] An overview

The Presentation of Complaint

In June of 2002, one of the residents of Smith Street, a middle-aged White woman I will call "Helena," began to petition some of her neighbors to attend a meeting to address the problem of youth *overlast*, specifically at the hang-out spot near her apartment and in the common courtyard. In July, 10 residents, one youth, and two local officials met; at that meeting complaints were voiced about a range of problems, summarized in the minutes[157] as follows:

> Inventory of complaints from nearby residents:
>
> Motorbike noise, through the streets, in the passageway, near the storage units and their entrances. Where you can't open your door or your window because of the noise and you can't hear your TV anymore. It's been going on three or four years. The youth gather in the storage units with the motorbikes, also at night from midnight until two or three a.m. (residents can't sleep). Smoking pot in the storage units, causing *overlast* from the odor, but also from the gas odor from the motorbikes. The storage units don't look nice. The entrances are very narrow. Slamming the storage unit doors. Pissing against the doors.
>
> Loud music from cars that park in the passageway or under someone's window, along with yelling, talking, *hangjongeren* making noise. Smoking pot and the odor that comes into houses. Music can be sometimes so loud from the cars that the windows of houses begin to vibrate.

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[156] This is a pseudonym for a subsection of the ethnically mixed, working- and lower-middle class neighborhood that was described in more detail in Chapter Two, called IJplein. The Smith Street area is comprised of the apartment buildings that surround a common courtyard and the streets encircling those buildings, described further below.

[157] These minutes were taken and written up by Helena.

> Playing soccer really hard in the passageway, against the doors and ceiling, so that it sounds inside the houses. Lots of graffiti on the doors and the walls of the passageway which isn't cleaned up. There is frequently a lot of litter in the passageway left by *hangjongeren*, for example broken (beer) bottles.
>
> Playing soccer in the communal garden between the apartment buildings and on the street that passes through and against the electrical shed. From such soccer playing, many windows have been broken, garden hedges damaged, plants and things in the gardens broken. If the ball comes in someone's garden, it's retrieved without first seeking permission, fences and trellises are climbed over and balls are retrieved even from balconies. Balls are kicked really hard against the metal electrical shed, making a lot of noise. They provoke.
>
> People don't dare put up satellite dishes for radio or TV because of this soccer playing. Not only the big youth, but also the smaller youth play so hard.

The high attendance and the numerous complaints at this meeting appeared to convey a unified picture to the local officials: many residents were very unhappy with the youth, and the hang-out spot near Helena's apartment was a significant problem area. Under closer observation, however, this unified picture falls apart; in interviews and subsequent meetings, I found that there were a range of motivations for attending these meetings. Many other residents did not have any complaints, and some even resented Helena's organizing. Some attended because they wanted to complain about motorbike noise, but did not live near the hang-out spot and had no complaints about the youth there, which was Helena's primary complaint. Even at that first meeting, participants noted that some of the complaints listed above had nothing to do with the youth: loud music was played by many people in their apartments, and most youth don't have automobiles and aren't responsible for the loud music from cars; the houses have very thin walls; and the mechanisms that slow the outside building doors from closing quickly are often broken, causing them to slam shut. Some who attended these meetings told me later that their principal concern was that the neighborhood needed to be cleaned up; they hoped that the local authorities might set out some flowerboxes and beautify the area. This range of

motivations for attending the meeting complicated the black and white picture Helena and a few others were trying to paint: an image of widespread adult discontent with extreme, intolerable youth behavior.

The Space, the Attendees, and the Interviewees

The meetings were almost exclusively held in the nearby publicly funded neighborhood community center, which is largely an adult-dominated space, providing room for activities for adults and younger children under the age of 12.[158] The center holds exercise classes, language lessons and parenting workshops, regular neighborhood committee meetings, and holiday parties; in addition, local authorities and social work agencies and networks hold meetings here. The meetings were held in a large open space within the center, with folding tables and chairs arranged in a square; coffee and tea were provided, but smoking was prohibited, much to the dismay of some of the participants.[159] Generally, the meetings took place in the evenings, and lasted one to one-and-one-half hours. Between June 2002 and June 2003, eight meetings took place; one of these meetings was attended only by adults and local authorities, and two were attended only by youth and local authorities.

The attendance at these meetings varied, but on average there were about 10 adults and five youth present, and three local authorities.[160] These categories of "adults" and "youth" require some disaggregating, however. As noted above, not all of the adults

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[158] Only one meeting was held elsewhere, at the police station; perhaps unsurprisingly, only one youth attended that meeting.

[159] In a moment of levity, one of the leaders admonished another who began to light a cigarette. Pointing to a no-smoking sign, the official joked that if the youth were going to have to follow rules, so was he.

[160] On one occasion there were 14 adults and 15 youth, and on two occasions only one youth was in attendance.

were there to voice complaints: some attended out of a sense of civic responsibility to participate in neighborhood affairs but had no actual grievances, although the authorities moderating the meetings did not, at least in the earlier meetings, make such a distinction. Other "civic observers" had unrelated complaints, while still other adults present were parents of the youth in attendance, there to support their children. I ended up distinguishing between "complainants" (including those whose complaints are unrelated to youth behavior), "civic observers," and "parents." At most meetings, there were, on average, five complainants, four civic observers, and one parent. Interestingly, most of the participants used the term "*bewoners*," or "residents" to describe the adults—no matter if they were complainants, observers, or parents—at the meeting, and "*jongeren*," or "youth" to describe the youth, even though almost all of the youth who attended were also residents of the neighborhood. This terminological distinction both obscured the internal differentiation among adults, and implicitly lent a greater legitimacy to the complainants' claims on the neighborhood.

All of the complainants were over the age of 60, except for Helena, the woman who had initially organized the intervention of the authorities, who was aged 46 (b. 1955) at the time the conflicts began. The youth, all male, were aged 12 to 23, with the majority aged between 18 and 23. Their parents were in their early and mid-forties, and the civic observers ranged in age from their mid-thirties to seventies. Almost all of the participants, including the local authorities, were White Dutch; one of the parents was Surinamese, and two of the youth had one White and one non-White parent. Adult women made up the majority of attendees, heavily represented among both among complainants and civic observers, while the parents in attendance were more often

fathers. In an average meeting attended by ten adults, four of the five complainants would be female, three of the four civic observers would be female, and there would be one father present. The overrepresentation of women at these meetings may be attributable to multiple factors. Helena had gone door-to-door, and may have made an acquaintanceship with other women more easily, leading to more females in the pool of possible attendees. As discussed in Chapter Five, women tend to be have a greater level of feelings of being unsafe than men, which may have led more female residents to share Helena's concerns. In addition, it is possible that older women carry a greater sense of responsibility to be neighborly, given their upbringing in a period when most of their mothers stayed home, and interacted with the other mothers in the neighborhood when shopping, cleaning the windows or the stoop, or exercising *sociale controle* over each other's children. It is interesting that fathers often came to lend support to their sons, perhaps simultaneously showing their parental authority/engagement to assuage the complainants, as well as exerting their own authority to raise their children.

Most of the residents, adults and youth, worked or had worked in working- and lower-middle class positions; they were, for example, construction laborers, factory workers, postal workers, secretaries, hairdressers, and retail workers. Many had attained a mid-level vocational education (MBO, or *Middelbaar Beroeps Onderwijs*), while Helena had attained the next higher level, and held a more white-collar position. It would be too facile, however, to depict this as a simple class-based neighborhood division, as the other complainants were working class.[161] The meetings were moderated by at least

[161] I do think it likely, however, based on clues such as her modern home furnishings and her pride in certain activities in which she takes part, that Helena aspires to live a genteel, middle-class lifestyle, and may have felt dislike for the working-class elements that were part of her surroundings, although she never voiced those sentiments to me.

one local authority from the following agencies and institutions: the borough office of Neighborhood Management (*Buurtbeheer*), the police, and the organization "At Home on the Street" (*Thuis op Straat*), discussed in Chapter Four, which employs adults to visit neighborhood playgrounds and play with younger children in order to increase social cohesion in the neighborhood.[162] On occasion, other local authorities were in attendance, but did not moderate, including representatives from the apartment complex leasing agency and an organization that handles complaints about "extreme *overlast*." The moderators were all in their forties or early fifties, and also all White; they were equally divided in terms of gender. In addition, three lower-level, younger male and female staff people from At Home on the Street also attended a few of the meetings, two of whom were ethnic minorities, but none of these staff people took a leadership role in the meetings. Few local authorities actually lived in Amsterdam North, and many had a higher educational level than the residents.

Just as the category "adults" requires clarification, so does the category "youth." There were many groups of youth in the neighborhood, and their membership was not fixed. One group of White male youths (18-23 years old) hung around in the interior courtyard and under the covered passageway near Helena's apartment, and out of all the neighborhood youth, they were most likely to attend these meetings. These youth were employed, having gone from school directly to working full-time, but still hung around in the neighborhood in the evening, sometimes then heading over the river to the city center. One of the young men who sometimes hung around with these youth had friends from other neighborhoods who also enjoyed motorbikes, and they liked to get together and

[162] This organization is discussed in more depth in Chapter Four. Of course, playing with children is also a means of supervising them and a way to discipline unruly behavior.

tinker with their bikes and ride them around the block; to alleviate the noise from this activity, his parents rented him a workshop outside the neighborhood.

There was another group of ethnically mixed younger youth (11-14 years old), mostly boys but also occasionally joined by girls, who played a little further away. They walked through the courtyard and passageway frequently, and sometimes hung out there; they were often accused of small acts of mischief against Helena, such as throwing popsicle sticks into her garden or throwing an egg against her door. Groups of Surinamese youth and young adults also hung out on the other side of the courtyard, playing soccer and music, and drinking beer; they often had larger family picnic gatherings in nicer weather. These youth were generally not involved in the conflict; even though some of the complainants found their behavior irritating, they did not complain to them or call the police about them. This lack of interaction with the Surinamese youth did not go unnoticed. One mother, Marijke, about whose children complaints had been made, remarked:

> If the Surinamese over there listen to music, hang around, that woman (Helena) doesn't dare to call. She's too scared. So they must laugh about that, that she thinks they've got knives . . . But the (White) kids say, "Why aren't the police called on the Surinamese? Or on the Moroccans who make a lot of noise, in that apartment over there?"

Her comment was part of a more extensive narrative that criticized Helena for being closed off, overly sensitive, unfamiliar with different ethnic groups, intolerant, and afraid; to contrast herself from Helena, Marijke told me about her multi-ethnic extended family, how much she enjoys the music played by her Surinamese neighbors, how she enjoys opening her windows and hearing people outside, and her openness to youth in general. Such statements position Marijke and the other interviewees who made similar comments as better community members than Helena, in contrast with Helena's attempts to depict

her efforts, as we shall see, as a means to bring everyone together and create neighborhood ties. Finally, in addition to a group of skateboarders who practiced their sport one street over, there were other individual youths who were visible in the neighborhood but largely not involved in this conflict. The category of "youth" is clearly quite diverse; only a few youth were involved in these meetings, and could not represent all the different groups' interests nor could the youth in attendance be reasonably held responsible for other youths' behavior.

My first encounter with this conflict occurred in October 2002, when I was invited to attend the third of these meetings by a police officer assigned to this neighborhood. At that meeting, and at subsequent ones, I introduced myself to many of the adults and the youths present, and asked if they would be willing to talk with me. In addition, I approached people on the street that I recognized from the meetings, and asked those who granted me interviews for introductions to their neighbors. Over the course of a year, I interviewed each of the three local authorities who moderated the meetings, four adults who consistently attended meetings to voice complaints, four civic observers, four parents, and four youths; I also attended six neighborhood meetings.[163] Most of the interviews lasted one and one-half hours, and each conversation was tape recorded; eight of these 19 individuals were interviewed two or more times.

It is difficult to pick a beginning, or choose a vantage point, from which to start the telling the story of this conflict; any choice is rather arbitrary, and various parties to

[163] In addition to interviewing almost all of the individuals involved in this series of meetings, I also interviewed 30 other local authorities, five other parents, three other complainants, and two other youths in other neighborhoods in Amsterdam North. Of the 30 other local authorities, five were police officers, nine were employed in the youth work sector, eight were employed by the borough government, and eight were involved in social work organizations.

the conflict would, I'm sure, choose to tell the story in a different fashion. In addition, I was not present for some of the events. I arrived on the scene only in early October, 2002, and missed the first meetings, for which I have only people's recollections and Helena's minutes, and I was not present for other important moments, such as the on-the-street confrontations, the behind-closed-doors calls to the police, and the secretive acts of retaliation against those who complained. This chapter is based, instead, on the neighborhood meetings that I was able to attend, and the 32 semi-structured interviews I held with local authorities, adult residents, and youth involved in the meetings. For my purposes, the earlier moments in the conflict—the initial complaints, the first intervention of the police, the early meetings—are most revealing, and thus comprise the bulk of my analysis. I have chosen to present the events in a relatively chronological fashion, but to shift the voices telling the story among the various parties, in order to try to show the ways in which the conflict was differently experienced and the competing claims that were made. By way of conclusion, I suggest that the "rules for living" project permitted the intensification of adult regulation of youth behavior, while simultaneously allowing for a withdrawal of adult responsibility for the actual disciplining of youth.

Beginnings: Situating the Smith Street conflict

You don't see normal curtains almost anywhere.—Maarten, police officer

Built about 20 years ago, the Smith Street area of IJplein is a relatively new neighborhood. The housing stock is principally comprised of two- and three-storey apartment buildings, and almost every apartment has either a private garden or a small porch overlooking a communal green space. When they were first built, the buildings were considered more spacious and modern than the housing in other nearby

neighborhoods. Over time, some residents and local authorities feel that the neighborhood has *verloedert* or "degenerated" from a "clean" and "quiet" neighborhood to one that is much less pleasant. As one police officer, Maarten, explained:

> Over time you saw a certain kind of public come to the apartments, who didn't complain [about the youth playing soccer in the netted court for sports]. And the complainers left. You can see the neighborhood poverty, the curtains falling down—and now you don't hear any more complaints about the soccer. There is, of course, a whole other social make up than five years ago.
>
> The netted court is only two years old, they just had goals there before. Kids play there, older youth yell, and that causes *overlast*, and because it's between the apartment buildings, it sounds really loud. That makes it louder. And in that environment, it always causes tension, until you see that some people are leaving, and among the people who are replacing them . . . you don't see normal curtains almost anywhere in that neighborhood. You see a lot of *overlast* from junkies,[164] a different public that doesn't worry as much, compared to the people who were there before—people, clean people, who were quiet. You see a whole different public now, and you see fewer complaints.

Figure 19. Netted soccer court near Smith Street.

According to Maarten, the "new public" is less proper, and less likely to complain. His explanation seems a bit strange in light of the reason for our conversation: adult

[164] Although this officer asserted that there were a lot of complaints about junkies, I did not find that many people voiced such sentiments to me, either spontaneously or when asked directly if addicts were a nuisance.

complaints about youth *overlast*, and the adult-youth meetings. Maarten goes on to explain that the problem is that some adults' "tolerance threshold" (*tolerantiegrens*) is too low:

> In that area, there are lots of apartments, the terrain is pretty small. And the neighborhood doesn't really have a lot of children in it. The older people—there aren't even many youth there compared to some neighborhoods—and they still complain. They want it so quiet! Not even a motorbike. The level of tolerance is so low.
>
> [Helena], she had a [legitimate] complaint, but lots of people really have no reason to complain. Motorbikes make noise! And they are regulated to be under a certain decibel. I mean, they are not really doing anything wrong. There's so little appreciation for each other, just complaining—about everything.

This type of internal contradiction was common in people's explanations of the situation; in fact, most tended to see multiple perspectives on the conflict. Here, on the one hand, Maarten references that the neighborhood has more lower class and ethnic minority residents when he talks about the absence of "normal curtains" (typical white lace curtains) which has led, he asserts, to lower standards and fewer people complaining about youth *overlast*. Just a minute later, however, Maarten explains that many older adults complain because their tolerance level is low, even if there aren't many youth around, and even if no law is being broken.

While the neighborhood, like most of Amsterdam, has undergone changes in its residential population in the last twenty years, not everyone perceives the changes in such a negative light as Maarten. Marijke, the mother of one of the youths about whom many adults complained, who lived close to the hang-out spot around which the conflict was centered, told me:

> Kids have been coming here for *years*, as long as I've lived here. It's a meeting place; I can leave my door open, and it's fine. Sometimes I get annoyed by it, but I don't stand out on the balcony yelling at the kids to leave. I just say, "Can you be a little quieter?" The Surinamese across the street, they hang around outside, play a little nice music, it's a nice atmosphere.

Remco, a father of an older teenager who participated in the meetings, echoed this sentiment: "If you hate being around kids playing in the street, and making noise, you should move to an old age home." Hanneke, a mother in her mid-thirties, also found the sound of young people a welcome part of neighborhood life: "I think it's nice when kids are playing. I'll join, or watch them from the window. I'm like that—every day is a day to be happy. I let my kids play outside until 11, 11:30 in the summer. I keep the windows open and I think it's great."

Everyone agrees, however, that the architectural design of one of the buildings has been a recipe for trouble. Most of the streets are narrow, crowded with cars, and have apartment buildings on both sides.

Figure 20. Narrow and crowded streets near Smith Street.

Cutting through one of the three-storey apartment buildings is a large covered passageway that allows residents to access the communal green space from the street, and to take shortcuts from one apartment block to another.

Figure 21. Smith Street tunnel.

This "tunnel" is especially inviting to youth, as it offers shelter from the rain, and walls to kick soccer balls against. The passageway also leads into a asphalt courtyard, and a large, grassy space that is ringed with private gardens or terraces, and that has playground fixtures for smaller children.

Figure 22. Interior courtyard and green space.

Unfortunately, also in the middle of the tunnel is the front door to one apartment. Remarking on the problem with this design, Anna, who works with At Home on the Street and who was involved with moderating the meetings, stated: "Look, if you make a tunnel, between buildings, then you can be sure—definitely in the winter, youth will want to hang around there." This apartment block, this tunnel and this front door are the main sites of conflict.

There weren't any problems 'til she moved here!—Youth

Some of the boys and young men who live in the neighborhood meet up and hang around in the courtyard and the tunnel, and have done so for years. Johannes, 22, told me: "It's just a meeting point for us," to which another youth, Klaas, also 22, added: "Yeah, everyone passes by, and sees 'Oh, they're standing there.' We've hung out there for years . . . If we call each other, it's 'Where are you? I'm by the tunnel.' So then you go to the tunnel." Both Klaas and Johannes have lived in the neighborhood since it was first built, in the mid-1980s. In addition to hanging out, talking, smoking cigarettes and sometimes marijuana, and kicking a soccer ball around, some youths tinker with and test out their motorbikes on the street and sidewalk next to this hang-out area.[165] Most of the youth who attended the meetings live in the buildings directly abutting the hang-out area, in apartments on the other side of the courtyard, or in neighboring buildings.

In early 2002, Helena, then 46, moved to the neighborhood. Rather than facing the street, like the rest of the residences in the neighborhood, her front door is recessed into one of the tunnel's walls. Helena asserts that the previous resident didn't tell her that

[165] The motorbike is an important form of transportation for many young people since you must be 18 to drive a car, and cars are very expensive to own and insure. While loud, the decibel level of the motorbikes in the area is within legal limits.

the tunnel was a youth hang-out spot, and that if she had known, she wouldn't have moved in:

> When I came to live here, I asked the previous tenants: "How is it here, with the passageway? Did you have trouble?" They didn't say anything about it, but they did have problems, and the owner before that was really deaf, so they heard nothing. I should have asked more people, but I didn't. Well, since then I've heard from my neighbor that all the families who lived here left, more or less, because of the problems. Even one woman, an older woman, gave them money to be quiet. But it just got even more out of hand, and she moved too!

I asked Klaas and Johannes about Helena's assertions.

> Erin: How was it before Helena moved in?

(I was about to ask a second question, to clarify, but Johannes jumped in, forcefully.)

> Johannes: We never heard anything from anyone! It's only since *she* came here, never before!
>
> Erin: There were older people living in that house, before?
>
> Klaas: Yeah, but there were never problems then.
>
> Erin: Did you ever get money from them, to go hang around somewhere else?
>
> Klaas: No! (laughing), I've never heard of that!
>
> Johannes: That would have been great!
>
> Erin: How long have you been hanging out here?
>
> Klaas: Almost 20 years we've lived here. We've been here the whole time. If you're young, they think it's all really nice. But if you continue to hang out—(drops off). We've always played here, we've always stood here. And really, there have only been problems since she came.

In these comments, we can begin to get a sense of the attachment these youth feel to this place; in community meetings and in interviews, they clearly laid claim to the neighborhood by depicting themselves as long-time residents, and Helena as the interloping troublemaker.

The youth were not the only ones who claimed that the problems originated with Helena, rather than with their behavior. Sophie, the mother of two teenagers who lives by the courtyard, told me:

> We have lived here 15 years, with no problems. Since Helena came, there are always problems, and the police too. I don't think all the kids' behavior is OK, but I think she makes the problem bigger than it is. Kids shouldn't tease her, bother her, throw things in her garden. But for years, kids have met under the tunnel. Never a problem, as long as I can remember.

Sophie continued, a few minutes later, with statements that asserted that the youth were "good kids," and that she also enjoyed the presence of youth hanging around:

> Erin: Have you ever complained?
>
> Sophie: No, I think kids need to play. . . I think the whole situation was made too big, bigger than it is. The kids who stand there under the tunnel, they're good kids, they work, they don't do anything wrong. If they were criminals, doing something wrong—but they're not. . .
>
> Erin: It sounds like a difficult situation.
>
> Sophie: Also, during the summer, we have lots of Surinamese youth here, hanging around, playing soccer. I don't have a problem with it. They sit here lot, by the fence outside my house. I think it's good, I understand it. I've got kids.

Helena's complaints were repeatedly countered by other residents in ways that sought to "naturalize" the youth behavior as something normal; Helena's reactions were painted, then, as unnatural and inappropriate. Many people pointed to the fact that Helena did not have any children, but often then stated that they knew other people without children who did not complain, who were more understanding.

If you aanspreken them, you just get talked back to. –Helena

Shortly after moving into the neighborhood, Helena became irritated by the youths' hanging around and their soccer playing:

> They play soccer, and it hits my door, and it resounds through the house, through the walls. And this is every night, before dinner, and after. They're standing together, smoking pot, drinking, playing soccer, sometimes until 10 or 12 in the evening. And in the summer, they play soccer in the courtyard so close to the [private] gardens, and you can't put plants in your garden because they will get broken. And sometimes they kick the ball so hard that it goes up to the second-floor balconies!

In the beginning, she said, she first tried asking the youths to be quiet or to stop playing soccer in the tunnel. But, she lamented, "If you say something to (*aanspreken*) them, you just get talked back to (*een grote mond krijgen*)." Later, she continued: "I had gone to them outside, at two in the morning, to ask them to please stop, I've had enough, I have a headache. I went out in my nightclothes. And they listened sometimes and stopped. But the problems just continued." The youths confirm that, even early on, Helena complained to them, but say that she asked them to play more quietly, and that they did so. Klaas: "She always came out, asked us to play more gently against the doors [in the tunnel]. And we *did* play softer, but we *did not* stop. We *did* play more gently. But she just kept calling [the police]." In her statements, Helena asserts that she has been understanding, that she has tried to communicate with them; all they have done is "talk back" to her. Klaas and the other youths are, on the other hand, asserting that they acceded to her requests, and that she is the unreasonable party, by continuing to call the police on them and to demand further changes to their behavior.

One of the youths told me that they knew that Helena called the police, but that she denied doing so when they confronted her. He said that they knew that she had called because someone in the neighborhood had a police scanner and heard her address being given. That Helena often called the police was "common knowledge," although Helena denied it; one parent told me:

> The kids don't want to talk to her anymore because she calls the police every time. But she says she doesn't call. But someone here has a police scanner and I've asked that person not to tell the kids if she calls the police, because it just makes them angrier. She could just come outside and ask them nicely, or try to understand, give a little . . .

The youths were angry that she had called the police, but even angrier once they heard her deny it. Her denial appeared to them as another example of adults not treating them respectfully; in particular, they held disdain for adults who complained at the meetings but had never talked to the youth directly before:

> Klaas: We never heard any complaints from anyone else, but then you see them all at the meetings, saying "We have *overlast*." And I think, "What jerks!" There's that old man always looking at us from behind a tree, and he stands there, but he says nothing.
>
> Erin: Do you think you would have more respect for him if he'd said something directly to you?
>
> Klaas: Yeah, of course. I learned early on that you should never betray someone, and that you shouldn't spy either. And there he sits! A grown man!

In this depiction of the situation, Klaas casts the complainants as bad neighbors for not handling their complaints in a forthright manner. Helena, however, asserts that she feels powerless, and that the youth are the bad neighbors, who retaliate anytime she asks them to stop:

> I notice that it just gets worse, that if you speak to the youth, you just get a counterreaction, so it gets worse. So you feel pretty powerless. If you do nothing and say nothing, then it gets better for a little while. So what happens is that the youth become in charge, and you, as resident, have no more say in the situation.

Here we see again the assertion that the adult is the resident, not the youth.

Actions and Counteractions

At some point, the paddy wagon came along, and we had to go with them.–Klaas

In the early summer, tensions began to escalate: at the beginning of June, Helena began to invite her neighbors to the first meeting, which was held in mid-July. One afternoon,

apparently after Helena's invitation was circulated, two police vehicles descended on the hang-out spot, and brought four youths down to the station. The police had been monitoring the area for a little while, sometimes interfering with the soccer playing, sometimes asking the youth to move to a different area. One officer had told some of the youth that they would get a ticket for playing soccer in the tunnel, but others were not warned, and not all officers seemed to be aware of this warning. Helena explained that she blamed some of the problems on a communication breakdown within the police force:

> At a certain point, the soccer was so bad—maybe in June—and I had gone and asked them to stop. And then they were playing in the communal green space, and they kicked the ball in my garden, and I asked them to stop. And they said, "No, we can play here. The police were just here, and they said that we can't play in the tunnel, but that we can play here." And I was so angry! (visibly upset) That was not the agreement! And now the police say, "Over there [in the communal green space] is OK." Well, playing soccer over there also bothers me, a lot!

Helena's narrative shows that the parties were operating with different definitions: the youth thought playing in the communal garden was permissible and that only the tunnel was forbidden, but Helena was upset if they played anywhere near her apartment, asserting that soccer was permitted only within the netted soccer court around the corner.

The youths reported that they were first approached by the police about two months after Helena moved in, and clearly associated her presence with the beginning of their troubles with the authorities. Klaas recounted:

> Erin: When did the police first come?
>
> Klaas: Maybe two months after she first spoke to us. And she comes out and says "Yeah, why don't you go and enjoy your game over THERE." (Mimicking her in a dull tone, conveying idiocy.)
>
> Erin: Where?

> Klaas: Exactly! Damned if I know! (pause) Well, we play soccer here, we live here. So—there was a miscommunication (sarcastically), yeah. And then the police came with the patrols, monitoring things. And if we were playing soccer, sometimes they would say something. At some point, the paddy wagon came along, and we had to go with them to the station, and get a ticket.

A few minutes later, the conversation returned to the police. Klaas: "They said things, they warned us. But we said, 'What is the alternative, then? Where can we play soccer, where can we stand, where can we just be?'" Even though the police had been patrolling the area, the youths were shocked, they said, when the police paddy wagon pulled up and they were all taken to the precinct.

Four out of the five youths who were standing under the tunnel at that moment were taken to the precinct and given tickets for 40 (approximately USD$47); one successfully argued to the police that he had never been warned and that he should be released. Their parents and the youths were both angered, and felt that the situation had gotten out of hand. Helena told me that she never thought the police would do such a thing, and feared that the youths would blame her, and retaliate: "What kind of response was I going to get? They came with two police cars—one was a van—and took four of them away. They were angry, so angry!" This incident was met with very different reactions. Parents, perhaps not surprisingly, found it extreme and unproductive. For example, Froukje, a mother to two teenagers, one of whom has gotten into some problems at school and with the authorities, disapproved of the tickets: "I don't think it's a good idea. Then kids think you can just pay money if you do something wrong, and they get the idea that if you pay the fine, then it's like nothing happened." One of the older female complainants, however, totally disagreed: "I hope they learn from it. The higher [the fine] the better. But you hear that parents pay the tickets for them—so, what

can you do. But I think it's a good thing. I think some youth get some money for their studies, they can pay from their allowance, or go work to pay off your tickets!"

If you act normal towards my son, then he acts normal towards you. —Sophie

Helena's manner in dealing with the youths was perceived in different ways by people in the neighborhood. Helena claimed that "I don't get mad, I stay calm when I talk to them," and some youths agreed, saying she always spoke softly when she talked to them. However, others disputed this assessment. Willem argued that "If someone said to me, 'please stop, I can't sleep,' I'd understand. But she always says, 'Go away! I'm calling the police!'" While Helena's demeanor was perceived differently, it was remarkable that many people used identical terminology in describing how one should behave in addressing this kind of conflict: adults should approach youth in a "normal" fashion, and if that doesn't work, adults should speak to the youths' parents, not call the police.

One neighborhood volunteer, Mieke, explained: "Look, if you've got a problem with the youth, you've got to go to them, and if you just speak normally to them, it usually goes really well." A parent of one of the youths concurred: "If you want to achieve something, it's better to do it in a normal manner than to be aggressive. The problem is created by people who have no understanding, who act aggressively." When asked about their relations with the different police officers who patrol the area, one youth commented that one of the officers was better than the others because "he speaks normally to you, not like you are on a lower level than him." In relation to the meetings, another youth said that all they wanted from the adults was "to be treated normally."

Clearly, many adults and youths felt that the situation was not being handled "normally," and faulted Helena for not coming to speak to them directly. One mother,

Marijke, emphasized: "No one *ever* came to my house to say they had a problem." This assertion both criticizes Helena for not speaking to Marijke about her children, and depicts Helena as the only person who has ever had problems with them. Froukje, another mother who was embarrassed when the police came to her house, explained how such matters should be dealt with between neighbors:

> There's an order—you should talk to the youth, then the parents, and then the police in trying to solve a problem. If the parents don't do anything, then you are powerless, and then it's logical to speak to the police. Honestly, I never went to speak to that woman (Helena), although I thought about it, to ask her why she didn't talk to me first. But then some other parents in the area, they said it was pointless because she won't come talk to you anyway, she only calls the police. I've even heard that lots of parents have been to her door and she refuses to talk to them. That's really unusual, because usually parents can talk to each other.

Froukje's comments show the degree to which Helena's behavior was discussed among parents and other residents; although other adults had complaints, she was seen as the principal actor in the conflict, which is unsurprising since she had initiated the meetings and contacted the municipality for assistance. The intervention of the authorities was seen to bring shame to the parents of the youths accused of causing *overlast*.

Froukje spent a good portion of our conversation explaining to me how she raises her son, and was keen that I understand that she is an active, involved parent, contrasting herself with those who are less engaged and who simply call the police. Her comments are worth quoting at length, for they highlight important themes often left out of the public conversations on *hangjongeren*:

> Froukje: This is what I said to you before about youth behavior now being considered criminal [when it used to be seen as mischief]. . . Now, [they send them] immediately to Bureau HALT (early intervention program that uses community service as punishment), or the police station. But that doesn't work, it's counterproductive.

> I talk with my younger son for hours about things, "why do you do this," about why I'm punishing him, about what he will do next time. I think I'm doing well with him, but it takes time, and you need to keep talking with him. I ask him to imagine Grandma in Helena's situation, and if boys were bothering Grandma, and get him to think that way. I tell him every action has a reaction, to think about consequences. He doesn't have to be a sweetheart. He's not. But he needs to understand, use his brains, and not just say sorry later.
>
> Erin: Why is he causing problems for Helena?
>
> Froukje: It's because they can't play soccer, and she took his ball. She sends them away every time. But what they are most angry about is that she calls the police on them, that just isn't done. Try to talk to us, he says, rather than just sending the police for us.
>
> Erin: So they bother her because they're angry?
>
> Froukje: Yeah, it could have gone a totally different way, if she had approached it differently. And so they think, ok, now we'll really bother her! And she was also driven from her previous neighborhood by people bothering her, I heard. And so I ask, isn't the problem a little clearer? Is it the youth, or is it her? Is this a two way problem—but the children get blamed every time! That doesn't make sense.
>
> Erin: The people who lived there before, they had no problems?
>
> Froukje: No, it was always fine. This is not a new hang-out spot. Kids played soccer, the one boy had motorbikes. And kids have always hung around in front of Sophie's house.
>
> There were never any complaints, and now people just pick up the telephone so fast. They get bothered too much, too fast from youth. The day is too short, people have no time. I think people should talk with kids, use their anger that way. Try to explain to kids in terms of their world, their experience.
>
> But if you call the police, then kids get punished but the problem is not solved. If we send them to Bureau HALT, all that happens is the youth gets a bad reputation, gets categorized as a problem. I don't want that for my kids! I don't want them in contact with Justice—it just makes things worse. If he goes to HALT, then everyone in the neighborhood knows it, and if something happens, then it's immediately—oh, so-and-so must have done it! I had a man come here, and say "Your son hit my son," but it didn't happen! My son was out of town! It was a friend of his, and so that's how it is, [since the police came] it's like [my son] has a sign on his chest.

Froukje's fears appear to be well founded, as one of the older teenagers in the neighborhood is also frequently cited as the cause of disturbance, even when he isn't in

the neighborhood. His mother, Marijke, told a story of the time someone complained about her son's behavior on a certain date, and laughs, "He was on vacation, with the family!" She then continued, more angrily: "See, he gets all the blame!" It would seem that at least part of the problem in these conflicts is that many adults actually have little interaction with either the neighborhood youth or with other adults; stories and names circulate and people assign blame without really knowing who is who. Geertje, one of the older women who attended all of the meetings out of a feeling of civic responsibility and the desire to see some nice flowerboxes placed in the courtyard, reported at the final meeting in May that when she sees one of the youths on the street now, they say hello to each other; her announcement was met with smiles and cheers by the group, clearly perceived as a real breakthrough.

I'm really on the youths' side.—Helena

In organizing the intervention of the authorities, Helena often said that she understood the youth and felt that they should have somewhere else to play, and depicted her efforts as helping to initiate a "structural solution," such as the creation of a new hang-out spot elsewhere. In talking with me about her efforts to organize these meetings, Helena said: "I hoped when these meetings were over to have made some good connections with the neighbors and also with the youth, to show that I'm not against them, but for them." In later meetings, Helena tried to explain this to the youths, and was frustrated that they did not see her actions in that light. Many parents also found her claims that she was "on the youths' side" difficult to believe. Marijke told me, in angry and frustrated tones: "She says she's for the youth, that she wants to help them [find another place to hang out]—but she really only wants to help herself."

The question of whether there were sufficient playgrounds and sports fields in the neighborhood was controversial: parents and youths felt that there were too few places for kids, especially teenagers, while many local authorities felt that there was more than enough space. The youths stated that they could not play soccer in the netted court in the neighborhood (to which they were often directed), because there were always other youth there, usually children younger than themselves. "Little kids play there," Klaas explained, "and you can't ask them to leave. But someone suggested that at the meetings, and I was like, 'Yeah, you want me to kick out your grandkids?'" When older youth make use of the communal green space, they are seen by some as driving away little children. Geertje, an elderly woman who did not complain about *overlast* by the tunnel, expressed her preference about who should use the communal green space, and how:

> During the summer it's now more cozy and pleasant (*gezellig*) in the communal garden—people with little kids, and that's nice. But when the youth were coming, then no more little kids came—the youth took over the field. If you have a little grandchild, and the ball hits a child, they don't come back. And so that's how it was. Now some of the people come and picnic there, it's really nice! It's nice—(with strong emotion) and, and just *really* nice.

While picnickers were preferable to soccer-playing youth to some, the youth resisted the attempts to make them leave the neighborhood and play elsewhere. In interviews and in meetings, they stated that they wanted to remain close to their homes, did not wish to kick out the little kids from the soccer court, and did not want to go to the youth center that was about 10 minutes away because it was heavily populated by Moroccan youth from another part of the neighborhood. They just wanted to continue hanging out where they had hung out since they were children. The local authorities argued that there were plenty of facilities provided for the youth. Thomas, who works for the municipality, explained:

> In my opinion, there are more than enough facilities—we have a soccer court by the community center, another in the nearby park; these are installations that cost 150,000 guilders (68,067 or USD$80,617.25). There is space. There is also covered space elsewhere, where they can hang out, where they would cause less *overlast*. They have a a youth center, where they don't want to go, but it's there. They have a neighborhood center, where they could also do something, but they don't want that either. In short, in a glance you can see that there are enough facilities. (Speaking to imaginary youth:) "Fuck off."
>
> And now, we're getting tough and going after them. Helena had a problem, we talked about it at the municipal offices, and I said, "There are enough facilities, I want to get out of this vicious cycle—police, there must be no tolerance, zero tolerance. And we'll see how that works. That strategy was conveyed to Helena. But she, on her own initiative, also went to work on the problem. Took an action, an initiative herself, and brought people together.

Helena's desire to see a "structural solution" to the hang-around problem was at loggerheads with the municipal authorities, who saw no such need, and who had insufficient funds to physically transform the tunnel into a narrow passageway and install bright lights there, or create another facility.

In the early summer of 2002, Helena and a few neighbors met with a police officer for the area, Christiaan, and decided to hold a meeting in mid-June with adults from the neighborhood. Helena described to me that meeting, and her determination to mobilize others in the neighborhood:

> I brought a couple of neighbors to the municipality. Christiaan said, "Let's deal with this, get everyone around the table." I arranged for a room at the community center and I asked more residents to come, and we had 15 residents and Christiaan there, and I was automatically the chairperson. Christiaan asked what kind of complaints there were, and I was surprised to hear how many complaints there were, and how long the others had been bothered. About the motorbikes . . . they ride through the streets here, and everyone gets crazy from it, especially summers, when your window is open or you're happily sitting in your garden, reading a book, or on your balcony. So I didn't know so many people had such complaints! It was really bad.
>
> We said, we need another meeting, with the youth here too. That was our idea, not Christiaan's. And I called Mieke (a leader in the community), and told her that I wanted to continue, and she told me that it wouldn't do anything, that the youth would just behave the same. And I said, "No, they won't do the same, because I've got 15 residents here that also have a problem."

> There had never been such a groundswell from residents, so I said "Now something's got to happen. I want to continue, and I want to get your support." If you fight alone, it doesn't work. You have to be well organized.

Helena's narrative makes clear her expectations and desires for residential tranquility, where she can sit in the garden, read a book, and keep her windows open. According to the minutes, the meeting was attended by Helena and nine other residents, one youth, and two local authorities, and was primarily an opportunity to vent complaints and to begin to propose solutions. In addition to police measures, such as fining those who played soccer in the tunnel and giving tickets for speeding on motorbikes, other solutions were proposed: creating a new hang-out spot elsewhere; re-designing the tunnel to make it impassable by motorbikes and impossible to play soccer in, perhaps with automatic gates that would be accessible only to residents; and refurbishing the communal green space with trees, flowerboxes, and children's playground structures. A few attendees of the meeting agreed to look into these possibilities, and a second meeting was scheduled for the end of the summer.

Helena's really good at politics, but I'll never vote for her!—Marijke, parent

In organizing that first meeting, Helena approached her neighbors and asked them if they were disturbed by the youths, and circulated printed invitations. While Helena was pleased to find so many people willing to come to a neighborhood meeting, some of the parents felt that the group she organized did not really represent the neighborhood. As Marijke, a mother in her forties, put it, "She said she is for the kids, that she wants to break the vicious cycle. But she isn't for the kids. She only talked to the people without children, the ones who are older than sixty." However, Marijke also said that Helena had approached her about the meetings:

> [Helena] even came to my house! She said, "*Last* (nuisance)*, last*, do you also have *last*?" I said, "Well, *last* is a big word!" And I said, "Well, sometimes they're out there very late, and so we go outside to talk to them," and she says, "OK, you have *last*. And the motorbikes, do they wake you up?" And I say "yes." So at the meeting, she says, "Even his mother is sick of it!" I don't get sick of my child. It's like, as if you got arrested, "anything you say will be used against you."

To the youth and their parents, it appeared that Helena mostly approached the elderly people in the neighborhood because, they believed, she thought that elderly people were more likely to be sympathetic to her cause. In any case, Helena did not knock on every door in the neighborhood, and some parents I spoke with never received an invitation and did not even know about the meeting until months later. To the parents of the youths, her organizing efforts seemed excessive, and they worried that she was creating bad feeling against their families. Marijke summed up her feelings of resentment about Helena's approach:

> It's easy to go to a meeting and just complain—the purpose of a meeting is to find a solution. If you just want to complain, you can talk to your neighbor directly, you don't need a meeting. It's just not honest. The older people on the street, they ask my son for help with things, and now they are going to this meeting to complain about him! I don't understand. Well, I do understand: together, you are strong, as a group.

At the second meeting, 15 adults and one youth attended, along with three local authorities. Helena's minutes, in which she outlines the complaints, are revealing:

> Complaints: noise from motorbikes, that ride through the streets, under the tunnel and over the sidewalk multiple times. The tinkering with motorbikes on the street, which attracts groups of youth. Playing soccer in the communal garden and courtyard. *Hangjongeren* under the tunnel, smoking pot.
>
> Annoyance: Residents don't dare say anything out of fear of repercussions. If people do say something about *overlast*, then they can get talked back to by the youth. As a result (*vervolgens*) people can be terrorized by the youth in many ways. Youth continue causing *overlast*, despite requests to stop. The youth are in charge of the neighborhood!!!
>
> Youth: The youth would like to play soccer close to home. Soccer court is often occupied, there is no chance to play there.

While the minutes paint a picture of a unified constituency, Marijke had a very different experience of this meeting, and of the impact that it had on neighborhood dynamics. When I asked her if she had attended any of the meetings, she replied:

> Yes, in the beginning. I wanted to show up for the interest of the youth. I'm a mother. And I don't think it's good when people group up in the neighborhood, who always said hello to each other, and then all of a sudden, they stop. They've heard that I'm the mother, and now they don't talk. If I walk up, or past them, they all go inside—while it was never like that before . . . I went to the first two meetings, and I left crying the second time. Many people didn't know I'm the mother of Hendrick, and they were very angry, about soccer, but he doesn't do that, and about the pot smoking and drinking, but he doesn't do that either. He does have a motorbike, that's all, but lots of youth ride motorbikes, not just him. I work in a retail shop in the neighborhood, and I can feel it now, when people come in, it used to be friendly, now it's not, it's distant. It's because I stood up for the youth, and they didn't expect that.

In an interview I had with Helena just a few days before, she had characterized the effects of the meetings in a very different light:

> What's funny is that I've met lots of people (and they have met each other) since these meetings have begun. And we even talked to one of the youth who is really good with computers to help me and my neighbor with our computers. Everyone wants to have connection [with each other], but they don't have it. And I want to be sensitive with the neighbors, because it's pretty scary what I have done, to say that this must stop, it can't keep happening, and no one had dared to do that before.

One of the police officers, Willem, agreed with Helena's assessment: "Youth, adults get to know each other through such a meeting. Now adults can *aanspreken* youth about their behavior. The anonymity is gone. Now there's more understanding for each other. These meetings nurture such understanding." While Marijke and other parents saw the meetings as creating division and bad feeling, Helena and the local authorities believed the meetings were a means to creating neighborhood cohesion; in addition, Helena depicted herself as being brave for having taken on such a project.

I should note that most everyone, including the youth, agreed that "having a soccer ball kicked against your door all night would drive anyone crazy" and expressed

some understanding of Helena's position. No one envied the location of her front door, situated as it was in the middle of the tunnel. And, as the conflict began to escalate, most everyone believed that some of the youth had begun to deliberately provoke her. Still, many adults disagreed with the premise of organizing such meetings, arguing that adults have "to take account" of youth (*rekening houden*, see Chapter Seven). When I asked Froukje, a mother of two teenagers, if she experienced *overlast* from youth in the neighborhood, she responded:

> Only a little in the summer, when the motorbikes make a little circle around this building, and you've got the windows open. But I've never complained, I've never gone to Marijke about it. Because I think, well, Hendrick really loves to ride and tinker with his motorbike, and I think you also have to *rekening houden* with children.

"Drawing the Line": The limits of conflict resolution through consensus

Sure, things are tolerated, but there are boundaries.—Thomas, municipal official

For the third meeting, a new moderator was brought in to change the dynamic, as the first meetings had focused on the complaints, with little room for movement forward. Anna, from the organization "At Home on the Street," led the meeting by suggesting that the adults and the youth split into small groups and talk about "what they could do for each other." I sat in the group of adults, and listened as they began to rehash their complaints, and as Helena tried to bring the group back to their task, but to no avail. After about 10 minutes, Anna intervened in the heated litany of complaints, remarking that "when you are very angry, you can't communicate with the youth," and suggested that "We could make rules for living, like: I will speak to you first, before I call the police, if I have a problem with your behavior." One of the adults responded, "Yes, I've tried talking to them, but they call me a bitch, and what am I supposed to do?" Another older man, Wim, spoke up, excitedly and very angrily: "When someone is smoking outside my apartment,

I can't open my windows, and it's so hot in the apartment!" (Most people in the neighborhood did not have air conditioners.) By the end of the 20 minutes, the adults had come up with only one suggestion, contributed by a parent, who stated that adults could try to "speak the youths' language," and be more "relaxed" with them.

The youth came back with a list of things they would stop doing, such as: stop playing soccer in the tunnel, be quiet in the evenings, pick up their trash. They also brought forward a drawing of an alternative hangout, as the possibility of a new hang-out spot had been talked about in previous meetings. The drawing showed an "L" shaped space, of approximately the same area as the tunnel. Although the youth had been encouraged to come up with alternative solutions in the previous meeting, this drawing was met with not a little incredulity by one of the moderators from the municipality, who stated flatly that something that large was out of the question, for it would cost too much money. Klaas replied that this was just a sketch of what they would like, a kind of dream sketch. Later on, in an interview, I asked him about the drawing.

> Erin: You came one time with a drawing for a new hang-out spot. Did you really want a different hang-out spot?
>
> Klaas: No, but we couldn't stay under the tunnel, because then we'd get tickets, and so we had to go. So then they say, well, make us a drawing. So we do, and then they say, "Well, that would cost a lot of money." But this is what we want (pointing to the tunnel, laughing), something as big as the tunnel!

Toward the end of the meeting, Anna suggested that the compromises proposed by the youth could actually be made up into a list, "rules for living," and then posted on a sign in the tunnel. The youth thought this a bit redundant, and wondered why that would be necessary, but acquiesced. The adults, especially Helena, seemed happy about this idea, since she would have some concrete rules to which she could point when she felt the youth were causing *overlast*. While it seemed that, early in the meeting, Anna had

intended the rules for living to be two-sided, as adults would have rules they would agree to follow as well, what emerged were only rules for youth. Anna's endeavor to get adults and youths to "see what they can do for each other," ended up being articulated as conduct rules for youth, a project that meshed more with the intentions of Thomas, the civil servant who had favored a zero-tolerance policing strategy.

I was intrigued why the youth would continue going to these meetings, given the way in which most of the adults were simply venting complaints, and why they would participate in creating conduct rules for themselves. In an interview, Klaas and I had this exchange on the topic:

> Klaas: I went to the first meeting, it was just me, and it was only complaining: "Youth do this, youth do that, and the ball this, the ball that." But I said what we thought.
>
> Erin: Were you invited, or did you have to go?
>
> Klaas: No, you don't *have* to do anything. But I see it this way: if you don't go, they'll just complain: "Yeah, it just doesn't interest the youth." Well—it does interest me, but I don't like having to sit there every time. I've got other things I'd prefer to do.
>
> Erin: What did you think of what the adults said during the meeting?
>
> Klaas: Look, everyone can describe things to best suit their interests. Everyone can give their arguments so they sound like they are in the right. So, if we don't show up, it just proves to them that we act like jerks and don't care, and then you can't do anything about it.

Another youth, Martijn, agreed with Klaas's assessment: "If you don't go, then you get the blame anyway. So we go and do it, and then they can never say, 'Well, you weren't there.'" Although they participated in the meetings, the youth were mostly interested in being left alone; if conduct rules gave them permission to hang out in their favorite spot, then they would go along with the process. At the end of the meeting, it was decided that the youths should meet again, separately, to decide what rules should go on the sign.

Even though there was an initial attempt at establishing boundaries for adults as well as youth, the rules quickly became principally a way to set limits on the youth. In the previous chapter, I discussed the norms and values discourse; it might be useful to return to two of the quotes from that chapter now that we are immersed in this particular context. As noted at the beginning of this section, Thomas, the local authority from the municipality, stated emphatically at one of the meetings: "Sure, things are tolerated in the Netherlands, but there are boundaries: to here, and no further." Compare those words to the explanation Thomas gave me in an interview:

> In the Netherlands, the whole tenor has changed a bit. We, the country, we've moved away from the previous decades of tolerance, from permissiveness, and, now, it can be said: "There are norms, and there are values."

There is a resonance here between setting limits and having norms and values. The words of Anna make this explicit with regard to the meetings:

> I hope that by creating rules for living, we can bring a little norms and values into the equation. [We can say:] 'Don't you think that you kids could *aanpassen* (adjust) a bit? Try to convince us that you could *aanpassen* a bit.' And the rules for living really are a tool—it's about what happens in your head, you have to internalize it. That's one hope, to have a conversation, and change their heads a little bit.

These quotes show that the discourse of norms and values, which is principally applied to the problem of ethnic difference, is being powerfully applied in a context that appears to be dissimilar from the larger discourse. But the situations may not be as dissimilar as they appear: both ethnic minorities and neighborhood youth are being positioned as insufficiently socialized, groups "whose heads need a little changing." What I would like to emphasize at this point is that such changes are to be *internalized*: the stating of norms and values, the creation of conduct rules, are intended to make the disciplining of such

groups a self-regulating process, requiring little actual interaction between the insufficiently socialized and those White adults who are already fully Dutch.

We can't be responsible for all that happens, especially if we don't see it!—Youth

A few weeks later, the youth met with only a few of the local authorities, and they agreed to the following rules: no soccer in the tunnel, the youth would *aanspreken* (speak to or admonish) each other upon undesirable behavior, they would clean up after themselves, and they would not hang out in the tunnel after 10 p.m. As Anna put it, these rules would also be *for* the youth, because "We've agreed that you can hang out here if there's normal behavior." Two weeks later, the adults and the youth met in a large group again; Anna was unable to be present to moderate that meeting, and the tone moved from Anna's theme of "with each other, for each other" to one more disciplinary. At this meeting, there were three authorities present, six complainants, four civic observers, three parents and 15 youth, although six of these were from the "skater" group, and who sat quietly throughout the entire meeting only to ask, at the end, about promised plans for a skate - park. (The skate park was completed and opened in 2003.) Willem, the local police officer, gave a fairly positive report on the neighborhood situation, stating that there had been very few complaints, and that he had seen youth smoking cigarettes in the tunnel, but had not seen any real problems. Another moderator stepped in, and sternly entreated the group with the following words: "We should say hello to one another, good morning, not look at each other wrong. We all live in Amsterdam, and we have to get along, live together in society. We can make *leefregels*, put them on a wall, and refer to them."

Then, the rules were described to everyone, which led to the following heated exchange:

Helena: But the *overlast* is also in the communal garden, not only in the tunnel.

Thomas (municipal official): No, we're only talking about the tunnel now.

Helena: No! They play soccer [in the garden].

Thomas: These rules are only for the tunnel.

Helena: No, it's also the surroundings, the street, the garden.

Remco (parent): But little kids also play soccer in the garden, little kids of five years old.

Willem (police): The key word is *overlast*, that's what this is about.

Klaas: But we already made that agreement [about soccer], it's over.

Willem: It's about *overlast*, it's not that complicated.

Klaas: Fine, just write it down (makes dismissive hand gesture as if to say: "Let's get on with it!).

Willem: OK, so, the rule reads "No soccer in the tunnel and in the immediate surroundings."

Thomas: The *leefregels* shouldn't say "It is forbidden", but "We won't," or "We shall not."

This exchange shows that the rules continued to be negotiated between and extended by the adults after the youth had met on their own and brought their list to the group; Helena, in particular, wanted to add rules that would limit the number of youth permitted to hang out together, address the issue of graffiti, and lay out the "next step" to be followed if the rules were not adhered to. The fact that the rules ended up being stated in a "we" voice came at the suggestion of the moderators, and I asked the youth if they were bothered by this formulation, since the rules were not originally their idea. Klaas said that he and his friends were not really bothered by the use of "we," since they had agreed to the rules, but that they thought it might be a problem for future groups of youths: "Of course, we agreed to it. But I see it like, there's our group, and there's other kids, younger kids, who will see this sign and be like, 'No [we didn't agree to that].'" I found the use of "we" to

reveal the hope of many adults that they could create a compliant consensus among the youth, and fix that consensus, set it in material form. Furthermore, these rules depicted the youth as willing participants, which they were, but only to an extent, while also obscuring the reasons why the youth would agree to such rules. Imagine, instead, that the introduction to the rules read: "Helena, Hein, Wim and their neighbors promise not to call the police on Klaas, Johannes, Hendrick, Martijn and their friends, and the police promise not to give tickets to the youth, as long as they keep to the following rules . . . " Such a statement would make more visible the kind of conflict that actually existed between some of the adults and the some of the youth, and the role of the police. Of course, in the use of "permitted" (as in, "it is permitted for the youth of this neighborhood to remain in the tunnel as long as these rules are followed") hints at the power relations in this conflict, but it does not make explicit who the interested parties are, and instead only isolates the youth for promises and punishment.

As much as I wanted to talk about the use of "we" in the rules, the youth were clearly more interested in arguing against one of the rules to which they had "agreed": "We will speak to each other (*aanspreken*) about undesirable behavior." They protested, vigorously at times, that they could not be held responsible for things that happened when they were not around. This matter was an important one, given the fact that Helena had been increasingly pestered over the course of the conflict. As Martijn explained:

> At first it was really only about soccer, but then, like, when the Christmas tree was set on fire in the tunnel, or when someone clogged her lock, she said to us "You should say something," telling us we should speak to those who did those things. But I say, if I'm not there when it happens, if something happens, then I can't warn or tell someone. She says, "Well, you must hear something," and I told her, "No, I don't." And then she just says, "No, no."

In addition to keeping a journal detailing the irritations she experienced and the interactions she had with the youth, Helena also kept track of a number of incidents of vandalism that appeared to be retaliations against her, often taking pictures of any evidence. For example, after the youths were taken to the precinct during the summer of 2002, and after the first couple of meetings, Helena's car windshield had been broken, her front door had had paint thrown against it, and the keyhole to her front door had been jammed full of a gummy substance.[166] At other times, she found ice cream sticks thrown in her garden, chips bags stuffed in her mailbox, and eggs thrown against her door. After the New Year's Eve celebration, she was upset to find parts of used fireworks and a burned Christmas tree in the tunnel; these, however, may not have been directed at her, since setting fire to Christmas trees and setting off fireworks are common to this holiday. She was unable to prove who had done any of these things, since there were no eyewitnesses who came forward. The youth who attended the meetings claimed they not seen anyone vandalize Helena's property, nor did they know who had done it. Of course, they might not have been telling the truth, but it is certainly possible that other people had done these things, and that the youth attending the meetings had no knowledge. As noted at the beginning of the chapter, there were many groups of youths who did not participate in the meetings; the youth who came were only those who were willing to participate.

The problem of culpability proved to be quite tricky throughout the conflict. At this November meeting, although the situation had initially been characterized as much improved, toward the end of the meeting one of the moderators noted that someone had

[166] Given the importance of a well kept front door and a clean stoop, and the connection to middle-class respectability such cleanliness implies, I found it interesting that much of the vandalism against Helena was directed against her front door. It might be interpreted as a way of "disrespecting" her middle-class sensibilities, as embodied in her desire for a quiet, clean and properly civil neighborhood.

urinated against Helena's front door. When one of the younger youths giggled, he was questioned, quite forcefully, "What are you laughing for? Do you know who did this?" In response, the youth mumbled, "No, it's just funny." One of the authorities then said, "There's nothing funny about this. Did you do this? Is that why you think it's funny? I bet you know about this. Hmmm?" Even though the youth protested his innocence, his amusement at the incident worked to make him an object of suspicion. In subsequent interviews, some of the complainants referred to this youth and commented on how "that one is a troublemaker."

In the weeks following the exchange at the meeting, the story about the urination incident changed significantly. Another adult in the neighborhood told the police that she witnessed the alleged urination, and that none of the youths were responsible. Instead, the witness claimed, a dog wandered under the tunnel during a rainy day, and urinated against the wall and Helena's door, rather than out in the foul weather. This claim was repeated to me by many individuals, by police officers, other local authorities and parents. What is important, however, is that stories about such incidents—whether of vandalism or of false accusations—circulated quickly throughout the neighborhood. Through telling such stories, individuals positioned themselves with or against each other. The urination incident became a story that the youth repeated in order to demonstrate their inability to "reprimand each other," as was required by the rules for living; it was, for the complainants, a story that epitomized the meanness and vulgarity of the youth and their reprisals. In addition, the urination story became a way for local authorities, parents, and civic observers to suggest that Helena was becoming more

unreasonable in her demands and in her feeling of persecution. As one police officer put it to me:

> Helena thinks – she complains about everything, and feels it personally. I think things are going well, the older youth are calmer, people are saying hello to one another. The youth still stand in the tunnel, but just standing there is not a problem . . . Helena feels like the process has abandoned her, and she'd prefer the youth to all be gone. But they all live in the neighborhood, they belong in the neighborhood, and they can hang around there. But the key word is *overlast*, if they make noise, play music loud, make a mess, then that's a problem. But it would be strange if you couldn't just stand there.

The professionals have the idea that the problems are now manageable– Thomas

At the end of the November meeting, after all the youth had left, it was clear to see that the moderators of the meeting had a different idea about the status of the situation than Helena and the other complainants. While the police and municipal authorities asserted that the situation was going well, and there was no need to schedule any further meetings at this time, Helena and others with complaints were anxious about having a plan to proceed. Thomas stated that:

> Well, the *professionals* (said in English) have the idea that the problems are now manageable, that we're done "*for the time being*" (said in English) and our idea is that there was a problem, and it was tackled, and you don't need us anymore, our professional support is not necessary.

Thomas's comment ignited a flurry of responses. I have included the extended exchange below, for it is remarkable in many ways. First, Thomas had claimed just a few weeks earlier in an interview with me that there was clearly enough space for youth in the neighborhood, but, in this exchange, he states that there is not enough space and that adults have to compromise a little more. Second, Helena is still dissatisfied with the rules, asking "What have we gotten, really?" from the process, although it seemed to me that Helena and the other complainants are the only ones who "got" anything from the process, in the form of municipal intervention and the establishment of rules that protect

their interests. Third, this exchange was the first in which many civic observers spoke up and asserted their opinions, revealing the position of the complainants to be clearly the minority position. Finally, Thomas's use of English, particularly the use of "professionals" to describe himself and the other authorities, placed some distance between the local authorities and the complainants, and, in their responses, the complainants display an eagerness to keep the professionals involved with the problem as their advocates. Both neighborhood residents and local authorities had become weary of the complainants, it seemed. Because the exchange is so lengthy, I have included a categorical description after each speaker's name.

> Hein (complainant): But what about the future, what about what happens in the communal garden?
>
> Helena (complainant) (to Thomas): I think it's unfair, to discard the plan that was on the table.
>
> Thomas (local authority): If you say that—(clearly angered)—You have to stop. What do you mean—you can't say that, I did not say the plan is over. People can organize on their own, but our support is not necessary right now.
>
> Hein (complainant): Professionalism is good, but you have to look to the future as part of that professionalism.
>
> Jana (complainant): And there's little kids, playing soccer so hard, breaking my plants—
>
> Thomas (local authority): There's not so much room for kids here, you have to give them some space, you have to make a plan—
>
> Jana (complainant): And the little kids play with the older kids—
>
> Willem (police): There won't be any more soccer, it's over.
>
> Jana (complainant): I hope so!
>
> Helena (complainant): I want to know what we have gotten, really?
>
> Maurits (civic observer): We should say "Ok, we've made contact [with the youth]," and we'll trust that it goes well.

> Anouk (local authority): The youth have agreed to the rules for living, and they've gotten nothing—that's not really the question.
>
> Thomas (local authority) (angrily): This is not a visit from Santa Claus, this is a group of adults, and we need to ask: Is the problem gone? Not, what did we get from this?! . . .
>
> . . . Helena (complainant): I want to know, what is the next step? I mean, with the professionals? It is not over. I had the idea that, with Anna, we should come back to this and say, how's it going?
>
> Thomas (local authority): That might be good, but maybe it's not necessary. My idea is that the police are really on top of this. At Home on the Street is involved, the police are here. The issue has been addressed. And we have to keep the finger on the pulse. But you can't completely close off public space!
>
> Helena (complainant): But now that we have finger on the pulse, we have to make sure not to lose it!
>
> Maurits (civic observer): You are making the problem bigger than it is. You should go with other people when you talk with the youth.
>
> Anouk (local authority): They are sick to death of coming here to talk about this.
>
> Remco (parent): You've got to give them a chance, maybe see how things are in March, or so.
>
> Frederiek (civic observer): Yeah, wait a few months, give some space to it.
>
> Anouk (local authority): And we're still around.
>
> Frederiek (civic observer): Let's wait a few months and see how it goes.
>
> Jana (complainant): I don't have any *last* anymore, it's stopped. It isn't happening anymore, really.

It seemed that within the span of just a few minutes, the tide had turned, the pendulum had swung, and now those with complaints were in the minority; one of the complainants (Jana) even moved from complaining to stating she doesn't have problems anymore. Helena and the other complainants appeared unwilling to "wait and see," and their demanding additional rules and additional meetings drove both the local authorities and their neighbors to differentiate themselves from the complainants. Although there was a youth-only meeting in February to finalize the rules, and a check-in meeting with the

adults in May, in many regards the process stopped with this exchange. Unfortunately, both the youth and the complainants felt that the "other side" had won: the youth thought the complainants won by banning soccer and regulating when and how they could hang out at their hang-out spot, and the complainants were displeased that the authorities were pulling away, and that the plaque did not regulate the rest of the public space near the tunnel nor set limits on the number of youth permitted to hang out together. Yet, in the spring, talk began of having a celebration at which the rules would be "unveiled." The youths did not want to attend this party, and were instead promised that those youth who had participated in the meetings would be treated to an afternoon of paintball, paid for by At Home on the Street. Importantly, some of the complainants argued that the youth only be allowed to play paintball if they attended the party; they wanted the youth to be happy about the rules, but, not surprisingly, the youth did not want to celebrate the hanging of the plaque.

Conclusion: The writing on the wall

The rules were finally printed up on a large sign, approximately five feet tall and three and a half feet wide. As noted at the opening of this chapter, an "unveiling party" was organized for mid-June, 2003, and residents from the neighborhood came out at 3 p.m. and had coffee, soft drinks and beer, and snacks. The event was coordinated with At Home on the Street, and staff members were present and mingled with the residents. About 30 people showed up, including four staff and a police officer, and the parents and complainants generally avoided one another. One of the youths was drafted into organizing the music for the party, and one other youth stopped by, but in general the youth were absent from the event. As someone who had listened intently, over months,

to all sides of the story, the tensions between the complaining adults and the parents were palpable. I felt uncomfortable spending more than a few minutes with any one person; even though I had told people that I was interviewing all the different parties to the conflict, some still raised their eyebrows if they saw me talking to parents of the youth or to the complainants. As a revealing aside, some of the Surinamese youth were hanging around just on the other side of the courtyard, perhaps 30 yards away, watching the unveiling. No one invited them to join the party, and the ethnic divide was very stark to me, as almost all of the people under the tunnel were White native Dutch. Toward the end of the party, I observed Helena bringing some of the leftovers to the group; I was told that it was the first time she had spoken with them.

Within a few days, the sign was vandalized. The "curfew" times were printed at the bottom of the sign, reading: "until 22.00 in the winter and 23.00 in the summer." The vandal(s) scratched off only the number 23, leaving the rest of the sign intact. No one was caught, and the sign was removed in order to have the 23 replaced, and have a protective seal placed over it to prevent further scratching. It took almost a month before the sign was finally ready to be re-hung, this time, to no fanfare. And by the next morning, it was gone; someone had climbed a ladder (the sign was about 15 feet high), unscrewed the fasteners from the brick wall, and stolen it in the night.

This came as a shock to many people, but perhaps it shouldn't have. The youth were clearly tired of the meetings, since they mostly experienced them as venues for adult complaints and for the imposition of rules. Relations between Helena and the youth, and between Helena and some of the parents and other adults, had worsened. Helena felt even more threatened by the youth, as they ignored her attempts at greetings

or were aggressive in return. Many of the local authorities had tired of her frequent complaints, phone calls, and letters, and it had become common wisdom that she was overly sensitive, even at the same time it was acknowledged that she was being harassed. It was rumored that Helena was thinking about moving to another neighborhood, and this rumor was employed in ways that seemed to suggest that the problem would eventually resolve itself. It was never discovered who had stolen the sign, but the youth were blamed, and their promised paintball excursion canceled. The sign, while well intentioned by those who initiated it, had not brought about any of the desired ends; the deep division that existed was unable to be papered over. If anything, the meetings had made it the division worse, or at least more visible. These rules that pretended to express community-wide agreement did not honor the conflicts of interest, different norms of behavior, and conflicting definitions of a pleasant residential environment that actually existed within the neighborhood.

The rules were clearly not evidence of neighborhood cohesion, or of youth accession to adults' wishes. What they do reveal, however, is a double movement on the part of the local authorities and the complainants. First, the rules, and the process for creating them, show the desire of local authorities and some adults to intervene in youth behavior. Then, in a second tack, the rules insist that the youth become responsible for disciplining themselves, both by internalizing the rules and by *aanspreken* each other. The rules, in a rather unexpected way, allow adults to further withdraw from being actively engaged in the public space. If these rules were followed, complainants would not have to interact with the youth, nor would local authorities have to discipline them or interact with the complainants. In addition, these rules show that such conflicts are not,

in their essence, about public space. It has become commonplace to say that youth are "privatizing" or taking over public spaces; in this conflict, we can see that the complainants did not want access to or use of the public space, rather, they wished to prevent public life from intruding into their private homes. This conflict could be understood as an attempt to extend the realm of the private, to demand that the public conform to the private. In order to extend the peacefulness and the tidiness of the home, the public sphere must be emptied. Those who wish to remain in the public sphere must be domesticated.

Chapter Nine – Conclusion

"Too much tolerance" and the problem of freedom

The Substance of Emotions

Early on, after returning from my fieldwork, when people would ask me what my research was about, I would reply, jokingly: "It's about why some Dutch adults get so mad at kids who hang around in public spaces." And, almost invariably, they would respond: "But I thought the Dutch were so tolerant!" In the very late stages of my writing, I realized that my flippancy belied a deeper consternation about this anger. I had long known that my analysis would demonstrate that the *hangjongeren* problematic was inflected with contemporary anxieties about ethnic difference, gender, class, Dutchness, and safety. Similarly, I knew that my account needed to capture the ways in which particularly Dutch concepts like *overlast*, *aanspreken*, *sociale controle* and *aanpassen* are articulated in relation to anxieties about hang-around youth. I entered into fieldwork knowing that I would situate the concern about hang-around youth within a long history of adult concerns about youth behavior, and within long-evolving policies to target "problem youth." Finally, I recognized the need to balance that long-term view with the impact of more recent demographic and social changes.

In the early stages of writing, I felt confounded by adults' emotional reactions to *hangjongeren*, and so focused on unraveling the many possible intertwined meanings that attach to the concept of *hangjongeren.* My goal was to demonstrate how this version of "problem youth" reflects the concerns of this particular cultural moment. And in the

previous chapters, I have attempted to demonstrate how a specific conjuncture of events, cultural patterns, societal changes, and social and political discourses work together to make *hangjongeren* an object with a plethora of meanings. I have shown that most everything in the *hangjongeren* problematic varies, when examined ethnographically: some youth are White, some are not. Some groups are male, some are mixed. Class, age, school and work status all vary. Among adults there exists the same variance: some complainants are older, some are younger; some are men, others are women. There are trends, to be sure, but there are no absolute correlations among the demographic characteristics of both adults and youth, or in the interactions between them. Recognizing that youth behavior has historically been a frequent focus of adult concerns and government policy makes it difficult to argue that there is anything definitively "new" about the fact that some adults complain about *hangjongeren*.

While outlining the various contexts that give shape to these adult-youth conflicts sheds light on why this social problem has so much resonance in politics, the news media, policy making, and neighborhood dynamics, explaining the deep emotional response among some adults requires a further step. Interviews showed that these strong responses were related to feelings of frustration and powerlessness, to perceptions of youth *overlast* as an intrusion into one's home, and to discontentment with the limited ability of the social welfare state to solve problems. These adults' responses, I want to emphasize, are physically manifested, visible in facial expressions when people recount incidents, apparent in their red, flushed cheeks, audible in their sputtering attempts to articulate their sense of violation, felt as adrenaline in their veins. I kept coming back to their responses in consternation; "Sure, youth can be irritating," I thought, "but why are

these adults so wound up?" Marnie Bjornson, a friend and fellow scholar of Dutch culture to whom I am deeply indebted, recently made the insight to me that anthropologists—even though we may prefer to avoid such seemingly petty complaints—need to carefully attend to these emotional reactions, as a kind of insider's critique.

Alongside my efforts to untangle the cultural elements that make the problem of *hangjongeren* salient in this particular moment, I wish to make one more contribution, and it involves taking seriously the causes of such angry and fearful reactions in many adults. In this conclusion, I suggest that both these emotional reactions and the discourse about "too much tolerance" are indicative of a deep frustration, one which is engendered by strongly held ideas that stand in partial contradiction with one another. In particular, I think these reactions arise out three developments since 1960: increased individualization, the expansion of the social welfare state, and a particular expectation of domestic "*leefbaarheid*" (livability, or quality of life), a concept that came to the fore in the 1990s, as did "*hangjongeren*." I believe that it is the combination of these three—rather than growing anti-liberalism or anti-multiculturalism—that creates a specific response to the problem of hang-around youth in public space. The preceding chapters lead to the conclusion that some adults' reactions are founded in a particular notion of selfhood that is characterized by: 1) a belief that one should be able to live and develop oneself according to one's choices (individualization with an accent on personal freedom); 2) a belief that the social welfare state should support those choices, and solve social problems, through social policy (elder care, child care, benefits, and subsidies all assist individuals by taking over traditional obligations); and 3) a belief that one is entitled to a pleasant living environment, with quality housing, clean public spaces, and

ample green space. The frustration arises when adults are faced with the limits of the social welfare state to ensure social and spatial order, and with the limits of their own ability to live fully individualized lives. When these adults feel forced to confront neighborhood youth, they experience a double loss: the unmet promise of the state to care for all their "needs," and the infringement on their personal freedom. It is important to highlight the fact that many of these adult-youth conflicts are located in residential areas, where adults wish to find peace and where they believe they are entitled to find it, and where they are then angered to find that the government cannot ensure that for them. Of course, conflicts also occur in shopping and public transportation areas, but these are also places where adults expect public and private authorities to maintain order. Before continuing to pursue this line of thought, I would like to first return to the problem of stereotypical understandings of Dutch tolerance, in order to situate my explanation of recent changes in the Netherlands.

A Loss of Tolerance?

I do not wish to discount that social attitudes and policies toward youth and ethnic minorities have hardened in the last ten years, or that many talk about today's social problems as being the result of decades of "too much tolerance." But I do think it important to distinguish between the dominant discourses in the political and policy realms, and the variegated attitudes and meanings of "too much tolerance" that I found at the neighborhood level. A new kind of toughness is especially apparent in the discourses of conservative politicians who vociferously critique the multiculturalist policies and "political correctness" of the previous administration (the Purple Coalition of Labor and Socialist parties, 1994-2002). But today's tough talk often obscures the fact that in the

late 1980s and early 1990s there was a surge in extreme-right politics and hate crimes; today's nationalism and racism are not without precedent. Both the shrillness of political rhetoric and popular attitudes were moderated in the interviews I held with adult residents, municipal officials, police officers and social workers, who said things such as "We are tolerant, but up to a point," "Tolerance goes to here, but then no further," and "Tolerance is about setting limits."

The idea that tolerance is about setting limits is substantially different than the typical understandings of tolerance (i.e., openness and acceptance) in American English. In the reporting on the murder of Theo van Gogh, non-Dutch conceptions about tolerance were noticeable. The result was a framework for understanding current ethnic tensions in the Netherlands in terms of the "tolerant Dutch" and the "intolerant Muslims," and for interpreting shock about the murder as an abandonment of tolerance. In *The New Yorker*, for example, Ian Buruma wrote:

> After the war, and especially since the nineteen-sixties, the Dutch prided themselves on having built an oasis of tolerance, a kind of Berkeley writ large, where people were free to do their own thing. Liberated, at last, from the strictures of religion and social conformity, the Dutch, especially in Amsterdam, frolicked in the expectation that the wider world would not disturb their perfect democracy in the polders. Now the turbulent world has come to Holland at last, crashing into an idyll that astonished the citizens of less favored nations (Buruma 2005, 32).

In this short characterization, the many suggestions that the Netherlands was an oasis of tolerance, a perfect democracy, a site of frolicking non-conformity, an idyll go uncontested. Although there was a strong countercultural youth movement in the 1970s—the near-mythical image of which persists in the minds of many foreigners—the "oasis" is much more complicated than Buruma depicts in this paragraph. More accurate, I find, is the column by Maria Margaronis in *The Nation*—in which she notes both that

the Netherlands is "*seen as* Europe's most open society" (emphasis mine) and the multiplicity of intolerances:

> "We should therefore claim, in the name of tolerance, the right not to tolerate the intolerant." So said the philosopher Karl Popper near the end of World War II. The recent events in the Netherlands—traditionally seen as Europe's most open society—have exposed the difficulties of applying this paradox in twenty-first-century Europe, where competing forms of intolerance are feeding one another, to disastrous effect (Margaronis 2004).

In analyzing the Netherlands, I would like to emphasis how imperative it is to separate out foreign (mis)understandings of Dutch tolerance from the realities of cultural chauvinism and structural discrimination—intolerances that have long existed, already, before this moment.

In Chapter Two, I described common misconceptions about the Netherlands, including the notion that the Dutch are exceptionally tolerant, a stereotype that is as pervasive as it is persistent. But if we can see beyond the stereotype of tolerance, then it becomes hard to argue that Dutch society has become less tolerant, or more conservative. There are multiple histories of tolerance in the Netherlands, but these are quite distinct from tolerance as "openness." In the early modern Dutch Republic, religious minorities were tolerated, as long as they did not confess their religion publicly; this was a great improvement on religious persecution, but tolerance meant abiding something that was not approved. During pillarization, political and religious differences were accommodated through elite consensus-forging, which could be seen as a kind of tolerance, but social groups were not open with one another. The decriminalization of soft drugs in the 1970s, and the long-standing toleration of prostitution (legalized in 2000), were in many ways pragmatic solutions to persistent problems; these industries could be monitored, regulated and taxed if they were not driven underground. It bears

repeating that smoking marijuana is disapproved of by many Dutch people; one learns, living in Amsterdam, that the "coffeeshops" are frequented primarily by tourists and ex-patriots. A bit of experimentation in one's college years may be expected, but continuing use is not met with approval by most.

The notion of the multicultural society that emerged in the late 1980s most closely matches the sense of tolerance as openness and acceptance of others' difference, but the policymaking of that time did not solve the persistent problems of prejudice and structural discrimination against ethnic minorities, nor was gender equity truly achieved. Racist and chauvinist attitudes have persisted throughout the second half of the 20th century, making it difficult to argue that the prejudicial sentiments that are openly voiced today are new, or indicative of a decreased level of tolerance. Instead, I would stipulate that such sentiments have always been present—many Indonesian Dutch; guest workers from Southern Europe, Morocco and Turkey; postcolonials from Suriname and the Antilles; asylum seekers; and their descendants have experienced racism and exclusion, to varying degrees. What has changed, in the last decade, is the political environment; political representatives and public intellectuals have led the way, making such speech more acceptable. While there was a great deal of talk about multiculturalism, and attempts at anti-racism education in the 1990s, today's political leaders actively capitalize on the negative feelings that many people have—as many people have always had—about ethnic minorities.

Many White people I interviewed complained about "not being able to say things before," about feeling silenced, discriminated against, displaced from their own neighborhoods. While it would be easy to characterize such sentiments as a new wave of

racist feelings, I don't think that's accurate. I would like to suggest that such reactions to the changing ethnic composition of the Netherlands, while resonant with a larger political movement that depicts itself as riding a wave of backlash against multiculturalism, are more complex. Criticisms of the way in which the social welfare state has dealt with ethnic minorities are first, and foremost, criticisms of the government. The distribution of social welfare benefits to *allochtonen* is seen as a betrayal to those who are dissatisfied with their standard of living, and who thought the government would do more for them. Some of my White interviewees made it clear that they experienced the visible concentrations of ethnic minorities as an incursion into "their" space and on their entitlements, complaining that the government's housing systems gave preference to others over them. Nationalist and racist sentiments also articulate together with the heightened level of individualization. Anti-racist discourses are perceived as limiting one's freedom to say anything, and the presence of ethnic enclaves is interpreted as limiting one's freedom of movement. Similarly, given the sense of entitlement to *leefbaarheid* (quality of life) in one's residential environment, the incursion into that space by ethnically different, often poor, others can be seen as another broken promise of the social welfare state. When Whites say that ethnic minorities should have to integrate, I think that this attitude arises, at least in part, out of a desire to have their own quality of life and personal freedoms protected. The sense of anger and frustration voiced by some of the participants in this study is generally less related, I believe, to negative attitudes toward ethnic minorities themselves, and more connected to resentment about being limited—in one's speech, in one's movement, in one's housing choices. Rather than

argue that people have become less tolerant of ethnic difference, I suggest that it has become more acceptable to voice one's frustrations in racist terms.

Complicating the Concept of "Backlash"

While there are clearly significant demographic and social changes to Dutch society over the past fifty years, I would like to suggest that the notion of backlash does not fully capture the less visible transformations in people's notions of government, their expectations for their lives, and their relationships with one another. The concept of backlash does work, but in a limited way: as we have seen, the increase in ethnic minorities, working mothers, and feelings of being unsafe all contribute to a felt loss of social cohesion, and this loss is often blamed on immigration and housing policies. Within the realm of politics, it is certainly the case that conservative politicians of various persuasions have used "multiculturalism" as a straw man against which to agitate, and have positioned themselves as "anti-politically correct" in their "tough on integration" policy endeavors. But the fact that so many people hold a tremendous disdain for the current government, seeing arrogance, elitism and even ridiculousness in the political realm, forces me to question the extent to which such tough political rhetoric is an accurate mirror of popular attitudes. The phenomena of Pim Fortuyn and Theo van Gogh suggest that, perhaps more than simple racist nationalism, these two resonated with the public because of their trumpeted rejection of establishment politics. Moreover, I question whether people's dissatisfaction with government should primarily be seen as a backlash against the specifics of earlier policies. I would suggest, instead, that most people's criticism of government is deeply connected to how they conceive of their relationship to the social welfare state.

"Too much tolerance," I argue, is not simply a backlash against liberalism or "failed multiculturalism," but a larger critique of the inability of the social welfare state to meet its promise of ordering the social world. The notion of backlash would be more compelling, perhaps, if people were today more satisfied with this coalition that has enacted such tough, anti-immigrant policies. Most Dutch people I know do not think much of the Balkenende cabinet, but they did not think much of the previous cabinet either. And while there was sometimes admiration for Pim Fortuyn's "naming the problem," I never met anyone who admitted to wanting him to lead the country. Instead, there is a pervasive dissatisfaction with government that cuts across classes and ethnic groups, a deep cynicism that the government is powerless to achieve its goals, whatever they are, and a sense that, therefore, individuals are powerless too. This does not mean that they reject the social welfare state, however. Perhaps the most compelling evidence of this dissatisfaction is the 2005 "No" vote on the European Union Constitution. When I returned to the Netherlands that summer, I was repeatedly told that many people rejected the Constitution because they were so displeased with the paternalistic attitude of the government, which expected people to ratify it without debate. Others rejected it because it represented the neo-liberalization of the social welfare state, a loss that they feared. And still others voted "no" because they believed it did not really matter anyway.

While many people harbor a great deal of anger and discontent toward the government, it is certainly true that the current political environment has also made voicing racist and populist sentiments more acceptable, to the relief of many. But these sentiments, and that sense of relief, deserve a nuanced treatment. Most people who participated in this study, while displeased with the government for not dealing with

integration in a better manner, also attempted to portray themselves as accepting of immigrants and ethnic difference in their personal lives. Even the outright rejection of Moroccans by one highly educated man was articulated in a way that positioned the Dutch as extremely tolerant: Dutch people have been able to live with all newcomers, he assured me, thus problems with Moroccans must arise from their Moroccan-ness. Responses to the murder of Theo van Gogh demonstrated an earnest struggle in trying to think through the issues of demagoguery, racism, ethnic difference, and fundamentalism. The government's crackdown on suspected affiliates of Van Gogh's murderer was largely seen as a hysterical overreaction, a performance of force by buffoons. Almost everyone I spoke to about that event conveyed their belief that murdering Van Gogh was wrong, but they also emphasized that they did not see Van Gogh as heroic, that they did not approve of his provocations.

These complexities make it difficult to argue that there has been a widespread backlash against the last decades of social policy and social change, and against the values put forward under the banner of multiculturalism. I believe it is more accurate to say that many people have a contradictory and discontented relationship to the social welfare state, one which affects their perceptions of and responses to all sorts of social problems, including *hangjongeren*. The term backlash fixes a particular temporal movement to these social dynamics, but no one in my study wished to return to the poverty or the closed pillars or the relative homogeneity of the 1950s. Many people are certainly unhappy with the current state of affairs, but there is a great deal that they treasure from the last decades, as well. On March 7, 2006, municipal elections were held all across the country: the Labor and Socialist parties made huge gains, and the hard-right

efforts of the Christian Democratic, Liberal and Leefbaar Nederlands parties seem to have caused them to lose seats even in highly populist areas like Rotterdam. If there had been a true surge to the right at the popular level, it would be reasonable to assume that people would have kept the current coalition in power. Instead, there were small gains among some extreme right parties, and a massive movement to "kick the bums out."

The high level of individualization since the 1960s also complicates the notion of backlash. While some may long for the days of *sociale controle*, they do so largely because they resent interruptions from other people's children, not because they wish to be subject to that kind of surveillance and conformity. Some decried an excess of individualization, but within a context of complaining about being inconvenienced by other people's behavior, not with any desire to relinquish one's own individual freedoms. Individualization has engendered a specific sense of selfhood that is thought to be free of the traditional strictures of church, family obligation, marriage, and *sociale controle*, a sense of selfhood in which developing oneself (*zelfontplooing*) was the proper goal. At least one of the beginnings of this transformation was seen in the 1969 Youth Policy Memorandum, discussed in Chapter Four. At a larger level, the expanding social welfare state was a promise to provide care for one's children and one's parents, to fund the education and the unemployment of everyone, to create policies for the common good, in short, to order the social world in a way that freed individuals to realize themselves.

My last criticism of the concept of backlash is that it prevents us from seeing a third development, which is a new sense of entitlement to peaceful domestic space. The suburbanization of the Netherlands, which began to accelerate in the mid-1960s, is the physical manifestation of a widespread desire for quiet, clean, well-ordered, residential

spaces. Dutch social scientists Rob van Ginkel, Leon Deben and Tineke Lupi describe the promise of suburban living: "Suburbs pretend to combine the best of the city and the country. The ideal is to live outside the city in an environment that is presented as free, spacious, clean, green, natural and peaceful, but without the restrictions of living in a village" (Van Ginkel, Deben, and Lupi 2002, 276). The authors note that more than half of all Dutch live in suburban environments, so we might assume that such "suburban dreams" are fairly pervasive (Van Ginkel, Deben, and Lupi 2002, 275). I would argue that today such dreams of peace, quiet, and order actually extend well beyond suburban settings, as evidenced not only by the complaints about *hangjongeren* in all types of residential environments, but also by the struggles over nightlife noise in Amsterdam in the last few years.

In 2002, a new organization of nightclub and bar owners and patrons was established, and named itself—playing on the title of the famous painting by Rembrandt—"De Nachtwacht," or the Night Guard.[167] The organization held elections for a "Night Mayor," to represent the interests of nightlife establishments in the city, establishments that were feeling the squeeze of new central-city residents who were demanding peace and quiet in the streets of Amsterdam. (This anecdote alone should give pause to those who would characterize Amsterdam as an idyll of frolicking counter-culturalists.) While I agree that problems around hang-around youth are connected to suburban dreams and the "oversensitivity" of adult residents, as argued by Van Ginkel, Deben and Lupi, I would extend their analysis further—to argue that such dreams are held not only by suburbanites, but by people in cities and villages, as well. In addition, I

[167] The organization has a website at: http://www.nachtwachtamsterdam.nl/nachtwacht/fla/index.html.

would argue that this desire for peace and quiet must be seen not simply as the expression of a pervasive "*burgerlijk*" (bourgeois and small-minded) mentality, but in relationship to the high level of individualization and the expansive social welfare state.

The Multiple Contexts of the *Hangjongeren* Problematic

In Chapter Two, I discussed a long pattern of political and social consensus making, or conflict avoidance. Both the attempts to create Rules for Living and the series of neighborhood meetings should be seen as examples of this; importantly, such practices often mute conflict, without actually creating agreement. I also reviewed the large-scale demographic and social changes that have occurred in the last 50 years, to demonstrate that Dutch society has undergone substantial changes both in terms of its ethnic makeup and the disintegration of many societal institutions. Histories of pillarization and secularization, the difficult incorporation of post-colonials, guest workers, and women into the labor market, and the current levels of political extremism all demonstrate that the notion Dutch tolerance is more complicated than most foreigners imagine.

In Chapter Three, I examined the notion of *hangjongeren*, examples of similar problems in Dutch history, and current characterizations of youth in the news media. I have found that most theoretical perspectives on the social construction of "problem youth" insufficiently attend to the variety of expectations, feelings, and experiences among adults and "the public." For example, some adults expect their domestic space to serve as a personal refuge, while others enjoy the sounds of young people playing outside. I discussed in Chapter Three how the theory of moral panics insufficiently addresses heterogeneity among adults; my study shows that "the public" is made up of many different sets of social groups, who hold sometimes unexpected and even internally

contradictory attitudes about adult-youth conflicts. Their views, of course, are shaped in part by dominant discourses that circulate through the news media, expert analysis, and social policy, but their views are also based on their world-views, their experiences, and the experiences they believe that other people have. Differentiating among adults does not mean discounting the role of media, expert, and political discourses; the news media certainly report frequently, and in often sensationalized ways, about *hangjongeren*, and politicians and experts form well-publicized policies for these youth. The adults I studied, however, did not simply internalize those ideas. Noticeably missing from the news media, and from the policy realm, are the voices of parents, and other residents less concerned with order and quietness.

More compelling than moral panics is the notion that "youth-as-a-social-problem" is a site of hegemony, but this perspective also provides a limited view on the nuances of adult reactions to youth. Chapter Three makes clear that youth have long been an object of adult concern, and that discourses and policies about youth are at the same time attempts to order certain kinds of futures. The strength of this perspective is that it allows for a focus on the efforts of particular social groups to assert particular norms, by examining struggles over the power to name what is "proper" and to correct what is "deviant." In my research, there are clear stakeholders, such as political factions, policy makers, adult residents and social welfare experts, who are working—sometimes at cross-purposes—to create their ideal Dutch society. Hang-around youth, as an identified, named, and "known" population, become an object through which such efforts can be enacted. The Foucauldian concepts of governmentality and technology are clearly applicable in this context, as authorities of various sorts do seek to discipline youth in

targeted ways, and to create the conditions in which youth govern themselves. My resistance to analyzing the *hangjongeren* problematic primarily through such a lens, however, is that it is difficult to retain a sharp focus on the complicated and contradictory attitudes and beliefs of individuals when using a framework of governmentality. I wanted to learn what I could see if I kept my eyes close to the ground, and what my research shows, I believe, is that subtle, but fundamental, changes have occurred in how most Dutch people conceive of their relation to the government, their obligations toward interacting with each other, and their expectations for domestic peace. The use of *overlast* makes clear that the problem with youth today is understood in terms of adult suffering and powerlessness. In stating "I have *overlast*," these adults voice their resentment at being disturbed, and their desire for the social welfare state to solve this social problem for them. In suggesting that it is these ideological changes that best explain adults' reactions to *hangjongeren*, I would also like to suggest that further study could fruitfully examine in more depth how these ideological changes came into being, to what extent class may shape attachments to the suburban aesthetic, and to distinguish the specificities of the desires and expectations that make up this late modern relationship between the individual and the state.

After placing the problem of youth in its historical context, I examined in Chapters Four and Five the way in which youth policy has changed over time, and the way in which the presence of youth in public space has become related to feelings of being unsafe. An important contradiction within the realm of youth policy is that such policies have become increasingly focused on more and more specialized target groups; at the same time, the definitions of risk factors have expanded to include more and more

youth. In apparent contradiction, as well, is the way in which the Christian Democrat-Liberal governing coalition (2003-present) espouses a philosophy of individual responsibility, and calls on families to take on a greater role in raising children, but at the same time promotes youth policies that are increasingly intrusive in individuals' lives, and that expand government even more. Today, youth policy is shaped by a focus on "prevention," a concern with "at-risk" youth, a movement to collect and share information about groups and individual youth, and an effort to make public space "safe." These developments are visible in the work of At Home on the Street, which provides supervised play activities to younger children, and the Safe Meeting Places project, in which police, youth workers and social workers collaborate to create opportunities for at-risk youth to interact with professionals in "safe places" such as youth centers. In my discussion of these projects, I showed that—best intentions aside—their work betrays a commitment to addressing the needs of adults, not youth. At Home on the Street and Safe Meeting Places both have the mission of addressing adult *overlast* and feelings of being unsafe; in both cases, professionals are hired to interact with youth, even to play games with them, while adult neighbors remain uninvolved. These programs reveal that public space is largely empty of adults, except for those hired for the purpose of interacting with the youth in it, or those hired to entreat the youth to come inside. The state is, in these interventions, working to ensure the personal freedoms of adults.

In Chapter Five, on the meanings of "feelings of being unsafe," we see a shift since the early 1990s from a focus on crime and its causes to a preoccupation with the victim and victimization, encapsulated in the notion of "prevention." It is notable that the presence of youth in public space is used as a variable in measuring adults' feelings of

being unsafe, and their presence is thus a marker of something that needs to be prevented. Alongside changes in criminology and statistical measurements, policing strategies have increased attention to the regulation of undesirable behavior. With programs like "Streetwise," "hanging around" has come to be treated as a punishable offense. Within the context of all of these changes, the "new" problem of "senseless violence" gains added meaning: public space has come to be seen as a potential crime scene, and the youth in it as potential criminals. Concerns about growing anonymity and aggressiveness have to be seen as part of an escalating spiral, in which fears of public space and the strangers in it cause people to retreat, intensifying their sense of isolation, leading to greater anonymity. Like the discussion of youth policy, the measures to address "feelings of being unsafe" make manifest both the absence of adults in public space and the reliance on the social welfare state to mediate the social world. The presence of youth in public space is thus a marker of the limitations of the social welfare state, a symbol of its inability to ensure social order, as well as a visible reminder of the loss of *leefbaarheid*, of suburban dreams.

While many adult-youth conflicts over public space often have little to do with the politics of ethnic difference, given that in many neighborhoods both the adults and the youth involved are White, the larger political discourse about integration has a notable impact on the way in which social problems are currently imagined. In Chapter Six, I emphasized the larger political context in which these conflicts occur, where it is now common to encounter populist, neo-nationalist, and racist speech in the public political sphere. Such speech is met with little official opposition. Problems among ethnic minorities, such as low graduation rates, low employment rates, and low income rates,

are characterized as arising from within the cultures of ethnic minorities themselves, rather than being understood as the result of complex social and political interrelationships. In this context, the maintenance of group identifications and ties is portrayed as an obstacle toward becoming a properly individualized citizen, and strict, invasive policies are thought to be necessary to force ethnic minorities to integrate. Here again we see the complicated dynamics between individualization and government intervention.

While the norms and values discourse has arisen in conjunction with the current politics of ethnicity, its imaginative framework transfers easily to other social groups who are seen as insufficiently socialized, such as youth. In Chapter Seven, I show how an emphasis on norms and values, articulated through the concepts of *aanpassen* (adjust) and *aanspreken* (admonish, speak to), intersects with the complicated discourse of "too much tolerance." Criticisms of "tolerance" and "multiculturalism" are clearly a means through which politicians all along the spectrum of the right seek to position themselves. At the neighborhood level, the discourse of "too much tolerance" finds form in divergent ways. In the Smith Street example, among both complainants and civic authorities—too much tolerance is a call to have limits be set, and to have youth discipline themselves by following conduct rules and by admonishing one another. Even the police officers hope that creating and posting such behavior rules will prevent conflicts, thus relieving them from this work. Parents, on the other hand, criticize their neighbors for being overly individualized, and long for more neighborly interaction. In addition, parents critique politicians and police for foisting new zero-tolerance regimes on a society accustomed to

a weak authority structure; they relate these crackdowns to grandstanding and power-grabbing, not a history of excessive permissiveness.

The norms and values discourse and the conduct rules with which it is intertwined are a double move on the part of some adults to both demand greater regulation of public space and public behavior, and to insist that those youths regulate themselves. The increased demand on government authorities, often disdainfully characterized by policy makers and public intellectuals with the term "*mondige burger*," or demanding citizen, becomes a logical extension of the emptiness of the public sphere. In the public spaces of residential neighborhoods, adult residents are absent, and the representatives of the state wish they could be. But no matter how strong the desire for order among complainants, policy makers and police officers, Chapter Eight clearly shows that the social welfare state cannot completely solve all social problems.

A Look at Contradictions

I have emphasized, throughout this summary, the contradictions between deep individualization and expansive social welfare that underlie this frustration experienced by some Dutch adults. I have also noted how that contradiction is replicated at the governmental level, as well: Christian Democratic, Liberal, and populist parties call for active citizenship, less government, and individual responsibility at the same time that they introduce more extensive and invasive social policies—creating new mandatory integration requirements, national identity cards, re-socialization camps, and person-specific bans for particular streets.

But the contradictions do not end there. The stance of some current neoconservative and populist politicians tends to unravel when examined closely. For

just one more example, Rita Verdonk, the Minister for Integration and Immigration (Liberal Party), proposed in January 2006 a national code of conduct for the Netherlands that included banning the speaking of any language but Dutch in public spaces. Interestingly, she is but one of the leading politicians who have held up "free speech" as one of the fundamental values that characterize Dutch society; even more interestingly, she threatened to sue a group of people who hung posters criticizing her immigration policies in relation to the deaths of 11 undocumented immigrants in a fire in a detention center in Schiphol airport.

These fundamental contradictions in the relationship between expansive government and personal freedoms are a significant factor in adults' frustrated reactions to *hangjongeren*. The social welfare state attempts to order the social world, and most citizens want an ordered social world. But most citizens also believe they have the right to live the lives they choose, and that no one should impede their wishes. This contradiction is then exacerbated by the fact that many people feel entitled to orderly, peaceful residential neighborhoods. I would like to suggest that many people want a well-ordered society, they want limits to be set—but they do not want to be responsible for enforcing those limits, nor do they want to be limited themselves. Anecdotally, during my research I saw many people light up cigarettes directly underneath "No Smoking" signs—which is perhaps not that unusual. But these observations always served to remind me of another incident, in which a civil servant lit a cigarette in no-smoking section of a public building, in obvious violation of the rules. Notably, the purpose of the meetings was to get the Smith Street youth to agree to and follow conduct rules.

One final anecdote suggests that such frustrations are not limited to the realm of adult-youth interactions, but far more pervasive. Early on in my research I was told of an incident that occurred in a solidly middle-class neighborhood, by a resident from that area. Her neighbor had confided that she had recently received a letter from the housing corporation that managed the apartment building, stating that there had been complaints (kept anonymous) about the fact that her windows were not washed. Clean windows are rather important, and it is not uncommon to see ladies sitting in window frames with squeegees and rags; it has also become common to hire window washers. But I was amazed, nonetheless, that someone would dare complain about another person's windows—and, more so, through an anonymous letter. Many of my Dutch acquaintances found this to be an unusual story, as well, but I recount it anyway as it highlights the desire for orderliness, the pettiness of neighborly complaints, and the lack of interaction between neighbors.

The Roles of Ethnicity, Gender and Class

Ethnicity, gender, and class each play a role in the *hangjongeren* problematic, but none fully explain adults' responses. I think it is most productive to imagine these factors as contributing at times to, but not determining, the ways in which adults perceive the problem of *hangjongeren*. Ideas about ethnicity, gender, and class may add to adults' reactions, and may intersect with each other in complex ways. But because there is so much variation, I strongly hesitate in assigning any of these factors explanatory force in accounting for adults' perceptions of or reactions to youth.

It could be tempting to simply argue that *hangjongeren* have somehow come to symbolize ethnic difference. While there is certainly an element of truth to this

explanation—ethnic minority parents are thought to be deficient, and ethnic minorities are thought to be insufficiently integrated (or assimilated)—it does not explain why White adults get so very mad at and afraid of White youth. Indeed, my study could have been much simpler had I conducted it in a neighborhood that was dominated by Moroccan youth; racial profiling, structural marginalization, and social exclusion would have been easy to document. But I had heard too many anecdotes about White youth, in mostly White neighborhoods, to focus on ethnic difference as a primary factor in my research. Of course, in an ethnically polarized climate—both nationally and in much of Western Europe—feelings of being unsafe as well as policies to address "at-risk" and "hard core" youth are affected by ideas about ethnic difference; that does not mean, however, that White youth are somehow seen as not-White. I argue, instead, that youth of all ethnicities, and ethnic minorities of all ages, are similarly seen by many White Dutch as insufficiently socialized. Both are thought to require the intervention of the social welfare state to provide explicit instruction on what is proper behavior in Dutch society, as seen in the campaign for norms and values and the creation of conduct rules.

Gender also plays an important role in these adult-youth conflicts, although sometimes in unexpected ways. While in the past a common concern about youth arose out of often class-based concerns about protecting girls (and their virginity) from boys, I did not find that to be the case within the contemporary *hangjongeren* problematic. Dutch girls are presumed to be in charge of their own sexuality to a great extent, which is likely one of the more lasting impacts of the social changes since the 1960s. More unsurprisingly, gender and ethnicity intersect in particular ways. The only instances where I heard about the need to protect girls, although it was never voiced in such strong

terms, was in relation to the need to police Moroccan boys, who are often thought to behave improperly around White girls. Conflicts are especially prevalent around public swimming pools, as mentioned in Chapter Six. Because I did not study this particular kind of interaction, I cannot address whether or not there is a pattern of undesirable attention from Moroccan boys. The girls I met knew many of the boys, having mostly grown up in the same neighborhood with them; I never observed any behavior that indicated that these girls felt uncomfortable with or wary of the boys. This pattern might vary, of course, when girls meet boys they do not know; in my casual observation, I saw very little protective body language or avoidance behavior practiced by girls. It is certain, however, that Moroccan boys are prohibited from entering dance clubs and are ejected from swimming pools; while they attribute this to White males being jealous of their forming relationships with White females, many Whites state that Moroccan boys act inappropriately. In recounting these competing versions, I cannot help but be reminded of the 1950s conflicts over inter-ethnic dating described in Chapter Three, when Indonesian-Dutch immigrant youth and White youth fought each other over girls, and over style.

What is most striking is that the vast majority of concerns about *hangjongeren* are not about protecting girls, but rather about the anger and anxiety of adults. In a few cases, participants in my study spoke about feeling unsafe around youth in ways that were clearly gendered. Most of those who expressed fear were women, and most of those women were older women. Both their older age and their relatively weak physiques contributed to these women's sense that they were ill prepared for potentially dangerous youth. But gender, age, and physical fitness cannot be definitively related to

adults' emotional reactions to youth. In my research in the Smith Street neighborhood, one woman in her sixties laughed out loud when I asked if she felt afraid, and a physically disabled man in his forties also felt no fear of the youth, even when a group of youths blocked the path of his wheelchair. In general, people who were parents expressed no fear of youth, nor did some of those who were not parents. While reactions among adults vary quite a bit, dangerous youth are, in general, thought to be male, although there are occasional reports of young females who commit muggings or who are involved in a stabbing. Adults' anger toward and fear of (male) youth are not attributable to notions of girls' purity, nor are there absolute correlations between their gender, age, physical fitness, nor parental status. I would also hesitate to assert a strong connection between class status and adults' responses, since I found similar reactions among upper-middle class adults and working-class adults, even when the youth were also upper-middle class.

What remains consistent, among those who are afraid of and angry at youth, is a set of interrelated notions about government, personal freedom, and the residential environment; these notions resonate off one another, each amplifying the other. At one level, adults' emotional response arises out of their belief that the massive apparatus of the government—through social policy, policing, civil servants and social workers—should be able to solve or prevent social conflicts, and out of a deep frustration that such problems remain. They feel they should be free of having to interact with these youth, and so resort to calling the police or city hall. Endless community meetings are initiated, as government representatives feel compelled to respond; as one municipal official told me, "*Klant is koning*," or "The customer is king." Even when policy makers disagree

about whether youth behavior is actual *overlast*, they are charged with creating policies to address these adults' complaints. Because the police cannot arrest youth when they haven't broken any laws, because the police and social workers cannot monitor hang-out areas constantly, and because community meetings rarely can create true consensus, these adults are disappointed in their government. Because they feel entitled to a quiet, peaceful residential environment, they feel that their quality of life is damaged by youth *overlast*, dog poop, and litter. Outside noise is perceived by many to be an intrusion, a violation of privacy; having to turn up the television volume is experienced as a serious frustration. This deeply felt anger at such disruptions, however, appears curious given the simultaneous discourse of "living in a crowded country"; it appears that many adults hold both an image of densely populated space as well as expectations for uninterrupted domestic tranquility.

Too Much Tolerance and the Problem of Freedom

Today's youth problem is a problem that is located in the self of the aggrieved adult ("I have *overlast*), a self that carries a heavy burden of having to deal with, admonish, and protect itself from youth. But not all adults share this feeling: parents, and other residents who recognized and interacted with the youth, felt that they could tolerate more from, or even enjoy, the youth. Those who were most frustrated were those who had little or no acquaintance with them, who shot angry glances in passing or avoided eye contact altogether, and those who called the authorities rather than the parents. What distinguishes the group of complainants is that they experienced their surroundings differently than parents and other residents: the youth were seen as invading their expected peaceful residential environment.

The notion of "too much tolerance," in the end, must be seen to mean multiple things, to be deployed in multiple ways. There are the police officers, who use the phrase to try to reassert their authority, and to idealize a lost *sociale controle*. With this usage, they indicate that their job of regulating an unruly, highly individualized populace is difficult, and express their wish that they could just set some limits that everyone would follow. There are the parents, who lament the difficulty of raising children in a new "zero-tolerance" environment, where politicians and police officers "want to turn back the clock." Parents see these new policies as putting forth unrealistic expectations that being tough can magically create more respect for authorities and for rules, and dismiss politicians as grandstanding and grabbing power. Parents also use the phrase "too much tolerance" to indicate their displeasure of raising children in an environment where most of their neighbors only look out for themselves, longing like the police—albeit differently—for more *sociale controle*. And there are those adult residents with complaints about hang-around youth, who use the phrase to assert their right to tranquility, and to place the responsibility for assuring such tranquility on the social welfare state. In their eyes, youth *overlast* is a result of a lack of government intervention and a lack of explicit limits for youth.

The various parties who use the phrase "too much tolerance" to assert that society has been too lax, that limits need to be set on public behavior, that conduct rules need to be set for insufficiently socialized youth, and that the articulation of norms and values is needed to help ethnic minorities "integrate," collectively place the problem of freedom in the realm of others. Other people have been granted too many liberties, and have been tolerated for too long, according to this logic. I would like to suggest that the more

serious problem of freedom is, in fact, completely reversed. Instead of youth and ethnic minorities having too much freedom, acting improperly because of too much tolerance, I believe that the problem of freedom lies with the highly individualized, peace-and-order entitled resident who expects the welfare state to mediate unpleasant aspects of the social world. The notion that one's freedom is limited when required to engage with others in the residential environment is deeply, deeply troubling. Social scientists studying (in)tolerance today must recognize the multiplicity of meanings underlying the seeming rejection of tolerance: the frustration with freedom is an outcome of, rather than a backlash to, the social changes of the 1960s.

The Dutch word for "society" is a compound word, *samenleving*, created by *samen* or "together," joined with *leving*, the noun form from the verb "to live." This concept of society as living together is threatened by these three developments of heavy individualization, a reliance on the social welfare state to both support one's individuality and manage social problems, and a perceived entitlement to domestic peace and isolation. But, given these developments, it is not surprising that many adults react so strongly, feel so aggrieved, and experience youth behavior as intrusive. And given the social narrative—both inside and outside the Netherlands—of Dutch society as tolerant, it is no wonder that many adults struggle to justify their reactions, as Helena did when she asserted that she was "really on the youths' side." Finally, it is no wonder that solutions such as the "Greeting Zone" signs created by the Green-Left Party, discussed in Chapter Seven, do not meet with success. Because the heart of this problem is deeply complex, involving notions of self, of government, of relationality and neighborliness, of quality of life—much more than can be addressed by simply saying hello.

"They Are the Messengers, but not yet the Authors of the Message"

—Geert de Vries (2000, 37)

One last point for further consideration: the youth who are being disciplined for misbehaving have not created the society in which they have grown up. In many cases, adults criticize youth for not taking others into account, for only thinking about themselves—in short, for being too individualized. They are similarly criticized for not respecting authority figures, dismissing the complaints of their elders, and cursing at older adults. But these youth have grown up in a society that expects its members to develop themselves, to be independent. It is disingenuous to see in them the disintegration of society when they are simply living out the social changes that began in the 1960s. At the same time, those adults who complain about youth are also shaped by the society in which they live, and expect to have the services of the social welfare state and to live the lives they choose, free from *overlast*. While their frustration may seem at times overblown, it is a response that makes sense within its context. To be Dutch—for both adults and youth—has come to depend strongly on the notion of personal freedom, on being unfettered by structures of authority and the demands of others.

Today's youth have grown up in a society that expects them to become self-sufficient from an early age, to choose their own path in school and work, and to see themselves as full individuals. The fact that they react with aggression, at times, to adults' criticism should not come as a surprise. I do not offer any excuse for youthful violence, nor do I see it as fundamentally different from adult violence. But most of what constitutes adult-youth conflicts has nothing to do with violence, rather, these conflicts arise out of a mutual devotion to and frustration with freedom.

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