



Two sides of the same coin?

**A Netherlands-based analysis of two
contemporary feminist discourses**

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Feminism is the struggle against sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and other intersecting forms of structural power imbalances based on naturalizations of inequality. Its aim is to dissolve Difference, not feminism.

- Iris van der Tuin (2014, p. xiii)

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1. Introduction: The realm of the Dutch feminist debate

What is feminism? At the start of my academic focus on Women's Studies almost ten years ago, this was a question which dominated classroom discussions. I vividly remember the words "you don't sleep with your oppressor", projected on a classroom whiteboard. Originated from the 1960s and 1970s, including the quote in this lecture was most likely to illustrate the many definitions of feminism. However, in that particular moment in time and space, the quote was a reason for us - students in our early twenties - to giggle. After all, the idea of feminism prescribing strict rules about what you could and could not do was not something we could relate to. In fact, the teachers from the Women's Studies department of Utrecht University did not tell us who to have sex with but instead provided us with critical strategies to unveil oppressive structures in society. It was all about the bigger picture, the larger structures of oppression of women and other marginalized identities. I remember Rosi Braidotti asking us to "please be promiscuous", so we did, because Braidotti was – of course - right, and me and my fellow students thrived in a sex-positive environment which is still providing me with a valuable amount of self-esteem now I am in my mid-thirties.

For us, predominantly twenty-something students in the Netherlands of the late 00s, the idea of feminism as a clear-cut believe system, being only allowed the identity of 'feminist' if you follow certain rules, sleep or not sleep with a person from a specific group of people, was not our feminism. On the contrary, feminism provided us with strategies to break free from the strict rules of society; it encouraged us to have agency and to own the decisions we made. However, I did see the emotions and problems through which "you don't sleep with your oppressor" had been constructed. Ignorance is bliss, and an academic path in feminist theory certainly results in the opposite. I suddenly felt aware of all oppressions, and I was not alone. Initially this resulted in a state of numbness and crippling self-awareness. How anyone would ever be able to be happy in a world full of exploitation and oppression was a mystery to me. At a certain point, I honestly believed I would never be able to have a relationship with a man ever again. Yet the quote "you do not sleep with your oppressor" seen in the light of that specific period when I saw it projected on that whiteboard instead of the time it originates from, was embodying a dogmatic kind of feminism to me.

During the last ten years, a lot has changed in the Dutch feminist landscape. Some years ago, identifying as feminist felt a lot less common than today, and it was (Smits, 2013). The presence of feminist writers and opinion makers actively involved in the public debate has increased tremendously, and concepts and theories from feminist theory are used in day-to-day public discussions in national newspapers and magazines. In early 2016 two new feminist platforms – Vileine and Stellingdames – emerged in the Dutch media landscape; this can be seen as an example which confirms the observation that feminism in the Netherlands is growing. In 2016 and 2017, events such as the Women’s March Amsterdam, and books by black scholar Gloria Wekker and opinion maker Anousha Nzume, have received media attention on national level which further sparked public discussions about feminist issues in the Netherlands. Today, Blendle's daily newsletter tells me 'to get to know my vagina', and in the last three months of 2017 I have seen at least two new feminist platforms emerge¹. Academic concepts and theories to do with gender, race/ethnicity, social justice and power relations are no longer locked up in the symbolic ivory tower of academia, but instead widely used in national media.

For the feminist movement, this is great news. As an editor at feminist magazine *Tijdschrift LOVER* for over five years now, I can honestly say it is thrilling to see how we - as a feminist movement - have been fighting to raise awareness and support in the public debate, and to see that happening and growing. Thus, there is more support for change in the mainstream media because we have more reach to create awareness on structures of oppression and power. After all, we need to build awareness on all levels in society and go beyond our feminist academic bubble.

As one of my feminist advocacy contributions, I created a one-time workshop (for *LOVER* and Doetank PEER) which I presented in September 2016. The title was ‘How to be a feminist’, which was meant to be an ironic reference to neoliberal ideas of self-marketing. Instead of teaching people how to be a feminist, my aim was to provide a critique on the neoliberal “free market fundamentalism” (Giroux, 2013, p. 261, cited in Genz, 2017, p. 17) which tends to result in a neurotic desire to brand everything, especially the self, with a strong emphasis on realness as a rejection of complexity (Henry, 2004, p. 150)². I emphasised how there is no such toolbox of rules

¹ Such as: Uitgeverij Chaos and de Bovengrondse.

² Henry (2004, p. 149-152) does in fact not refer with ‘to be real’ to contemporary feminist efforts. She refers to the desire for realness for third wave feminists in the US. The body of her analysis is the anthology *To Be Real: Telling*

to follow that magically turn you into a feminist, but that self-reflection and insights into systems of oppression (and your privileges) at least get you started. I underlined how there is no one feminism, that it is not a brand which you can tailor-cut to your individual needs, but instead a paradigm about multiple power relations which are all interconnected, and how our vision of the world is shaped by your own position and experiences. The workshop was a major success: it was sold out completely.

Even though I did not think I would change history with my workshop, I was somewhat in shock when a year later I realized how feminism as a brand had become more than ever a widespread phenomenon, while on the other hand, questions about who is and who is not allowed to identify as feminist had become a common practice. Of course, this did not just happen overnight, nor did it happen within a year's time. Maybe suddenly it became clear to me that things had changed for real, marking a generational barrier between the feminists of the 00s and now.

I noticed a change in the way we speak about feminism as feminists. A critical stance towards our movement is important; however, when we end up fighting over if Beyoncé³ can call herself a feminist or not (Baas, 2016; Kuchler, 2016; Redactie DeMorgen, 2017), while at the same time we are unable to build a national movement⁴, I cannot help but wondering how much of our energy we should spend on each other instead of on the rest of the world, fighting for the change that has brought us together in the first place. Confusion hit me. What is going on in the Dutch feminist movement? How did we get here? Is it a good thing? Is it necessary? These were the central

the Truth and Changing the Face of Feminism, edited by Rebecca Walker in 1995, and one of its essays 'To Be Real' by Danzy Senna which criticises the quest for realness and an 'authentic identity'.

³ I am aware that the Beyoncé-example is problematic; after all feminism is increasingly used for a neoliberal agenda to reinforce a high sense of individualism and accountability instead of collective solidarity such as argued by historian Casper Thomas in *de Groene Amsterdammer* (2017). The crucial question to answer should be: Is Beyoncé a brand or a woman? However, in order to illustrate the 'who is feminist' discussion without yet describing the main issue of my analysis, I needed a gendered, radicalized character who has been widely discussed on her feminism. Hence, for this introduction: Beyoncé.

⁴ Here I am referring to Anja Meulenbelt's Facebookpost: "In the Netherlands we have some interesting new feminist initiatives, often through social media, and what's particularly striking, is how often black women are on the forefront. However, there is no central Group taking the lead (like in Belgium!) and a massive women's protest is unthinkable. At the moment anyway. How come?". Original text: "We hebben in Nederland nogal wat vitale en boeiende nieuwe feministische initiatieven, vaak via social media, en opvallend hoe vaak zwarte vrouwen voorop lopen. Maar er is in Nederland geen centrale groep die het voortouw neemt (in België wel!) en een massale vrouwendemonstratie als in Spanje is bij ons ondenkbaar. Op dit moment althans. Hoe komt dat?".

questions leading to my master's thesis, resulting in one major goal: a critical analysis on the Dutch feminist movement, while productively contributing to the question how to continue from here.

This personal and professional quest, so to speak, resulted in the following main research question:

Which new feminist discourses can be defined in the Dutch public debate and what are the implications for the Dutch feminist movement?

And to support the main research question, I have formulated the following sub-research question:

How is inclusive feminism understood and practiced?

I will focus on my theoretical framework, methodology, and the relevant academic debates concerning the supporting academic references in chapter 2. Next, I will elaborate on my analysis in chapter 3 and 4 in which I will focus on two seemingly contrasting discourses inspired by inclusive feminism. In chapter 5 I will conclude my analysis with a critical summary and provide the answers to my research questions mentioned above. At last, in chapter 6, I will finalise my thesis with an afterword providing context and opportunities for the Dutch feminist movement of today.

2. Theoretical framework and methodology

In the previous chapter I have narrated a personal anecdote to illustrate how my research question *Which new feminist discourses can be defined in the Dutch public debate and what are the implications for the Dutch feminist movement?* has come into existence. In this chapter I outline the theoretical framework which this thesis is built upon, and state my position as a researcher in relation to my research. Secondly, I elaborate on how different theories, narratives and concepts are interconnected, and how this leads to a critical argument to answer the sub-research question *How is inclusive feminism understood and practiced?*

2.1 Methodology and research context

The sub-question outlined above is build upon the main research question and offers insight into the construction of the discourses mentioned in the main research question. To answer this, it is necessary to provide a genealogy of both the context of the research question as well as the research materials. I do so by first elaborating on the applied research methodology, and secondly, by providing an academic context by building a theoretical framework in chapter 2.2.

The aim of my research question is to identify and analyse two new feminist discourses in the Netherlands and its implications; to offer possibilities for establishing and maintaining a sustainable feminist movement; and consequently building a feminist collective movement to implement societal change. I analyse two narratives in popular news media to provide future opportunities and challenges. In recent years in the Netherlands, terms such as ‘whiteness’, ‘inclusivity’, and ‘intersectional theory’, have been adopted by opinion makers outside the academic context. While some are inevitably linked to feminist theory, others are not. Or their random application in the public debate has changed their meaning drastically. These new constructed feminist narratives have implications for feminist academia as well as the feminist movement as a whole. Though this also seems to be happening in other parts of Europe and the US, I focus on the Netherlands. I do use literature from other regions, because there is not much literature on specifically the Dutch context available. However, the literature often covers a generic approach to feminist developments in both Anglo-American and European context.

To critically address my research question, a feminist media analysis forms my methodology. Historically, feminist media research aims to provide insight into the relations of power regarding gender, and is focused on multiple texts within popular mass media, such as television series and films (McIntosh and Cuklanz, 2013, p. 267). As for my research, however, this does not apply. Where media discourse in popular media such as films can provide valuable information about ideas of gender and dominant ideologies of the culture of origin, I believe it can also function as an effective method to identify a paradigm shift in the public debate (McIntosh and Cuklanz, 2013, p. 267). By public debate, I refer to the collection of news media texts both in print and online, mostly intertwined with a strong sense of opinion instead of the ‘hard news’ articles. I have selected the articles and book in question because I was looking for texts to illustrate the current new discourses in the Dutch feminist landscape.

These texts exemplify the current trends I sought to address. The process of selection was complex. I knew what I was looking for and what my case studies needed to illustrate. After all, I had witnessed how the way we discussed and talked, changed. Now I had to collect the discussions which illustrated what I had observed. Most discussions which illustrated the new feminist discourses took place during physical debates, on social media or through back-and-forth column writings in national newspapers. However, to recover these dialogues turned out to be a challenge of its own. Especially Twitter was an impossible source to look for specific dialogues. It took me weeks – if not more- and during my searches I mainly came across right-wing inspired discussions about ‘identity politics of the left’ and its ‘political correctness’ and this was not embodying my argument at all. The case studies had to be more nuanced, and not written by the usual suspects that were already not considered to be part of ‘our’ movement. This is how I chose the texts from Ezzeroli and Duits, both feminists who take a visible part in the feminist movement and the public debate.

My background in journalism has amplified the interest in the power of discourse and representation in popular media. Communication theorist George Gerbner (cited in De Boer and Brennecke, 1999, p. 139) argues with his foundational ‘cultivation theory’, that television and other mass media ‘cultivates’ its public and constructs a sub-reality, which is parallel to, but inherently

different from, actual reality⁵. In addition, Stuart Hall (Hall, 1987, p. 45, cited in Thornham, 2000, p. 3) has convincingly discussed how narratives play a crucial role in the construction of identities and that how we construct narratives about ourselves play a key role in the construction of identity (Hall, 1987, p. 45, cited in Thornham, 2000, p. 3). While the rather simplistic notion of women as mere passive spectators has been nuanced, the effect of media representation and discourses is still not unproblematic (Pilcher and Whelehan, 2004, p. 138). Though critics have argued how women as viewers can appropriate images for their own benefit, “the range of images of women available are still limited and dominated by those of young, white, thin, hairless, able-bodied women” (Pilcher and Whelehan, 2004, p. 138). This paradigm resulted in a focus in my academic writing: I always try to explore the implications of the underling discourse when discussing news media. I want to provide a meaningful perspective on current feminist practices and discourses. The choice for nonfiction media texts to illustrate what is currently happening in the feminist debate was therefore inevitable.

But what defines a ‘discourse’? From a foucauldian perspective, social phenomena are considered constructed from within a discourse (Jary and Jary, 1991, p.169). Staying with Foucault, from a post-structuralist context, language matters and the liberal idea of a rational ‘self’ is rejected; instead post-structuralist thought argues for the idea of a fragmented and contradictory ‘self’ (Pilcher and Whelehan, 2004, p. 112). It denies “the concept of the subject as a fixed entity” and argues how “we only get to know ourselves through the medium of language” (Pilcher and Whelehan, 2004, p. 112). Our experience of the world is structured by words and “their relationship to other words” (Pilcher and Wheleha, 2004, p. 113). McIntosh and Coklanz (2013) describe how discourse “functions as a system of meanings created by a combination of texts and the social practices that inform them” (McIntosh and Cuklanz, 2013, p. 265). Adding Stuart Hall’s ideas of discourse, I wish to emphasise the importance of identifying discourse in the public debate because it illustrates a cluster of ideas, “which provide ways of talking about, forms of knowledge and conduct associated with, a particular topic, social activity, or institutional site in society” (Hall, 1997, p. 6, cited in McIntosh and Cuklanz, 2013, p. 265). To grasp current developments in the

⁵ I am aware this is complex. Besides, what defines ‘actual’ reality? However, I merely use this theory to underline my motivation and standpoint regarding the choices I have made about my thesis, which is why I do not elaborate in this any further.

feminist movement, I believe looking at the construction of two different discourses can provide meaningful knowledge for current trends in the Dutch feminist discourse and its implications.

It is important to note that in this thesis, I use the term ‘wave’ to refer to different generations of feminism. I wish to emphasise that this is ambiguous, to say the least. Yet, due to the major use of the term in feminist public discourse, I felt the practical necessity to use that same word to refer to different times and generations of feminism and feminists. When my fellow students and I responded to “you don’t sleep with your oppressor” with giggles and disbelief as I described in chapter 1, this vividly illustrated the generational conflict inherently connected to the feminist movement. According to scholar Astrid Henry (2004, p. 115) this conflict unveils the “defining issues of the generational struggle between second and third wave feminists”. While the struggle in feminist generational relationships – also, problematically, referred to as the dualistic term ‘matrophor’⁶ - is somewhat inevitable and even can be productive, the term ‘wave’ underlines discontinuity between the different generations of feminism (Henry, 2004, p. 7). Discontinuity implies disconnection between multiple generations of feminism, while each generation is in fact building forward on what the previous generation has established (Henry, 2004, p. 9; Van Der Tuin, 2014, p. 3). Only retrospectively we can see from a distance where a wave starts and ends, however, with every wave closer to each other than before, it is even harder to define where were an ‘old’ wave stops, and a ‘new’ wave begins (Bailey, 1997, p. 17). Van Der Tuin (2014, p. 4) adds how feminism should always seek transgenerational continuity and describes her awe over the fact that generationality is often considered being reductive⁷. To conclude, I do not wish to reproduce academic debates about generationality. I want to underline, however, that the use of generational terms is not unproblematic.

As a white European woman in her mid-thirties, I aim to be aware of my blind spots. I choose not

⁶ ‘Matrophor’ as a term describes the limited “mother-daughter relationship” within feminism and to state dualistic feminist generational relationships (Henry, 2004, p. 7). Generationality is often “dyadic” and “referring to only two generations” (Henry, 2004, p. 3). Instead of underlining the diverse relationships between multiple women, ‘matrophor’ tends to reduce these “potential” relationships to a “single relationship” (Henry, 2004, p. 3)

⁷ To sum up Iris van der Tuin’s (2014) work on generationality as such is somewhat inconclusive. However, though tempted to include more of her work, I believe it should be part in a thesis which focuses more on the opportunities for the feminist movement (as I briefly discuss in chapter 6), instead of this particular thesis which has only a limited amount of words available to illustrate a broader feminist debate.

only to position myself, but also the opinion makers I discuss. I do so because it is important to make myself and my position visible to produce ‘objective knowledge’ (Harding, 1986, p. 27). I state the position (or at least, the position that is generally known) of the opinion makers I discuss too, because part of them use identity as a marker in the feminist debate. To provide a meaningful contribution to feminist academia I believe it is not possible to reject positioning. However, I must underline that I have mixed feelings stating the identities of the persons in questions simply because identity, to some extent, is fluid, and by naming it for others, it appears I make it a static, fixed entity of something that is not mine.

2.2 Academic debates: who is ‘we’?

The meaning of sisterhood (‘zusterschap’ in Dutch)⁸ is relevant for the definition of new feminist discourses in the Netherlands, because multiple ideologies and concepts mentioned in the analyses of this thesis, either refer to or reject this generational concept. Sisterhood claims a ‘we’, which seems both necessary and problematic⁹. The meaning of ‘we’ in a generic context of the feminist movement has different meanings and connotations depending upon its time and location in the academic discourse.

To grasp the complexities that surround ideas of ‘sisterhood’ in the feminist movement, it is important to start with a brief analysis of the word ‘we’. What does ‘we’ refer to? ‘We’ as in the feminist movement, or ‘we’ as part of an opposition of ‘us’ versus ‘they’ or ‘you’? A seemingly simple ‘we’ in a feminist context can pose a problematic binary: on the hand referring to the utopian idea of sisterhood originated from the second-wave movement, which is in part responsible for the

⁸ “But we could come a long way once we no longer seek the blame among each other but instead in a system which keeps us small. (...) As long as we don’t change the system, sisterhood is very difficult for us. (...) The qualities which we can unveil among each other are: courage, insight, perseverance, and solidarity” (Smit, 1984, p. 135). Original text: “Maar we zijn al een eind verder als we de schuld niet langer zoeken bij elkaar maar bij een systeem dat ons klein houdt. (...) En zolang we het systeem niet veranderd hebben is zusterschap voor ons erg moeilijk. (...) De kwaliteiten die wij bij onszelf te voorschijn kunnen halen zijn: moed, inzicht, doorzettingsvermogen en solidariteit”.

⁹ The sisterhood paradigm also refers to the sameness-difference discourse within feminism, where sameness feminism aims to make women equal to men, whereas difference feminism aims to focus on a difference between men and women and to underline the empowering characteristics of women traits (Pilcher and Whelehan, 2004, p. 28).

increased feminist awareness in the 1960s and 1970s (Pilcher and Whelehan, 2004, p. 72); on the other hand, 'we' as in the type of sisterhood - criticised by many such as bell hooks (1984, p. 44) - which was used as an excuse for building a single-issue feminism.

McRobbie (2004, p. 256) notes that the issue of sisterhood was the unmediated 'we' that presupposed the ideology of a homogenised unity among women. As a result, in feminist theory the idea of an unproblematic 'we' shifted to a problematic 'she':

We could say that 1990 (or thereabouts) marks a turning point, the moment of definitive self-critique in feminist theory. (...) The concept of subjectivity and the means by which cultural forms and interpellations (or dominant social processes) call women into being, produce them as subjects whilst ostensibly merely describing them as such, inevitably means that it is a problematically "she," rather than an unproblematically "we," which is indicative of a turn to what we might describe as the emerging politics of post-feminist inquiry (McRobbie, 2004, p. 256).

McRobbie (2004, p. 256) criticises the idea of a unitary 'we' because it erases difference and promotes homogenization. Thus, the once unifying ideals of second-wave sisterhood eventually caused a shift in focus and zoomed in on the construction of the subject and a problematic 'she', a problematic self. However, McRobbie (2004, p. 256) claims that this shift to an individual level implies a post-feminist element. The lack of the collective and an increased focus on the 'self' outside academia, indicates a post-feminist shift, on which I elaborate in chapter 4.

Nonetheless, from the perspective of standpoint epistemology, the focus on the individual instead of the collective is inevitable to prevent homogenisation and unveil intragroup differences. Standpoint epistemology embodies the critique on traditional models of knowledge production (Pilcher and Whelehan, 2004, p. 164). From a standpoint epistemological perspective, the social identity of the researcher should be visible and provides a relation between politics and research (Pilcher and Whelehan, 2004, p. 164). Thus, self-reflection in feminist knowledge production is necessary to explore one's positions in relation to others.

Within standpoint epistemology, Sandra Harding's (1986) Standpoint Theory is considered a key theory. Harding (1986) attempts to complicate individual positions with the intention of unveiling the marginalized location of women, referring to the subordinated position women take in, making women's experience not universal, but instead pleading for strong objectivity by focusing on the social position of women and other subordinated groups. One of the critiques of Sandra Harding's (1986) Standpoint theory, however, encompasses that it tends to lean towards an essentialist stance assuming the existence of one universal women's experience, hence attaching specific characteristics to a specific gender (women), reducing them to their biology (Andermahr, Lovell, and Wolkowitz, 1997, p. 211). However, referring to Hegel's master-slave narrative, Harding (1986, p. 25) argues that it is the position of women that makes their perspective more valuable than the position of white men, because their marginalized position creates the motivation to unveil structures of power. Thus, women's 'strong objectivity' is not connected to women's biology but instead to their marginalised position in society. In addition, white men are positioned in the centre, possess epistemic authority, and believe their position is self-evident, which is lacking pressure to be critical towards those who hold power, which also guarantees their position (Naples and Gurr, 2013, p. 21).

Besides Standpoint Theory, another important marker in standpoint epistemology is Black Feminist Thought written by Patricia Hill Collins in 1990. It is this work that connects experience and identity in a constructive manner. Hill Collins managed to "identify a standpoint that allowed for an identification and examination of how social location makes for a perspective connected to lived experience" (Frost and Elichaooff, 2013, p. 58). According to Frost and Elichaooff (2013) Hill Collins' Black Feminist Thought has led to a "key source of understanding identity construction through the intersection of axes of race, class, and gender" (p. 58). As Frost and Elichaooff (2013, p. 58) retrospectively predict, the increased focus on individual identity partially resulted in a 'politics of identity'¹⁰, and Pilcher and Whelehan (2004, p. 72), and Meulenbelt (1989, p. 48) state how this was a response to the women's movement of the 1960s and 1970s. The Combahee River Collective

¹⁰ I use the term 'politics of identity' to refer to the concept, because 'identity politics' has become a derogatory term. It is predominantly used to refer to any polemics within both the political left as well as the feminist movement (Pilcher and Whelehan, 2004, p. 72). I use 'identity politics' only when specifically referring to the derogatory context of identity politics.

in 1977 was one of the first coining the term¹¹. The focus on individual identity was about “making a direct challenge to the dominance of other interest groups within feminism” (Pilcher and Whelehan, 2004, p. 73). In the Dutch context, Meulenbelt (1989, p. 45) argues, while referring to the 1960s and 1970s, that the cracks in the unity of the feminist movement were inevitable and she wonders if the concept of sisterhood was ever a realistic goal. According to Meulenbelt (1989), the idea to speak for all women, with all the best intentions, implied arrogance and ignorance at the same time:

We are talking about freedom of choice for women, but some feminists know too well how these choices are supposed to look: of course, you can make your own money, but not as a sex worker. Of course, you can decide who you have sex with, as long it is not with a man. Of course, you can decide what to wear, but what you’re wearing now, is not an option. ‘Sisterhood is powerful, it can kill you’, I wrote cynically after I realized that we as feminists have less difficulty to find solidarity based on weakness instead of force¹²(p. 53).

Thus, the sisterhood ideology became less evident and instead different identities and personal experience started to play a role. However, I believe it is difficult to pin down when this shift from an assumed unity to individual identities took place. Most likely the role of different identities and a shift from the implied sameness - between the women who were part of the feminist movement during the second-wave era - started to come to the surface in the late 1970s. I argue it could be rather seen as a process of action and reaction instead a sudden ideological change, which inspired feminist scholars to mediate our position as women in the margin, such as Sandra Harding’s Standpoint Theory in 1986, Crenshaw’s Intersectional Theory in 1989, and Patricia Hill Collins’

¹¹ “This focusing upon our own oppression is embodied in the concept of identity politics. We believe that the most profound and potentially most radical politics come directly out of our own identity, as opposed to working to end somebody else's oppression” (The Combahee River Collective, 1977).

¹² Original text: “We hebben het over keuzevrijheid van vrouwen, maar sommige feministes weten maar al te goed hoe die keuzen er voor andere vrouwen uit horen te zien: natuurlijk mag je je eigen geld verdienen, maar niet als hoer. Natuurlijk mag je zelf uitmaken met wie je vrijt, als het maar niet met een man is. Natuurlijk mag je zelf weten wat je aantrekt, maar dat wat je nu aanhebt, kan echt niet. ‘Sisterhood is powerful, it can kill you,’ schreef ik al eens cynisch, toen ik tot de ontdekking was gekomen dat we het als feministes onder elkaar makkelijker hebben om ons te solidariseren op zwakte, dan op kracht”.

Black Feminist Thought in 1990. After all, the continuing issues of the meaning of sisterhood include questions about solidarity which could be defined on both the level of the collective as well as on the level of the individual.

In the previous quote, Meulenbelt (1989, p. 53) describes the issues about identity and what it means to be a feminist in a collective when talking about the Dutch second-wave movement. Pilcher and Whelehan (2004) confirm her observation:

It wasn't just the individual identity and background of participants that could split the groups and eventually the movement: conflicts about what a feminist identity should mean became just as important, as well as the question who had the right to decide (p. 72).

Meulenbelt (1989) adds:

The hell that broke loose after women ended up fighting about what was most important in the liberation of women, frustrated most women in such a way that we never recovered from it¹³ (p. 41).

According to Pilcher and Whelehan (2004) 'politics of identity' was a logic response to the idea of sameness which was echoed by the sisterhood ideology that all women had the same agenda:

[i]t was inevitably going to come under fire once more women who weren't white, middle-class, heterosexual and university-educated became involved [in the women's movement], and the difference between women came to be seen as of equal importance as their similarities (p. 72).

¹³ Original text: "De stennis die uitbrak toen vrouwen met elkaar in de clinch gingen over wat nu het belangrijkste was voor de bevrijding van vrouwen, frustreerde de meeste van de aanwezige vrouwen zo hevig dat het nooit meer goed is gekomen".

Marxist-feminist scholar Linda Briskin (1990) underlines how the shift to the individual was initially a “healthy and critical response” to the “unmediated sisterhood”, however, she criticises the apolitical character of the practice of a ‘politics of identity’ and how this practice has resulted from an “over-emphasis on experience in the women’s movement” (p. 105). Briskin (1990) argues that this emphasis on experience¹⁴ has been “mediated ideologically through the ‘personal is political’” (p. 105). I interpret this as that, according to Briskin (1990), ‘the personal is political’, is not only making the personal experiences political, it also established a shift from the political to the non-political with a focus on experience understood as an individual phenomenon rather than on a political framework where experience is understood within a social set of power relations. While Briskin (1990) believes the personal/ political dialectic “provides the basis for a coherent analytical and strategic approach to women’s oppression”, she argues it also intersects with identity politics “to establish the problematic and competitive hierarchy of oppressions” (p. 105). The latter results in bonding over shared victimization and “exclusion organised around guilt, both which undermine the possibility of political alliance between feminists” (Briskin, 1990, p. 105).

Partially as a response to the simplification of identity in the politics of identity, the concept of intersectionality was amplified by Kimberly Crenshaw. Crenshaw, an American scholar of law, was the first to use the term ‘intersectionality’ in 1989 as the intersection of race and gender (Botman, Jouwe, and Wekker, 2001, p. 39; Yuval-Davis, 2006, p.193). Crenshaw (2002) unveiled the problematic combination of racism and sexism through an in dept analysis of several law cases in which she illustrates the problem of the inability of the court of law¹⁵ to condemn the injustice caused by the intersection of sexism and racism. The institution was only able to make charges based on either sexism or racism, and never both, which kept the discriminatory experience of black women invisible. The discriminatory charges could not be based on a combination of two different discriminations (Crenshaw, 2002, p. 210).

¹⁴ The focus on experience also plays a major role in Marxist theories of the 1960s. However, it relates to a more politicized experience instead of an unmediated experience on an individual level to which Briskin is referring to (Braidotti, 2003, p.197).

¹⁵ Crenshaw (1986; 2002) specifically refers to the situation in the United States. However, her publication has meant a great deal for other countries too, because it unveiled the unacknowledged problem that a combination of racism and sexism cause a different kind of discriminatory experiences.

It were other scholars, however, such as Valerie Smith, who expanded the term 'intersectionality' to a broader interpretation including many other axes of difference (Botman, Jouwe, and Wekker, 2001, p. 39). Consequently, the focus shifted to the intersection of a wider spectrum of difference, focusing on ethnicity, gender, nationality, class, and sexuality (Botman, Jouwe, and Wekker, 2001, p. 39). Kimberle Crenshaw (2002, p. 207) applauds politics of identity for bringing African Americans (and other non-white people), gays and lesbians, and other oppressed groups together. However, she criticises politics of identity because it brings people together based on a shared aspect of their identity while ignoring intragroup differences (Crenshaw, 2002, p. 208). Instead of a politics of identity, Crenshaw pleads for an intersectional framework to look at social reality without excluding complexities in identities (2002, p. 208).

Nonetheless, in the Netherlands ideas of intersectionality are often used together with ideas of inclusivity. However, while intersectional theory is a specific analytical tool to understand how different identities intersect and result in different oppressions and experiences, the concept of inclusivity is not an obvious academic research practice. Thus to provide a definition of 'inclusive feminism', we should focus on different practices, which is what I aim to do. In 1996, Shafik Asante, former leader of the New African Voices in Philadelphia defines inclusion as follows:

Inclusion is recognizing our universal "oneness" and interdependence. Inclusion is recognizing that we are "one" even though we are not the "same". The act of inclusion means fighting against exclusion and all of the social diseases exclusion gives birth to - i.e. racism, sexism, handicapism, etc. (Asante, 1996).

Asante (1996) shows the term 'inclusive' is used in multiple arrays of social justice movements. For instance, sites on autism talk about 'inclusion' in the context of awareness and acceptance for people with autism (Leary, 2018; Autism Speaks, 2016). However, in a feminist context, Archer Mann and Huffman (2005) use 'inclusivity' to define a post-millennial third-wave feminism discourse:

This new discourse did not seek to undermine the feminist movement, but rather to refigure and enhance it so as to make it more diverse and inclusive (p. 57).

With “more diverse and inclusive”, Archer Mann and Huffman (2005, p. 57) refer to the multiple feminisms that are part of the third-wave discourse in the US, with a focus on difference and strongly influenced by intersectional theory. In addition, U.S. scholar Jenifer Nelson (2003) effectively described the implicational meaning of ‘inclusive feminism’ by illustrating the history of CARASA, a reproductive rights organisation in the US, on which I elaborate in chapter 3. Nelson points out how in the US from the 1960s onwards, the reproductive rights movement aimed to be ‘inclusive’, and describes how this resulted in both “important strides” toward reproductive freedom, as well as “stormy clashes” within the movement itself (Nelson, 2003, p. 177). Thus, the meaning of ‘inclusivity’ in feminism is explored throughout this thesis. What the implications are of this ‘inclusive feminism’ is discussed in chapter 3 and 4.

On the other side of the feminist spectrum, so called ‘white feminism’ is often portrayed as the opposite of ‘inclusive feminism’¹⁶. The great number of white women addressing feminist topics that only concern them, resulted in ‘white feminism’. What this means precisely, is difficult to pin down. However, the role of whiteness and white privilege in the Dutch public debate provides a context to further explore the meaning of ‘white feminism’. As I further discuss in chapter 3, from 2008 onwards, anti - and pro-black pete activism has grown¹⁷ (Wekker, 2016, p. 144). The current increased anti-racist protests were initiated by the abuse of two young black men who were wearing T-shirts with the text ‘Black Pete is Racism’¹⁸(Wekker, 2016, p. 144). I diagnose how this resulted in an increased role of whiteness and white privilege in the public discourse. White privilege - as most famously described by Peggy McIntosh (1990) - has been used as a strategy to unveil the issues of whiteness, and I believe that this is amplified by Sunny Bergman’s documentary *Our Colonial Hangover* in 2014, by Gloria Wekker’s book *White Innocence* in 2016 and its Dutch release in late 2017, and by Anousha Nzume’s book *Hello White People*¹⁹ released in 2017.

¹⁶ I provide an example of this in chapter 3.2, p. 24.

¹⁷ The first round of anti-black pete protests took off in the 1960s, initiated by mostly white people (Wekker, 2016, 144).

¹⁸ Original text: ‘Zwarte Piet is racisme’.

¹⁹ Original title: *Hallo Witte Mensen*.

Illustrative of the critical approaches to whiteness is the choice of Dutch public news broadcast channel NOS (2018) to refer to white people as ‘wit’ instead of the common phrase ‘blank’²⁰. The Dutch word ‘blank’ does not mean ‘white’, but instead ‘without colour’ or ‘neutral’, and the use of ‘blank’ to describe whiteness is the embodiment of the issue with whiteness (Verbeek, 2016, p. 8).

This chapter has illustrated the broader academic context of my analyses and outlined the theoretical framework on which my research is build. The next two chapters address the analyses of two narratives in the public debate which are carried by the different theories and concepts on which I elaborated in this chapter. Each analysis partially answers the main research question *Which new feminist discourses can be defined in the Dutch public debate and what are the implications for the Dutch feminist movement?* and the sub-research question *How is inclusive feminism understood and practiced?*

²⁰ “Should we refer to ‘blanke’ people as white? The NOS indicates that it prefers to use the word ‘white’ from now on. ‘We prefer to use ‘white’ in our content because ‘blank’ in relation to black has a positive connotation’, explains Editor in Chief Marcel Gelauff”. Original text: “Moeten we blanke mensen voortaan wit noemen? De NOS geeft vandaag aan liever het woord 'wit' te gebruiken. “We gebruiken bij voorkeur wit in berichten omdat blank in tegenstelling tot zwart een positieve connotatie heeft”, legt hoofdredacteur Marcel Gelauff uit”.

3. Not the right feminists: to be inclusive, to be intersectional

In this chapter I focus on one practice of inclusivity and how this results in one specific discourse. A column article written by journalist and feminist Nadia Ezzeroili forms one part of the research body of my analysis because it illustrates a typical feminist discourse in the public debate. I analyse how her newspaper column ‘Feminist women of colour want to be heard – not saved’²¹ is part of a larger discussion and how it embodies a new feminist discourse – while it was published in a time when that discourse was not prevailing. Ezzeroili, a ciswoman with a Dutch-Moroccan background, is known for her critical columns and articles published in several national newspapers and news magazines. In late 2013, she published an article about her experience of turning away from her Muslim faith (Ezzeroili, 2013). In 2014, Ezzeroili (2014) wrote the column ‘Feminist women of colour want to be heard – not saved’ in national newspaper *Volkskrant*, elaborating on the fact that, as the title illustrates, women of colour do not need saving, but instead want to be heard.

I use Ezzeroili’s article as a vantage point to discuss the implications of this new feminist discourse focused on inclusivity. In 3.1, I describe the narrative of the article. In her article, Ezzeroili (2014) critiques another feminist opinion maker Asha ten Broeke, a white ciswoman and science journalist. Secondly, in 3.2, I analyse ideas of ‘inclusive feminism’, ‘white feminism’, and ‘agency’. I then discuss how they relate to the Dutch anti-racist movement. I conclude this chapter in 3.3 by providing a critical analytical summary.

3.1 Narrative

In the light of the second wave of the anti-racist movement, a new feminist discourse, inspired by inclusivity, emerged in the Netherlands. In January 2014, Dutch journalist Nadia Ezzeroili called for an open discussion “free of bullshit”, aimed at all women of colour whatever sexuality, religion, or social-economical class in national newspaper *Volkskrant* (Ezzeroili, 2014). Women of colour, she stated, “don’t want to be saved, but want to be heard” (Ezzeroili, 2014).

²¹ Original title: “Feministen van kleur willen gehoord worden – niet gered”.

What happened? Earlier in 2014, a program flyer of the VU caused outrage with GeenStijl, PVV, Machteld Zee²², and Ezzeroili (Ten Broeke, 2014; Ezzeroili, 2014; VU, 2014). The program of the multicultural women's day of the VU included a panel discussion focused on the question whether it should be acceptable for Muslim health practitioners to examine a person of the opposite sex. First, PVV and GeenStijl were outraged. As a response, Asha ten Broeke wrote the column 'Don't hijack feminism to bash Islam'²³. In this piece, Ten Broeke (2014) attacks populist right wing PVV as well as GeenStijl for using feminist sentiments to attack Islam and spread islamophobic ideas. Ezzeroili (2014) then writes the column 'Feminist women of colour want to be heard, not saved' in which she blames Ten Broeke for speaking up about a topic concerning Muslim women and argues Ten Broeke is lacking knowledge on the subject, hence not being qualified to speak up about such topic²⁴. Ezzeroili (2014) concludes how there are plenty of women of colour like herself who have more knowledge on the subject²⁵, and white feminists as such should speak up more against religious and cultural misogyny²⁶.

The question if examining someone of the opposite sex is acceptable was specifically requested by Muslim students and the discussion was led by a Muslim caretaker (VU, 2014). Ten Broeke (2014) argues that gender segregation is only a sensitive issue in an Islamic context, and she speaks up

²² GeenStijl is a populist rightwing platform; PVV is a Dutch nationalist and rightwing political party; Machteld Zee is a scholar of law and political theory who also writes for national newspapers. She is infamous for her islamophobic and rightwing 'feminism'.

²³ Original title: "Kaap het feminism niet om de islam te bashen".

²⁴ "Why should I be happy with a well-meant, but paternalistic Asha Ten Broeke who barely did any research on the topic in question?" Original text: "Waarom zou ik blij moeten zijn met een goedbedoelde maar betuttelende Asha ten Broeke die zich amper heeft ingelezen in de materie?".

²⁵ "Why should I leave this discussion to Machteld Zee, seemingly more realistic but eventually also patronizing, while I'm also capable to voice my testimonies and ideas about women's emancipation loud and clear myself?" Original text: "Waarom zou ik deze discussie overlaten aan een realistischer maar uiteindelijk net zo bevoogde Machteld Zee, terwijl ik evengoed mijn eigen stem kan laten horen om mijn getuigenissen en ideeën over vrouwenemancipatie luid en duidelijk kenbaar te maken?".

²⁶ "(..) who [Ten Broeke] in my opinion, is insufficiently rejecting religious and cultural misogyny and discrimination" Original text: "(..) die [Ten Broeke], naar mijn mening, zelfs niet ver genoeg gaat in haar afwijzing van religieuze en culturele vrouwenhaat – en discriminatie".

about the hypocrisy of outrage, arguing the debate is not based on the concern of the position of women, but instead used as leverage to disqualify Islam²⁷.

Ezzeroli's critique (2014) on Ten Broeke is contradictory. Ezzeroli (2014) criticises Ten Broeke for speaking up about a topic regarding women and Islam, arguing that she should not speak up about something she has no knowledge of²⁸. On the other hand, Ezzeroli (2014) states she wants white women to speak up against cultural misogyny. Yet Ten Broeke does not reject the panel discussion regarding gender segregation, nor does she advocate in favour of gender segregation in Muslim spaces: she does applaud addressing ethical and religious dilemmas among students²⁹.

3.2 Contextualisation

Ezzeroli's (2014) contradictory stance raises the question if there is a correct stance for Asha Ten Broeke. From Ezzeroli's (2014) perspective, speaking out is not accepted for Ten Broeke because she is not an expert witness while at the same time ignoring the question would have sparked critique about Ten Broeke not speaking up. After all, Ten Broeke did speak up: she addressed the responses of PVV and GeenStijl, instead of criticising religious ethical questions of students. What would have been the implications if Ten Broeke addressed the event at the VU instead of the right-wing critique? By doing so, she would have taken the voice of Muslim women, speaking for them by assuming they cannot speak for themselves. Ten Broeke (2014) argues that feminism is used as an excuse to give an islamophobic response. Ezzeroli (2014) disagrees, and describes how "a generation of young feminists of colour has stood up and do not appreciate a well-intended pat on

²⁷ "On their [PVV] website, the term 'women's rights' is only used in Islam critique context". Original text: "Op hun [PVV] website valt het woord vrouwenrechten alleen in de context van islamkritiek".

²⁸ "In our society the actions, words and questions posed by muslim people are constantly evaluated by a loud screaming group who use different standards than for other groups". Original text: "In onze samenleving worden de acties, woorden en vragen van moslims door een luidruchtige groep roeptoeters voortdurend langs een andere meetlat gelegd dan die van andere groepen".

²⁹ "It seems good to address a multiple pallet of ethical complexities during the study program". Original text: "Het lijkt me uitstekend om tijdens de opleiding aandacht te besteden aan een zo veelkleurig mogelijk palet aan ethische ingewikkeldheden".

the back by paternalistic left elite and academic feminists”³⁰. Yet in that same article Ezzeroili (2014) argues that no one should be holding back in the feminist debate and that her feminism is inclusive³¹. In this context, the question arises what unintended representations of inclusive feminism in the Netherlands look like.

It matters what ‘inclusive feminism’ means, both in context of current time and space as well as in the context of its historical genealogy. If ‘inclusive feminism’ is a response to the single-issue feminism of the 1960s and 1970s which advocated for one general women’s experience mainly centred on higher educated, white women (Meulenbelt, 1989, p.48), a definition of ‘inclusive feminism’ seems a simple mathematical equation: if single-issue feminism is criticised for excluding specific groups of women by focusing on one universal women-experience, ‘inclusive feminism’ aims to do the opposite.

But what definitions of ‘inclusive’ are available? Although much has been written about being ‘inclusive’, there seems to be no clear-cut definition available. Departing from merely a language point of view, however, ‘inclusive’ means ‘complete’, ‘comprehensive’, or ‘whole’³². Macmillan Dictionary, defines ‘inclusive’ as “deliberately aiming to involve all types of people”. So, in the context of feminism, ‘inclusive feminism’ could be defined as bringing all people together, or to give all people a voice. Though these two definitions might look similar, they are not. As for the latter definition, the idea of ‘giving a voice to’ continues to maintain the dominate narrative of a binary between centre versus margin which results in a continued marginalisation (Burman, 2006 in Frost and Elichaooff, 2013, p. 56). Thus, to offer an effective definition of ‘inclusive feminism’, there should be a critical awareness of the practical implications of its meaning. Archer Mann and Huffman (2005, p. 73) state ‘inclusive feminism’ as a political fault line between second- and third-

³⁰ Original text: “Er is een generatie mondige, jonge en gedreven feministen van kleur opgestaan die niet zit te wachten op schouderklopjes van paternalistische links-elitaire en academische feministen”.

³¹ “Hence my feminism is inclusive. The intellectual elite doesn’t need to hold back. Doing research, posing parliamentary questions, and writing articles are all useful and necessary”. Original text: “Mijn feminisme is dus inclusief. De intellectuele elite hoeft zich niet koest te houden. Onderzoeken, Kamervragen en (opinie) artikelen zijn nuttig en nodig”.

³² I refer to Google to give some sort of basic assumption of the term inclusive.

wave feminism. They refer to Rebecca Walker and her analysis of ‘changing the face of feminism’ by practicing “anti-revolution activities” (Walker, 1995, p. Xxxivvv, cited in Archer Mann and Huffman, 2005, p. 73). In sum, for Archer Mann and Huffman (2005, p. 73) being ‘inclusive’ means rejecting the strict rules of second-wave feminism.

A more strategic example of ‘inclusive feminism’ provides US scholar Jenifer Nelson (2003). Nelson (2003) describes the history of a US reproductive rights organisation CARASA, established in 1977 because of the issues around several reproductive rights issues in the US in the 1960s and 1970s. CARASA focused on reproductive rights for the less-advantaged women with a class focus. Another important goal was to create an inclusive feminist agenda. The organisation was built mainly by feminists from the radical socialist movement, and these socialist feminists were trying to address the issues of class and race in the US (Nelson, 2003, p. 134). They soon widened the perspective of reproductive rights by answering the critique on the feminist movement by women of colour (Nelson, 2003, p. 137). Reproductive rights for white women were different than for women of colour (Nelson, 2003, p. 137). Where white middle-class and working-class women were pushed back into the home to resume the role of motherhood and housework, the right of abortion and contraception was the main goal to reach reproductive freedom (Nelson, 2003, p. 133). However, for low-income women, and specifically women of colour, this was different. They were often the target of strategic programs of ‘population control’ such as forced sterilization and programs that aimed to remove children to foster care or state institutions. Thus, their reproductive freedom was focused on the right to have children and not to not have children (Nelson, 2003, p. 133). By redefining the agenda of reproductive rights and including population control programs, CARASA managed to include the reproductive freedom of both white women as well as women of colour (Nelson, 2003). With her research, Nelson provides a valuable example of how ‘inclusive feminism’ can look like in practice.

So, what does it mean to be an ‘inclusive’ feminist? From Nelson’s (2003) perspective, it means to acknowledge other experiences, and to include ideas and experiences other than your own. From Archer Mann and Huffman’s (2005) perspective, ‘inclusive feminism’ is a strategic response for the prudish and strictness of the second wave. Yet for Ezzeroli (2014) ‘inclusive feminism’ has an ambiguous meaning: “Why should I be content with the well-intent, but patronizing contribution of

Asha ten Broeke who barely did any research on the matter?”³³, she says, while in her next paragraph calling for an “open discussion free of bullshit, aimed at women of colour”³⁴ (Ezzeroli, 2014). On the other hand, Ezzeroli (2014) implies to stand for a more comprehensive feminist movement by underlining how her feminism is inevitably inclusive: “Hence my feminism is inclusive”³⁵. At the same time, she argues how the role for white women in that same movement should be changing: “But feminism is no longer solely meant for the enlightened, white, higher-educated women handing out safety jackets to Muslim women in order to surf their emancipation waves safely”³⁶ (Ezzeroli, 2014). Ezzeroli’s (2014) argument on the, often problematic, role of white women in the feminist movement is valid. She provides the example herself, explaining how an “elitist, self-proclaimed feminist” once discredited her contribution by calling her critique “gangster poetic”³⁷ (Ezzeroli, 2014). However, advocating for an inclusive approach while at the same time labelling a feminist contribution from a white woman as “paternalistic” and suffering from a “saviour syndrome”, results in the question if this is a matter of opinion or skin colour. More importantly, it raises the question if it is in fact causing ‘inclusion’ instead of ‘exclusion’.

Nonetheless, defining the role of white women - such as Ten Broeke - in the feminist movement is not a straightforward task. The increased problematised position of white women in the feminist movement of today is expressed in the regular use of the term ‘white feminism’. It is difficult to provide a valid definition; its meaning is contradictory while at the same time it is not an ‘autonomous’ term: it is structurally absent in dictionaries on feminist theory. However, googling the term results in 305.000 matches and there is also a Wikipedia³⁸ page describing ‘white

³³ Original text: “Waarom zou ik blij moeten zijn met een goedbedoelde, maar betuttelende Asha ten Broeke die zich amper heeft ingelezen in de materie?”.

³⁴ Original text: “Mijn oproep om een open discussie, vrij van bullshit – te voeren is in de eerste plaats gericht aan alle vrouwen van kleur, ongeacht seksuele voorkeur, religie en sociale klasse”.

³⁵ Original text: “Mijn feminisme is dus inclusief”.

³⁶ Original text: “Maar feminisme is al lang geen bezigheid meer voor verlichte blanke, hoogopgeleide vrouwen die reddingsvestjes staan uit te delen aan moslimvrouwen, zodat ze veilig op hun emancipatiegolven kunnen surfen”.

³⁷ “My critique has been discredited by an elitist, self-proclaimed feminist by calling it ‘gangster poetic’”. Original text: “Mijn kritiek is door een elitaire, zelfverklaard feministe eens weggehoond als ‘gangsterpoëtisch’”.

³⁸ I only refer to Wikipedia in order to illustrate contemporary thought; not as a valid source.

feminism’ as “a form of feminism that focuses on the struggles of white women while failing to address distinct forms of oppression faced by ethnic minority women and women lacking other privileges” (Frankenberg, 1993, cited in Wikipedia, 2018). The use of the word ‘privilege’ in the Netherlands has increased as well. Sunny Bergman’s documentary *Our Colonial Hangover* which premiered in 2014, played part in the debate of white privilege and sharply illustrated the reality of white privilege by unveiling the problematic racist figure of black pete – from history to experiences – which never had occurred to most white people because it was simply never part of their experience. Hence today, ‘white feminism’ has evolved into an actual term which, I believe plays a rhetorical role in current ideas about feminism.

‘White feminism’ seems, on the one hand, to refer to the single-issue feminism of white women, while on the other hand its meaning and use has changed over time resulting in a more ambivalent definition. Frankenberg (1993, p. 53) argues that historically in the feminist movement, ‘white’ either implies “superiority or is neutralized and ignored”, and describes the necessity to explore why often “white feminist thought and practice replicated the racism of dominant culture” (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 53). Online magazine FLARE underlines how ‘white feminism’ should “not to be confused with feminism practiced by white people”, and defines the term as “a brand of feminism that minimizes, forgets or wilfully ignores the experiences of women of colour” (Bero, 2017).

The connotation of whiteness as superior and the rejection as such, is present in the current feminist debate, though surprisingly it does not always have to do with skin colour, race or ethnicity. For instance, in May 2016, a post of the Dutch Facebook group ‘People of Power’ reads that groups of women are being oppressed by the ‘white feminist’. The post describes how a campaign which printed the quote ‘what if men were as disgusted by rape as they are with periods’ in menstruation pads, is an example of ‘white feminism’ which lacks inclusion “because it excludes trans women who are subject to rape but not to menstruation”. In this context, ‘white feminism’ has nothing to do with skin colour but rather embodies the superiority connotation of whiteness, expressing a kind of ‘bad’ or ‘incorrect’ feminism which is not ‘inclusive’. Hence being white overlaps with ‘practicing’ ‘white feminism’. You can be white without ‘practicing’ ‘white feminism’, on the other hand, if

you are white and you are ‘called out’, your feminism is often labelled as ‘white feminism’, regardless skin colour.

Besides Ezzeroili's article, there is yet another, more recent article focused on problematising specific identity traits in the Dutch public debate. ‘White people should listen’³⁹ (Blokker, 2015) was published in national newspaper NRC and is an interview about white privilege and racism with four Dutch women of colour: Anousha Nzume, Mariam el Maslouhi, Arzu Aslan and Seada Noorhussen (Blokker, 2015). The article includes the idea that black women are more prone to racism, which results in more right to speak when it comes to racism⁴⁰(Blokker, 2015). In the article, this is described as ‘agency’ by Turkish-Kurdic Dutch Arzu Aslan (Blokker, 2015). Aslan defines ‘agency’ as the right to speak, and that black people have the most right to speak due to their lowest position on the ladder of inequality⁴¹(Blokker, 2015).

Without entering the complex academic debate on ‘agency’, it is interesting to note how a journalistic article in a national newspaper includes an academic term. Though Arslan’s definition should be seen in the context of the Dutch black pete debate, it is important to note that this definition of ‘agency’ is different from the several similar definitions present in academic literature, where it is predominantly defined as “the faculty of action” (O’Neil, 1989, p. 68) and as an analytical tool to locate women’s sites of resistance (Mahmood, 2001, p. 105). Mahmood (2001, p. 205) underlines the importance of ‘agency’ in “complicating and expanding debates about gender in non-Western societies beyond the simplistic registers of submission and patriarchy”, and adds how locating women’s ‘agency’ provides a “crucial corrective to scholarship on the Middle East that had portrayed Arab and Muslim women for decades as passive and submissive beings, shackled by structures of male authority” (Mahmood, 2001: 205). ‘Agency’ is a tool for analysis to restore the

³⁹ Original text: ‘Witte mensen moeten eens luisteren’.

⁴⁰ “Because black people experience racism most, they have a prominent position in the discussion about racism”
Original text: “Juist omdat zwarte mensen racisme het meeste ervaren, nemen zij in de discussie erover de meest vooraanstaande positie in”.

⁴¹ “Since they [black people] are on the lowest position on the ladder of inequality, black people have the highest position when it comes to right to speak”. Original text: “Aangezien ze [zwarte mensen] op de ladder van ongelijkheid onderaan staan, staan zwarte mensen bovenaan als het om recht van spreken gaat”.

absent voice of women in Middle Eastern societies, representing them as “active agents” (Mahmood, 2001: 205).

Other than the context regarding the meaning of ‘agency’ in ‘White people should listen’ (Blokker, 2015), it is important not to overlook its meaning in this time and space. The idea of a ladder of oppression reminds of identity politics that became a dominant discourse in the feminist movement of the 1980s:

The utopian vision of ‘sisterhood’- the collecting together of all women under the same political banner – was in part responsible for the burgeoning interest in feminism and the emergent Women’s Liberation Movement. It was inevitably going to come under fire once more women who weren’t white, middle class, heterosexual, and university-educated became involved, and the difference between women came to be seen as of equal importance as their similarities. Identity politics was the term used to describe, at times, bitter disputes between different feminist groups (Pilcher and Whelehan, 2004, p. 74).

Although this quote relates directly to the situation in the US and the UK, Meulenbelt (1989) confirms that the Dutch situation was not much different:

While the 1970s were still focused on the similarities between women, the 1980s are focused on the differences between women. That seems to be impossible without conflicts. One of the first cracks in the apparent unity was between lesbian and heterosexual women⁴² (p. 48).

Currently, ‘identity politics’ is still predominantly used as a derogatory term. In the feminist movement, the practice of ‘politics of identity’ became an answer to the ideological idea of a unitary sisterhood (Pilcher and Whelehan, 2004, p. 74). After all, this idea of sisterhood turned out

⁴² Original text: “Terwijl de jaren 70 nog in het teken stonden van de overeenkomsten tussen vrouwen, staan de jaren 80 in het teken van onderlinge verschillen. Zonder conflicten schijnt dat niet te kunnen. Een van de eerste barsten in die ogenschijnlijke eenheid was die tussen lesbische en heterovrouwen”.

to be a too narrow concept which focused on sameness between women while neglecting differences (Pilcher, and Whelehan, 2004, p. 73; Briskin, 1990, p. 102). Though the idea of sisterhood was built on the notion of common oppression, it was merely white upper-class women who pleaded for this (hooks, 1984, p. 44). As described in chapter 1, the importance of acknowledging difference emerged as a response to sisterhood, resulting in an increased focus on individual identity, which, as a result, had its own challenges:

Many felt that identity politics was stifling feminism with people feeling obliged to announce their own identity before making any statement and risking someone more ‘oppressed’ than them denying them the right to speak (Pilcher and Whelehan, 2004, p. 74).

Thus, the role of identity in the feminist movement is not new. To establish how the current feminist discourse developed, however, we need to look at the bigger picture. I argue that the Dutch anti-racist discourse is having a major effect on the reconstruction of current feminist discourses. The feminist discourse is not isolated from other discourses in the Netherlands, especially since the increased anti-black pete protests from 2011 onwards (Wekker, 2016, p. 144).

The ‘question’⁴³ if black pete is racist, was initially discussed by mostly white people in Dutch media. As a result, barely a handful of black people were visible in media and the public debate. That is problematic from the perspective of representation (Pilcher and Whelehan, 2004, p. 139), but also from another critical feminist perspective. Donna Haraway (1997, p. 33) addressed knowledge production by illustrating the ‘invisible scientist’ with an invisible perspective of vision, which is objective, transcendent, and has the possibility to produce universal knowledge. Though Haraway’s (1997) critique is focused on academic knowledge production, it can be useful to use it as a framework when looking at the self-implied knowledge production by media. In media the objective, self-invisible knowledge producer is not, to stay close with Haraway (1997), an ‘invisible scientist’, but rather an ‘invisible journalist’ who has the ability to look at societal issues objectively, separating his vision from his own persona. This idea of objectivity in media has got

⁴³ I put single quotation marks because whether or not black pete is a racist caricature, is not a question, but a widely substantiated argument which cannot be ignored, such as analysed by Gloria Wekker in her book *White Innocence* (Wekker, 2016:, p. 148). I also purposely do not capitalise black pete.

under attack which is illustrated by ‘White people should listen’ (Blokker, 2015). With her quote and also title of the article, Anousha Nzume (Blokker, 2015) criticises the blind spot of Dutch media by discussing the question of racism with white people who cannot experience racism. Arslan’s definition of ‘agency’ should be seen in the light of the Dutch tradition to discuss issues of racism by people who do not experience the racism in question: white people.

3.3 Who is allowed to speak?

Retrospectively, the Ten Broeke-Ezzeroili narrative embodies a new feminist discourse in the public debate which could be partially considered a reconstruction of a dominant feminist discourse of the 1980s as well as an adaptation of a contemporary anti-racist discourse. The discourse can also be read in the light of islamophobic sentiments in the Netherlands. Midden (2010, p. 2) argues how gender equality is “often misused in islamophobic and anti-migration discussions, which also harms the position of minority women”, and analyses how feminism has a bad track record with issues of migration and multiculturalism (Midden, 2014, p. 211). As such, the historical context of the discourse on who is allowed to speak provides important insights into why this discourse is currently prevailing in the feminist debate.

While the 1980s discourse was a response to the failed ideal of sisterhood of the 1960s and 1970s where only white, upper-class women were visible, the Ten Broeke-Ezzeroili narrative represents a broader discussion that very easily dismisses the voices of white women because they are white, instead of looking critical at each other’s position in different contexts (Pilcher and Whelehan, 2004, p. 72; Meulenbelt, 1989, p. 46).

The plea for a passive role for white people in the anti-racist movement resonates – understandably - in the feminist movement and I believe this is reinforced by a collective regret of the single-issue feminism which reigned the early second-wave feminist movement in both European and Anglo-American locations. However, Meulenbelt (1989, p. 48) underlines that most historical revolutions were initially started by elite groups, because that is the group who can afford the necessary freedom to stand up first, and that “we shouldn’t feel guilty about this”⁴⁴ (Meulenbelt, 1989, p. 48).

⁴⁴ Original text: “We hoeven dat onszelf niet kwalijk te nemen”.

“Nevertheless, we should acknowledge it. We shouldn’t reproduce the cliché how our differences don’t matter because we are all women”⁴⁵, adds Meulenbelt (1989, p. 48).

The question remains how a movement can be ‘inclusive’. Influenced by the anti-racist movement and offered as a solution for the once dominating position of white women in the feminist movement, ‘inclusive feminism’ in practice results in the question: how do people with specific identity traits relate to each other when imagined in a symbolic ‘ladder of oppression’? In addition, if we look at the 1980s, the implications of focusing on who is allowed to speak and who is not, and excluding women who are experiencing less oppressions, can result in a fragmented feminist movement. The result is a discourse that focuses on how women with specific normative privileges should not “patronize” women with less privileges by “interfering” (Ezzeroli, 2014).

To return to the main research question *Which new feminist discourses can be defined in the Dutch public debate and what are the implications on the Dutch feminist movement?*, the Ten Broeke-Ezzeroli narrative exemplifies a discourse of who is allowed to speak and shows that unintended representations of ‘inclusive feminism’ are ambiguous. This brings me back to the sub-research question *How is inclusive feminism understood and practiced?* The narrative illustrates how the plea for ‘inclusive feminism’ actually stands for a refusal to exclude voices that historical have been silenced, while at the same time aiming to include voices of people based on individual layers of oppression. Hence ‘inclusive feminism’ is not so much about establishing sensitivities for multiple priorities in order to include all people, as illustrated by Nelson’s analysis (2003) about the practice of ‘inclusive feminism’ in CARASA. As such, in the Ten Broeke–Ezzeroli narrative, the dominant racial identity of Ten Broeke, weighs heavier than the issue that brought Ezzeroli and Ten Broeke together in the first place: the question how Muslim students who identify as women, can discuss their questions regarding their profession and religion freely. Consequently, the latter is not discussed, nor did it result in improved strategies for the emancipation of Muslim women.

⁴⁵ Original text: “Maar we moeten het wel constateren. We kunnen niet blijven staan bij de cliché opmerking dat die verschillen er niet toe doen omdat we toch allemaal in de eerste plaats vrouw zijn”.

4. Everybody feminist: if you are inclusive, make it fun.

In this fourth chapter, I analyse how a new feminist approach focused on ‘inclusivity’, is practiced in a different way than the previous chapter. The idea of ‘inclusiveness’ has got a life of its own with different meanings. I focus on one particular meaning in which ‘inclusivity’ tends to results in a flat, one dimensional framework in which feminism risks to become a hollow identity. Well-meant initiatives such as the Ieder1 Parade⁴⁶, stem from the idea that ‘inclusiveness’ asks for positivity and celebration instead of protest and critique. To grasp how this contemporary development looks like and what the implications are, I focus on some parts of the non-fiction book *Dolle Mythes* (‘Mad Myths’)⁴⁷, its reception, but also on the Ieder1 Parade and how this initiative was received and talked about. My body of analysis is built around specific parts of the book written by Linda Duits and published in April 2017. I use Duits’ book *Dolle Mythes* as a symptomatic narrative that represents an emergent discourse of ‘popfeminism’, and to illustrate the implications of this new discourse (Spiers, 2014).

In the section 4.1 I briefly describe and analyse Duits’ book and the reception in Dutch media. I examine the content page of the book, and focus on how Duits describes in a particular event the role of men. I mainly focus on how Duits addresses issues of harmful clichés and stereotyping, which her book is focused on. In the next part of the 4.1 paragraph, I focus on the role of positivity in Duits’ book and how this relates to the Ieder1 Parade, a social change initiative which took place in September 2016. In this section I also look at its reception in the public debate. In 4.2, I focus on ideas about ‘post-feminism’ versus ‘popfeminism’ and how this relates to *Dolle Mythes* and the Ieder1 Parade. Finally, I conclude this chapter in 4.3 with how *Dolle Mythes* pertains to a new feminist discourse.

4.1 Narratives

Duits is a self-proclaimed ‘independent social scientist’ specialized in popular culture. She does an array of different commercial research, but also writes columns for different online platforms, such

⁴⁶ I will explain this later in this chapter.

⁴⁷ *Dolle Mythes* is a non-fiction book written by Linda Duits of which the title refers to the Dutch second wave feminist group Mad Mina’s (Dolle Mina’s).

as the controversial site The Post Online, a Dutch news platform described by Wikipedia⁴⁸ (2018) as right wing, while in the Dutch feminist movement Duits positions herself - and is considered as such - to be left wing. She says identifies as a queer heterosexual ciswoman.

This information about Duits' background somewhat illustrates her position from which she has written her book, which provides a meaningful perspective in order to contextualise her arguments and perspective. Looking at the index of *Dolle Mythes*, some of the chapter titles are 'Zeurders' (plural Whiner), 'Humorloos' (without humour), and 'Mannenhaters' (men haters), which immediately confirms any negative associations with feminism. Further in her book, Duits counter-argues the idea of feminism as being a movement of men haters, by describing how the Mad Mina group had more male than female members. However, she continues by describing how the role of men started to agitate the women in the group at a certain point in time. This, Duits argues, was Mad Mina's downfall: the women wanted to do it by themselves and the men were kicked out. She concludes this chapter with: "That label [men haters] does in fact fit some radical feminists"⁴⁹(Duits, 2017: 11). While Linda Duits promises that her book will "bust" myths and stereotypes associated with feminism, it reproduces them. Duits zooms in on the myths and stereotypes in question, which results in reproducing and maintaining stereotypes and myths about feminism.

Though attempting to support the efforts of the second wave, Duits rejects second-wave feminism by dismissing the parts she dislikes most. In one interview, she describes: "I thought that protesting on the streets was old fashioned, but it isn't. It's so much fun to walk along in a protest, to sing songs, to make protest signs, yelling and just being together"⁵⁰ (Bogosavac, 2017). Duits' statements embody a paradox of her work. On the one hand she reflects on her book as it being a contribution to the feminist movement. However, instead of providing an alternative for the myths and stereotypes she promised to 'bust', I diagnose that she provides the reader with anti-feminist sentiments by using a 'not all feminists' argument. McRobbie (2004) describes this paradox as a

⁴⁸ Wikipedia is not a valid (academic) source, however, it does provide a reflection of the meaning of certain people, and in this case, websites in the current time frame.

⁴⁹ Original text: "Dat label [mannenhaters] past namelijk wel degelijk op sommige radicaal feministen".

⁵⁰ Original text: "Ik dacht: demonstreren is niet meer van deze tijd. Maar dat is het dus wel. Het is ook heel leuk om mee te lopen in een demonstratie, liedjes te zingen, borden maken, leuzen schreeuwen en samenkomen".

‘double entanglement’, which entails the aim to provide a feminist stance, while at the same time providing or supporting anti-feminist sentiments. The sentiments reflected in *Dolle Mythes* are that some feminists are indeed man haters, without any humour and Duits is unable to provide the reader with actual arguments and history to fully dismantle the myths in question.

Not only does Duits reinforce stereotypes, she also illustrates the idea that feminism is something that can be tailor-cut on a personal identity level when used in the proper manner: fun and cheerful. Duits advocates for the feminism that needs to be kind and fun. In an interview about her book, Duits describes: “As I grew older, I got to know a lot of fun feminists. Why wouldn’t I want to be part of that group? As for myself, I feel at home within ‘queer feminism’, a group that is mainly focused on pigeonholing”⁵¹ (Bogosavac, 2017). In another interview about her book, she describes the response she got on an article she wrote about parental leave for fathers. She says: “I received a lot of messages of angry mothers. A lot of women don’t want to share childcare tasks; instead they want to be in control”⁵² (Dujardin, 2017). The idea that feminism is something that should be approached from a positive, happy perspective seems to be an issue of this era. Other social change movements also need to deal with the discourse of ‘het gezellig houden’. A common argument used as a response to the black pete debate, is to ‘please keep it gezellig’ during a children’s holiday⁵³. The tendency to focus on a more positive approach is often disguised as an ‘inclusive’ strategy, using words such as ‘connecting’ and ‘together’ (Tijdschrift LOVER, 2016).

Another example of this ‘positivity’ approach is the Ieder1 Parade (‘Every1 Parade’), initiated by actor Nasrdin Dchar, which took place in Amsterdam in September 2016. The self-proclaimed ‘walk of positivity’ was supposed to stop the increased polarisation around diversity in the Netherlands (Ieder1, 2016), however, it received a lot of critique. Journalist Seada Nourhussen

⁵¹ Original text: “Ik leerde naarmate ik ouder werd hele leuke feministen kennen. Waarom zou ik niet bij die club willen horen? Zelf voel ik mij thuis bij het ‘queer feminisme’: zij zijn veel bezig met hokjesdenken”.

⁵² Original text: “Maar ik kreeg óók onwijs veel boze moeders over me heen. Veel moeders willen de zorg helemaal niet gelijk verdelen, maar de baas zijn”.

⁵³ Such as in: Leeuwarder Courant, 2017; de Telegraaf, 2017.

(2016) argues in her column ‘Verandering via feestjes? Nee die eis je op’⁵⁴ published in national newspaper Trouw:

Especially because of the hollow phrases which accompany this campaign – ‘celebrating diversity’ and ‘together we are strong’ – the funds are flowing freely. From 500 euros from photographer Erwin Olaf, to 1000 euros from anonymous people. “What a great idea, but what are we going to do with that money?”, someone asks only after they’ve donated. It turns out the collected funds are used to finance Dixie-toilettes and stages: apparently, the walk ends in a festival like setting. Because injustice is awful, but it should stay ‘gezellig’⁵⁵(Nourhussen, 2016).

Anousha Nzume (2016) agrees with Nourhussen (2016) and writes the OpEd ‘Waarom ik niet meeloop met Ieder1’⁵⁶ which is published at online magazine Joop:

What’s painful in the Every1 campaign, is the ‘not up for negativity-vibe’. As if experiencing societal injustice and racism is a choice. Besides, I’m disappointed in the lack of support for our activists who were at the forefront and made this ‘fun parade’ possible, including all the risks and danger it took to get here⁵⁷ (Nzume, 2016).

Thus, the core issue with Ieder1 is the prerequisite that diversity and inclusion on societal level should be accomplished through a mere positive, fun, and friendly approach. In addition, the

⁵⁴ Translation: ‘Change through parties? No, change through demands’.

⁵⁵ Original text: “Juist door de holle frasen die deze campagne sieren - 'diversiteit vieren' en 'samen sterk' - stromen de donaties binnen, van 500 euro van fotograaf Erwin Olaf, tot 1000 euro van onbekenden. "Wat een goed idee, maar wat gaan we doen met dat geld?", vraagt iemand zich pas ná donatie af. Het geld blijkt naar onder meer Dixie-toiletten en podia te gaan; de mars eindigt dus in een festival. Want onrecht is erg, maar het moet wel gezellig blijven” (‘Gezellig’ can be translated as a mix of coziness and fun).

⁵⁶ Translation: ‘Why I don’t take part in the Every1 Parade’.

⁵⁷ Original text: “Wat pijn doet in de IEDER1 campagne is die ‘geen-zin-in-negatief-gedoe-sfeer’. Alsof het ervaren van maatschappelijke ongelijkheid en racisme een keuze is. Daarnaast ben ik teleurgesteld in het totale gebrek aan concrete steun voor onze activisten. De voorhoede die met gevaar voor eigen welzijn de paden heeft gebaand voor ‘gezellige parades’ en ‘concerten met kraampjes’”.

commercial exploitation implies that diversity equals bringing a lot of people together and lacking the aim of structural societal change. As such, there is neither a political agenda nor a political strategy to mediate the societal change that is necessary for creating the political groundwork for an actual diverse and inclusive society.

4.2 Contextualisation

The question who is entitled to a movement and who is allowed to speak, brings us back to Duits' book and the role of men in the feminist movement in the 1960s and 1970s. Where Duits (2017) describes the role of men and the rejection of men in the Mad Mina group as a symptom of irrationality and men hating, German scholar Emily Spiers (2014) describes a similar situation in the same era in Germany:

Like many other women across European and Anglo-American contexts who were involved in the civil rights and student movements at the end of the 1960s, she [Alice Schwarzer] found that leftist male activists perpetuated the misogynistic practices which were part of the bourgeois society they criticised. (...) This realisation led Schwarzer, like many other feminist thinkers originally associated with the New Left, to seek out autonomous groups dedicated to women's liberation (Spiers, 2014, p. 73).

Comparing Duits' (2016) description with Spiers (2014) description, Duits' perspective seems somewhat black and white, lacking the nuance necessary to provide a critical argument. Which raises the unanswered question: why is Duits (2016) not providing her readers with a more critical analysis?

While a critical analysis in Duits' book is absent, the reception of the book was positive. However, there are few journalistic articles dedicated to the release of the book. Most articles are an interview with Duits herself. All articles have one thing in common: they all use versions with a minimum change of Duits' own description and subtitle of the book: "a fresh fact-check!"⁵⁸, which raises questions. Why are there no more in depth reviews available? It turns out that in March 2017, one

⁵⁸ Original text: "een frisse fact-check".

month before the publication of Duits' *Dolle Mythes*, Anousha Nzume's book *Hallo Witte Mensen* ('Hello White People') was published. This other book, written by another big feminist name and focusing on the personal experiences of a black woman in the Netherlands, shook the grounds of white-dominated Dutch media. As a result, it could be that Duits' book was overshadowed by the major success of the controversy of Nzume's book.

However, there was one actual book review on *Dolle Mythes* which was published in newspaper NRC. In this review, Sandra Heerma van Voss (2017) describes the book as an ambitious response to current rejections of second-wave feminism. When Duits' both wishes for a "tsunami" of feminism, while at the same time expresses her resistance for a collective movement based on the premise of "having a uterus", Heerma van Voss (2017) calls Duits' contradiction, "complicated"⁵⁹. She describes Duits tone as often being "populist" and "crude", concluding that Duits herself does what she criticises other feminists for doing: bashing others for not being the 'right' kind of feminist⁶⁰. The question of the 'right' kind of feminism is regularly confused with what different kind of feminisms entail. I diagnose how the question of what is the 'right' kind of feminism is, defines a current trend in the contemporary feminist debate.

Spiers (2014) describes the group of contemporary German feminists as 'popfeminist' because their identification with feminism while simultaneously dismissing second-wave feminist efforts. This group of feminists embodies a renewed interest in feminism while they "distance themselves linguistically and ideologically from the women's movement of the 1970s and the negative stereotypes of second-wave feminists which have flourished in post-feminist culture" (Spiers, 2014, p. 70). 'Popfeminism' provides an alternative for the overused term of 'post-feminist'. As a term 'post-feminism' is ambiguous; it implies both an antithesis to feminism, as well as a transcended

⁵⁹ Original text: "Duits kiest in *Dolle mythes* voor een andere, nogal ingewikkelde vorm: haar boek is reconstructie, theorie en actie pamflet ineens, van een zelfverklaarde feminist die enerzijds hoopt op een 'Derde Tsunami', en anderzijds 'niet echt te porren' is 'voor collectieve actie op basis van een gedeelde baarmoeder'".

⁶⁰ Original text: "Minder geslaagd is Duits' populaire, soms ronduit botte toon. Terwijl ze een zo breed en inclusief mogelijk feminisme voorstaat – alle kleuren, seksen, seksuele voorkeuren zijn welkom – krijgt bijvoorbeeld Emma Watson een snauw omdat zij met de campagne HeForShe probeerde om meer mannen binnenboord te halen. Mannen wáren al welkom, aldus Duits, die zich daarmee schuldig maakt aan precies het soort gevit dat feministen eerder uiteen dreef. Zonde".

kind of feminism (Pilcher and Whelehan, 2004, p. 105; McRobbie, 2004, p. 257; Tasker and Negra, 2008, p. 1; Wright, 2000, p. 5).

McRobbie (2004, p. 255) takes the concept of 'post-feminism' one step further by stating it is more a process instead of a fixed concept of identity. She describes 'post-feminism' as an active process of undoing feminism while appearing to provide an engaging response to feminism. Spiers (2014, p. 70) adds to that notion that 'post-feminism' is an umbrella term, often used for contradictory women and girls who distance themselves from the negative stereotypes of feminism but also from the women's movement of the 1970s. 'Popfeminism' seems to be in fact exactly that, with the only but crucial difference that popfeminists identify as feminists, and post-feminists do not (Spiers, 2014, p. 70). However, 'post-feminism' does embody a more complex form of feminist backlash. This results in the question if 'popfeminism' is bad for feminism. From this point of departure, it should be underlined that the question whether 'popfeminism' is bad for feminism is different from debating the 'right' kind of feminism. When we argue that someone is 'not feminist' due to lifestyle, views, or anything else, we establish and maintain a duality of right and wrong, of feminist and not-feminist, which is unproductive and ineffective in aiming for social change. However, by critically assessing what is bad for feminism, what is causing a backlash in feminism, we provide the opportunity to reflect on our previous efforts.

The difference between 'post-feminism' and 'popfeminism' seems to be a crucial, time-dependent, difference. Where the late 1990s have abundant examples of post-feminist popular culture where strong women are increasingly represented, and are widely subjected to feminist analysis, they never identify as feminist. TV-series such as *Sex and the City* and *Ally McBeal*, focusing on successful, white women, tends to result in a rejection or denial of feminism as a necessity to improve the position of women. The creator of *Ally McBeal* even claimed that "she's not a hard, strident feminist out of the 60's and 70's. She's all for women's rights, but she doesn't want to lead the charge at her own emotional expense" (Dow, 2002, p. 260). In that same era, the HBO series *Sex and the City* is another well-known symptom of 'post-feminism' in popular culture (McRobbie, 2004, p. 262).

The last ten years ‘post-feminism’ is less present in the manner of ‘strong woman but not a feminist’. Where ‘post-feminism’ of the late 1990s was marked by optimism, entitlement and the opportunity of prosperity, Genz (2017, p. 18) argues that the world post-2008 recession is less celebratory. Rather, the last ten years could be described as a world where the “neoliberal mantra of choice and self-determination have become inflicted with the experiences of precarity, risk, and the insistence on self-responsibilisation” (Gilbert, 2013, cited in Genz, 2017, p. 18). In short: where Sex and the City was all about being unapologetically selfish and feminism was out of the question, post 2008-recession Girls reflects the same issues without a rejection of feminism but with more focus on the self and entitlement and less to consuming (Genz, 2017, p. 22). Because, simply put, there just was less to consume.

To return to Spiers’ plea (2014) for the term ‘popfeminism’ instead of ‘post-feminism’: the latter is not the right term for the new generation of women who focus on women as a success story, embracing the neoliberal narrative of the self in which the identification with feminism is happily perceived as a form of self-branding (Spiers, 2014, p. 77 and 81; Genz, 2017, p. 25). Elizabeth Wright (2000, p. 8) underlines the ambiguous meaning of ‘post-feminism’ and argues that post-feminists “support an individualistic liberal agenda instead of a collective and political one”. This confirms Spiers (2014, p. 81) who argues that with ‘popfeminism’, “the private becomes private once more”, referring to the disconnection of feminist topics from politics. Where the ‘personal is political’ was once a strategy to politicize experience and to show how oppression was a common reality for women, in ‘popfeminism’ the personal is depoliticised and disconnected from politics (Braidotti, 2003, p.197).

4.3 Reproducing anti-feminist sentiments

Duits claims to support second-wave efforts - such as feminist protests and fighting the dominant stereotype that women prefer to do most of the domestic chores - yet she does so only selectively. By doing so, she not only maintains and reproduces discontinuity between different feminist waves, she also fuels negative connotations about feminism. In fact, her main argument why some stereotypes are a ‘myth’ could be summed up as: ‘because not all feminists are like that’. This discourse is similar to the New German Girls’ discourse described by Spiers (2014). Spiers (2014) argues that feminists such as Duits should be described as a popfeminist instead of a post-feminist,

even though popfeminists contribute to a feminist backlash and anti-feminist sentiments, making a clear distinction between the feminists such as Duits who do identify as feminists and the post-feminist stakeholders.

To answer the main research question *Which new feminist discourses can be defined in the Dutch public debate and what are the implications on the Dutch feminist movement?*, Duits' feminism embodies a new feminist discourse which can be defined as popfeminist. The pleas for the kind of feminism that should be fun and pleasant instead of negative and angry, is characteristic for this popfeminist discourse. Within popfeminist discourse, this is also the implicit definition of 'inclusive feminism', which brings me back to the sub-research question *How is inclusive feminism understood and practiced?* Duits' feminist narrative embraces 'inclusive feminism' as a strategy to include any individual approach as 'feminist' while lacking a critical point of reflection to explore what the implications of these individual choices are. I diagnose that within popfeminist discourse, ideas of 'inclusive feminism' result in a positive approach to include those who do not prefer an activist stance, with, as a result, a refusal of negative feelings such as anger and frustration.

As a popfeminist, just like her fellow New German Girls, Duits' aim is to attract a young group of women who are reluctant to feminism due to its negative stereotypes established by post-feminist discourse (Spiers, 2014, p. 80). On the other hand, Duits' ambivalence towards second-wave feminists on top of her profound reinforcement of feminist ideas result in a paradox which entails that her feminism conspires with the rhetoric of neoliberal individualism and anti-feminist rhetoric presented in the media and the public debate (Spiers, 2014, p. 80).

The remaining question is what the implications are of a popfeminist discourse in the current landscape of the feminist movement in the Netherlands. According to Spiers (2014, p. 79), 'popfeminism' is problematic for feminism because it lacks any critical intervention of the adopted neoliberal rhetoric. In the context of Duits' feminism this means that her profound efforts, packed in a popfeminist discourse, can do more harm than good. Her stance on the removal of men in the Mad Mina group, for instance, or her focus on 'happy' feminism, do not only disqualify feminist efforts which are not built on positivity, they also refuse to critically assess the structures that her feminism is built upon. For someone with a strong public persona such as Duits, this has impact on national

ideas about what feminism means. The generic presence of popfeminist discourse may seem positive for many because it makes feminism more 'popular', the implications are that it can undo any feminist political efforts, both past and present.

5. Conclusion: one origin, multiple practices: the implications for the feminist movement

In chapter 3 and 4 I have showed how the idea of ‘inclusive feminism’ can lead to two different feminist practices and therefore I argue how one ‘ideology’ results in divergent discourses in the public debate. To stay close with the main research question *Which new feminist discourses can be defined in the Dutch public debate and what are the implications for the Dutch feminist movement?*, I argue how there are two new feminist discourses: one focused on who is allowed to speak, and another one focused on a popfeminist practice. Both discourses are build upon the idea of ‘inclusive feminism’ and both are focused on individual realities and experiences. However, where the first discourse results in a debate of who is allowed to speak, the second discourse results in a popfeminist discourse influenced by neoliberal ideologies, ‘cherry picking’ feminist themes based on personal preference and indirectly reproducing anti-feminist sentiments by an unmediated adoption of neoliberal rhetoric (Spiers, 2014: 88). I therefore argue that both discourses focus on individual, depoliticised experiences and needs while lacking a political project.

In chapter 3 I conclude how unintended representations of ‘inclusive feminism’ are often ambiguous. As opposed to sisterhood, the focus on the self and individual experience seems valid; however, the implications lack a political focal point. By focusing merely on individual layers of oppression, the feminist agenda risks to become apolitical (Briskin, 1990, p. 102). Consequently, it disables the opportunity to create practical political strategies for radical change and equality. While it is popular to state that your feminism is ‘inclusive’, ‘inclusive feminism’ in practice tends to be fixated on specific identity traits and oppressions and resulting in a hierarchy of oppression. This hierarchy of oppression does not deconstruct current dominant power relations. Instead, I believe it copies its strategy. It does not provide an intervention to create strategic alternative for existing power relations. This approach risks to result in yet another exclusionary movement.

In chapter 4 I have showed how ‘inclusive feminism’ also risks to eliminate complexities and results in a flat, one-dimensional framework. The focus on positivity - and especially the rejection of anger and frustration in feminism - embodies a rejection of past feminist efforts and therefore

risks contributing to a feminist backlash (Spiers, 2014, p. 88). I believe that 'inclusive feminism' in a popfeminist context is applied as a point of departure to freely adapt feminist ideologies according to individual needs.

Characteristic of both these discourses is the adaptation and application of feminist academic theories and concepts - such as 'agency' and 'intersectional theory' - outside the academic context. Both discourses also reflect and reproduce a generational conflict. Ideas about feminism are not fixed, however, by reshaping academic analytical tools the feminist debates risks becoming a platform for misinformed left politics, often fuelling right wing anti-feminist sentiments.

However, both feminist discourses also impact the feminist movement from within. Both divergent discourses present a problematic position towards previous waves of feminism, tending to distant their feminism from previous generations and therefore rejecting past feminist efforts. Both discourses originate from the ideology of 'no longer excluding groups of people', which implies how previous feminist waves did exactly that: exclude and presuppose rules. These new discourses aim to transcend previous mistakes, which is characteristic for a generational conflict (Henry, 2004, p. 9). Consequently, previous efforts of the feminist movement are less visible, and only selectively used and applied (Spiers, 2014, p. 71).

In addition, the sub-research question *How is inclusive feminism understood and practiced?*, can be answered by concluding that the understanding and practice of 'inclusive feminism' is ambiguous. Moreover, 'inclusive feminism' is often used as a marker to defy or accept someone's feminism or to freely select feminist topics based on personal interest while lacking a critical perspective. I have shown how debates regarding 'inclusive feminism' are often dominated with questions of who is allowed to speak and who is not while lacking sufficient attention to create strategies for radical equality. Instead of building an actual inclusive movement, this strategy risks to establish an exclusionary movement focusing on a depoliticised experience and lacking a political agenda. Thus, experience in the context of these two new discourses remains an unmediated individualised experience which lacks any political strategy to assess the power structures which establish and maintain these experiences.

In the process of answering my research questions, I want to offer some opportunities for the feminist movement. After all, there is an increased feminist support base compared to ten years ago. Without arguing for a different discourse, I believe we can build a collective movement around, through and with, current feminist initiatives. I elaborate on this in chapter 6.

6. Afterword: Opportunities for a collective feminist movement

First I want to underline that I support Ezzeroili's claim (2014) in chapter 3 that there have been too few voices of women of colour in the Dutch public debate and that this has to change. I also agree you do not have to ask or be nice about it. We have passed that point a long time ago. Ezzeroili (2014) is right claiming space for women of colour who have been silenced and ignored by Dutch media for too long. However, this specific narrative illustrates a larger problem, namely the issue of preoccupation with each other in a movement, instead of focusing more on the actual people and institutions (PVV, GeenStijl) who are mainly the cause of reproducing a hateful discourse against, in this case, Muslim women and men.

Disqualifying a person's vision and competences based on single identity traits are problematic in almost every context. The focus on who is allowed to speak and who not, has implications that do not fit in a movement aiming to assess structures of oppression. As such, we should not reject popfeminist discourse as being not-feminist. The approach of who is allowed to speak and who is not, risks becoming yet another single-issue feminism, the kind of feminism which only allows certain groups of people to be included. If our aim is inclusiveness, we should be aware that people are not the same and that new generations of feminism bring new ideas of what feminism means. As a movement we should resonate this by standing by and fighting against different axes of oppression instead of aiming for a form of all-inclusiveness which in fact risks becoming a narrow, one dimensional approach of feminism.

I argue that we should continue to organise in different feminisms, black feminism, queer feminism, and so on. However, we should not reject a collective perspective and distance ourselves from the communities we are part of, by focusing instead on individual needs and shortcomings while losing sight of our mutual strengths. We should make the personal political again. To keep feminist work of the past and present meaningful, we should keep in mind that self-reflection and a critical eye are necessary. A critical eye is constructive, while a destructive approach can destroy a movement. We should focus on how we, as a movement, overcome differences without contributing to a feminist backlash - intentionally or not - and undoing the hard work of previous generations of feminists. We should refrain from pointing fingers, but instead look for probable solutions to continue and evolve

a critical movement that pursues structural social change by focusing on multiple axes of oppression and difference. We should not reject ‘popfeminism’ for being popfeminist, nor should we reject a ‘politics of identity’ based feminism, yet we should actively plea for more focus on the collective and our political experience, without losing focus on the role of intersecting identities. As a movement, we cannot afford to be seduced by neoliberal narratives which teach us that our selves count most.

So the implications of these two different discourses of ‘inclusive feminism’ are the absence of a political project; the depoliticising of personal experience; and a lack of focus for collective efforts, past and present. The focus on the individual level of being ‘woke’ is not connected to any political framework that should aim to unveil structures of power that have established the intersecting oppressions in the first place. Instead there is a focus on each other within the movement to make sure every single person is ‘inclusive’, while there is no critical political intervention for society.

I want to emphasise I am not arguing for keeping it ‘nice’ in the name of solidarity. My analysis has illustrated what many of us have already witnessed: confrontations in the feminist debate are inevitable. As a movement, I believe we should continue to be critical, to the world and each other, however, we should be cautious not to destruct ourselves instead of the normative structures that we have been fighting for so long. Meulenbelt⁶¹ (2018) wonders why we still do not have one feminist organisation taking the lead to organise massive protests. I believe it that the two discourses discussed in my analysis are partially the reason why this is not taking place. Maybe we have been misdirected by our feminist ambitions. Marxist feminist scholar Linda Briskin (1990) argued almost three decades ago for building a movement “not through large homogeneous political organisations, but rather through alliances and coalitions” (Briskin, 1990, p. 105). Briskin (1990) responded to the

⁶¹ “In the Netherlands we have some interesting new feminist initiatives, often through social media, and what’s particularly striking, is how often black women are on the forefront. However, there is no central Group taking the lead (like in Belgium!) and a massive women’s protest is unthinkable. At the moment anyway. How come?”. Original text: “we hebben in Nederland nogal wat vitale en boeiende nieuwe feministische initiatieven, vaak via social media, en opvallend hoe vaak zwarte vrouwen voorop lopen. Maar er is in Nederland geen centrale groep die het voortouw neemt (in België wel!) en een massale vrouwendemonstratie als in Spanje is bij ons ondenkbaar. Op dit moment althans. Hoe komt dat?”.

dilemmas of the second wave, criticising how we should not, in fact, think of one big feminist movement as homogenous. Her idea still seems relevant today. Retrospectively, including Meulenbelt's (2018) critique, it seems like an inevitable next step: let us build alliances and coalitions including representatives from as many feminist initiatives as possible, working together on one main goal in particular: to organise protests and strikes on a massive, national scale. Let us work together and unite on this one goal in particular, and we will write history.

7. Bibliography

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