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Girls' style and identity constitution within the school system

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ΕΠΙΒΛΕΠΩΝ ΚΑΘΗΓΗΤΗΣ

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Abstract

In the present research it is analyzed the way girls' negotiate their style within the school system. Although girls are perceived, in "common sense", as passive, through negotiating their style they achieve agenticness and subjectivity. Through interviews and participant observation I show the importance of something seemingly insignificant. Within schools there are written and unwritten rules. Some girls choose to obey them and some to defy them. What does this mean for their agency? Can they constitute themselves if they are part of the norm or if they are out of it? Furthermore, I analyze style as a constitutive factor in the formation of groups. Do the similar attract each other and drive away the "different"? Finally, I examine how girls achieve recognition through style and form their subjectivities.

This research gives a glimpse to the inside of girls' everyday school life, how they define themselves and others, how they form groups and all the aforementioned always in accordance with style.

Περίληψη

Στην παρούσα εργασία αναλύεται ο τρόπος με τον οποίο τα κορίτσια διαπραγματεύονται το στυλ τους μέσα στο σχολικό σύστημα. Παρόλο που τα κορίτσια θεωρούνται, στην «κοινή γνώμη», ως παθητικά, μέσω της διαπραγμάτευσης του στυλ τους πετυχαίνουν την εμπρόθετη δράση και την υποκειμενοποίηση. Με συνεντεύξεις και συμμετοχική παρατήρηση δείχνω τη σημασία κάτι φαινομενικά ασήμαντου. Στα σχολεία υπάρχουν γραπτοί και άγραφοι κανόνες. Μερικά κορίτσια επιλέγουν να τους υπακούουν και κάποια άλλα να τους αγνοούν. Τι σημαίνει αυτό για την εμπρόθετη δράση τους; Μπορούν να συγκροτήσουν τους εαυτούς τους αν είναι μέρος της νόρμας ή αν είναι εκτός αυτής; Επιπλέον. Αναλύω το στυλ ως συγκροτησιακό παράγοντα στη δημιουργία ομάδων. Τα όμοια έλκονται και «διώχνουν» τα «διαφορετικά»; Τέλος, εξετάζω πώς τα κορίτσια πετυχαίνουν την αναγνώριση μέσω του στυλ και συγκροτούν τις υποκειμενικότητες τους.

Αυτή η έρευνα παρέχει μία φευγαλέα ματιά στις σχολικές καθημερινότητες των κοριτσιών, στο πώς ορίζουν τους εαυτούς τους και τους άλλους, στο πώς δημιουργούν ομάδες και όλα τα προαναφερθέντα πάντα σε αντιστοιχία με το συλ.

Introduction

Girls are usually perceived as victims of fashion and capitalism. It is believed that the only thing they want to do is buy clothes and make-up, do their hair and gossip. In this sense they are presented as passive beings, being without agency. With this research, I tried to analyze their style (clothing, make-up, hairstyling etc.) in order to understand if girls can be powerful and agentic or superficial and shallow through it.

In the first chapter, I review pieces of research which refer to girls as well as style. I start by explaining the reason I chose to interview only girls. In addition, by using Hebdige's and Paumerantz's research on subcultural style and girls' style within school accordingly, I portray on the one hand, what style is and on the other hand, how it is used by girls who through it become agentic. At the end of the first chapter I mention a Greek research which refers to the way students constitute their subjectivities by resisting to the normative models within school, in order to level my research down to the Greek reality.

In the second chapter, I analyze the theories I will use later for the data analysis. More specifically, I use Jenkins concept of social identity in combination with Grosz's theory of the self to show the way the inside and the outside are interrelated; Butler's theory of performativity and agency as well as Benhabib's theory of agency; and Honneth's theory of recognition to examine if through style girls can be recognize and become subjects.

In the third chapter, I refer to the methodology I used to analyze the data as well as to some information about the participants and the difficulties that came up during the research.

The fourth chapter contains passages of the girls' interviews and how I interpret them according to the theory I previously mentioned. Finally, the fifth chapter includes the conclusions I came to after the whole process of this research.

Chapter 1: Literature Review

In the following chapters I am going to refer to various pieces of research in order to review what it is written, concerning my own subject of research. To begin with, I will explain the reasons I chose to occupy myself with interviewing solely girls. Secondly, by referring to the “Girl Power” movement I analyze the way girls and their style came into surface, into public speech and the ways they were and still are treated because of it in order to consequently show the importance of this research. Furthermore, I will use Hebdige’s and Pomerantz’s research to establish the meaning of style. I will refer to the former because he provides a solid definition of style and to the latter because she puts girls’ style within the school context which is utterly my end as well. Finally, I am going to mention a very useful Greek research conducted by Pechtelidis which lands style in the Greek schools’ reality.

1.1. *Why girls?*

There is a great deal of research on girls in school but few are the ones which refer to the connection between the “looks”, style, identity and exclusion-inclusion in groups. Bettis and Adams (2005) express their “disappointment with the lack of books that focus on the material realities of adolescent girls in schools” (1). According to them, the knowledge about adolescent girls’ everyday lives, concerns, problems, dreams etc. comes from a plethora of “popular-press books” such as “Reviving Ophelia”, “Queen Bees and Wannabes”. In addition, the movie companies seem to take advantage of the stereotypical girl-students in order to create box office movies (e.g. “Mean Girls”). All of the above may allow someone to take a glimpse of one small part of adolescent girls’ reality and leave out a variety of self making and identity producing aspects of their lives. Griffin appears to be at the same level of disappointment. She supports that girls and young women altogether, as much in contemporary academic as in popular interest, are ignored or at best treated as marginal beings, must be understood in the context of a focus on youth (Griffin et al. 2004, 30).

Feminist researchers took what were “women’s issues” and transplanted them onto the lives of girls supporting that all identity discussions must be located in the

global economy of shifting gender regimes and must be grounded in concerns for racial, ethnic, and social-class inequities (Bettis & Adams 2005, 2), topics that are not fondly discussed by teenage girls, and in a way they miss out the simple but of great importance things which concern them.

1.2. Girl Power

According to the Oxford living Dictionaries, girl power is “used in reference to an attitude of independence, confidence, and empowerment among young women”. Also, its origin comes from the early 20th century (in the rare sense ‘the number of girls available to perform a task’). The term was first recorded in its current sense in 1967 and was used by the riot girl movement in the early 1990s, but is particularly associated with the all-female pop group the Spice Girls, who released their first single in 1996¹. Indeed, one of the talents that Spice Girls had, was their proclamation and embodiment of Girl Power. They have been accused of presenting nothing more than a new halfhearted and commercialized version of a style which had been initiated by predecessors like Madonna and the Riot Grrrls. In fact, as Fritzsche found out by interviewing Spice Girls’ fans, the group provided girls with self-confidence, a way of negotiating their relationships with boys and a way to represent themselves – all of the above in a playful tone (Fritzsche, 2004). Quoting Currie, Kelly and Pomerantz (2009), “she (Fritzsche) interprets the phenomenal success of the Spice Girls as a reminder of the absence of empowering symbols in the lives of young women. She also reminds feminists that ‘empowerment’ is not a word that we can simply ‘explain’ to girls; empowerment is a practice learned, in part, through the kind of playful, body – oriented practices encouraged by girl power culture” (30).

Nowadays, girls are being urged to be independent, assertive, and achievement oriented, but they are still encouraged to be attractive, kind and maintain a “good looking” body. Although Fritzsche is sharing the majority of these views, she argues that even though feminist critiques suggest that e.g. Spice Girls preserve the

¹ https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/girl_power

“normative” expectations for many girls, they help some others to find their own path by objecting to these expectations (2004). During the second wave, young girls and women were urged to do “manly” things as to gain their emancipation and achieve equity towards young boys and men. Sinikka Aapola et al. (2005) stretch that girls “are encouraged to relate to their bodies as objects that exist for the use and aesthetic pleasure of others” (136). As a result, boys are taught to be in charge of “material things” and girls are mainly encouraged to gain competence “with regard to the body” (Aapola, Gonick, & Harris 2005, 138).

The female body has come to be seen as always “under construction”, a “working site” whose maintenance and improvement require a lot of time and attention; time spent on doing fitness or planning a low-fat diet, as well as acquiring trendy clothing, applying makeup, adorning one’s hair and so on. Traditionally, this maintenance work is required to remain hidden from view (with the exception of working out), with only its final product—a good-looking appearance— to be displayed (Ibid., 139).

As Ivashkevich (2011) realizes, in the summer art camp where her research took place, girls are influenced through many contemporary media texts. These texts provide girls with goal achieving female figures yet feminine and “nice” e.g. Kim Possible, PowerPuff Girls. Hains (2007) points out that this niceness is their “underlying attitude, which makes open demonstrations of their intelligence and physical powers seem socially acceptable and nonthreatening (in Ivashkevich 2011, 17).

In the same vein, girl power could be performed in various ways which differ amongst them. An essential characteristic of this difference is the economical status. In the previously mentioned study, a group of girls organized an inexpensive jewelry shop to provide younger girls with handmade rings, earrings, bracelets etc. Although jewelry making is a customary female activity in many cultures, the jewelry shop organized by Jessie went beyond the replication of traditional female roles. Apart from deriving pleasure from making jewelry to beautify herself, Jessie (one of the founders of the jewelry shop) used her knowledge of consumer culture to control

the production and sale of the items among the girls and to establish herself as a leader within her peer culture (Ibid., 23-24). Maria, one of Jessie's friends, refused to take place in this "business" because she thought it would be unfair to children who could not afford buying jewelry. Being herself, a child coming from a single-mother family, she was able to understand economic inequalities and organized a non-profit paper doll business, which did not blossom as rebellious as it might seem. The example above not only shows the socioeconomic gap between groups in the same environment but also points out the different "styles" by which girl power was performed in connection. Moreover, the first group of girls tried to legitimize their activity by selling their products for real cash, thereby challenging the modernist idea of childhood play as a free, spontaneous activity opposing to the well-planned, serious adult work. Nonetheless, the jewelry shop practices also normalized commercial relations as necessary for producing and sustaining individual power (ibid., 24) and creating power relations and hierarchies. Ivashkevich (2011) concludes that, in order to understand contemporary girls' subjectivities and their intersections with popular representations, individual desire, and socioeconomic opportunity, it is crucial to realize first that they exist in the space between female agency and patriarchal objectification.

Interestingly, the Girl Power movement seems to introduce young girls and women to a new kind of performing their subjectivities, assertiveness, emancipation etc. through their "femininity" in contrast with the second wave feminism beliefs which as aforementioned, urged them to constitute their subjectivities by doing "manly things".

1.3. Style, identity and agency

First of all, we have to question ourselves when it comes to identity, who is the beholder of this view. Howarth (2002) in her study, *Identity in whose eyes? The Role of Representations in Identity Construction*, is researching the same question. Her research takes place in Brixton, one of the most multicultural cities, as one participant declared. Also, it stands out for its "celebration of difference". This

opinion, though, is not unanimous, especially for the “outsiders”. Howarth aims to explore this divergence between “insiders” and “outsiders” and to assess the relationship between these representations and the construction of identity by using focus groups. The focus groups include seven friendship groups of boys and girls (44 participants) between 12-16 years, two and five accordingly, and also a range of nationalities, skin-colors and addresses in Brixton (Ibid., 147). According to the findings, borders are symbolical and indentifying with Brixton is more of a social psychological dilemma and linked to how others see them, rather than a matter to be decided by geography. In addition, Howarth found that it is a common phenomenon for the positive image of the “insiders” to conflict with the more negative image of the “outsiders” with an outcome which threatens self-knowledge and self-esteem. A serious result, as well, is the “spoiling of identities”. In accordance with the findings, the latter translates in 43% of the participant teenagers to identify themselves as “neighbors” and “not-from-Brixton, instead of “Brixtoners”. Furthermore, she spots that for some of the participants, especially for people of color, there is a “double dose of stigma” e.g. being black and being brought up in Brixton. Some of them develop coping strategies and some others are proud of their phenomenal stigma. Nevertheless, most of them confirm that representations are important because they construct the mind of the outsider and maintain a marginal and subordinate status to the wider society about them. The researcher argues that, an important impact on teenagers developing their identities belongs to family and school and the representations they provide. Concluding, Howarth states that:

Identities are continually being negotiated and challenged at an inter-subjective level [...] continually developed and contested through others’ representations of our claimed social groups. While this becomes clear in research in a stigmatized community, identities are always constructed through and against representations [...] To theorize social identity, therefore, we need to highlight the dialectic between how we see ourselves and how others see us [Ibid., 159).

Howarth touches many important points in her research, being the following: the importance of representations, of outsiders and of space. This thematology is

discussed, in accordance with style, mainly by Hebdige and Pomerantz who also add other equally important factors in identity formation.

1.3.1. Dick Hebdige's punks and subjectivity through style

Dick Hebdige (1979), in his book *Subculture: The meaning of style*, sets the basis of understanding various expressions of style mainly subcultural i.e. reggae, hipster, teddy-boy, punk etc. His book is divided in two parts. In the first part, Hebdige presents some case studies of people with subcultural styles. According to Hebdige subcultural style encompasses the styles which are different from the mainstream/popular culture. In the second part, Hebdige introduces a "reading" of style as intentional communication, bricolage, revolt, homology and signifying practice.

More specifically, the author does an introduction to subculture and style through Jean Genet's *The Thief's Journal*. In this "journal", Genet describes how a tube of vaseline, found in his possession, is confiscated by the Spanish police during a raid. This object was proclaiming his homosexuality to the world (Hebdige 1979, 2). The introductory pages of Hebdige's research show the various meanings of an object or a piece of cloth. Latter on, by using Roland Barthes' theory examines from whom the given "object" takes a particular meaning. Barthes tried to examine how and why some "phenomena" seemed "perfectly natural". He argued that everything in everyday life is dependent upon the representation which the bourgeoisie has and which is imposed to us of the relations between men and the world. In *Mythologies* Barthes examines the hidden rules and codes through which some specific meaning to the groups which are in power get universalized and are considered at the end "common sense". "Common sense" in its turn is spontaneous, ideological and unconscious as Hall puts it and Althusser agrees by arguing that [...] ideology has very little to do with 'consciousness'. It is profoundly *unconscious* [...] Ideology is indeed a system of representation, but in the majority of cases these representations have nothing to do with 'consciousness': they are usually images and occasionally concepts, but it is above all as *structures* that they impose on the vast majority of

men, not via their 'consciousness'. They are perceived-accepted-suffered cultural objects and they act functionally on men via a process that escapes them (ibid., 11-2). Borrowing Hall's phrase "maps of meanings", Hebdige argues that they "cut across a range of potential meanings, making certain meanings available and ruling others out of court [...] All human societies reproduce themselves in this way through process of 'naturalization'. It is through this process – a kind of inevitable reflex of all social life – that *particular* sets of social relations, *particular* ways of organizing the world appear to us as if they were universal and timeless" (Ibid., 14). Finally, by using Gramsci's phrase "hegemony is a moving equilibrium", he wants to underline that hegemony is not handily given to a particular class. On the contrary, it has to be won, reproduced and sustained (ibid.). Hebdige begins the part of the case studies by analyzing the origins of punk style, explaining that it is a combination of numerous styles and a "natural" subsequent of events at the time it arose. Time and space are always important in Hebdige's study.

1.3.1.1. *Being the Other and being a part of the community*

Continuing, Hebdige refers to many subcultures such as Rastafarianism, teddy boys, skin heads, mods etc. and finishes with the one he started, punks. Even in punk (sub) culture where its members seem to own a "unique" style, there is coherence and a sameness of a core of action. Having punk as his main subculture of examination, Hebdige tries to give a more concrete meaning of style. First, he demonstrates a base on which his arguments on what style is, are going to stand. He starts by mentioning that subcultures represent noise and are an interference in the orderly sequence which leads from real events and phenomena to their representation in the media (ibid., 90). As a result, subcultures by violating the authorized codes through which the social world is organized and experienced, provoke and disturb a considerable power. They are something contrary to "holiness", they are the Other. But how is it possible, to constitute a part of a whole i.e. a social world, a community, just by being the Other?

Hebdige, then, explains that there are two forms of incorporation: the commodity form and the ideological form. The former, refers to the conversion of subcultural signs (dress, music, etc.) into mass-produced objects and the later is the 'labelling' and redefinition of deviant behaviour by dominant groups – the police, the media, the judiciary (Ibid., 94).

The commodity form, being attached with consumption and belonging to the leisure sphere, creates the difficulty of maintaining an absolute distinction between commercial exploitation and creativity and/or originality. As John Clarke 1976b has observed: The diffusion of youth styles from the subcultures to the fashion market is not simply a 'cultural process', but a real network or infrastructure of new kinds of commercial and economic institutions [...] (Ibid., 95). At this point, Hebdige acknowledges the connection between cultural and commercial processes so he can argue that once the subcultural signs, as mentioned above, are made available and out of their private contexts, at the same time, they become "frozen" and "mainstream" as well but still remain a part of the social world rather than an "unnatural break".

Continuing with the second form of incorporation, the ideological one, the author suggests that the members of subcultures are treated like "folk devils", a phrase borrowed by Cohen, meaning that "too much weight tends to be given to the sensational excesses of the tabloid press at the expense of the ambiguous reactions which are, after all, more typical" (Ibid., 97). Media by representing subcultures as exotic make them lose their 'exoticness' (if it indeed exists). As a result, the Other is naturalized and the difference is purely denied. On the other hand, if the Other is considered exotic, this exoticness is transformed as meaningless and the Other into an object. Consequently, the difference is at a place beyond analysis (Ibid.). At the end of this chapter, Hebdige notes that youth cultures and accordingly punk, are considered a threat to the family and projected as such to the media. But, when articles with the previously mentioned subject matter were published, an equal number of articles praising the perks of punk family life were put in print as well. Every "success" of an individual from a subcultural context, in this case punk, created an impression of an expansion of the group and a social rank climbing which in its

turn empowered the idea of the open society which the presence of punk was contradicting.

1.3.1.2. What style is?

At this point, where Hebdige set the foundations of subcultures as part of the social world and not a complete outsider, he starts to theorize what style is. He describes it as intentional communication, bricolage, revolt, homology and signifying practice. By characterizing it as intentional communication, he tries to understand how a subculture makes sense to its members and in what way it is made to signify disorder. He ultimately concludes that, spectacular subcultures go against mainstream culture and they are obviously fabricated displaying their own codes. The communication between of significant difference is the 'point' behind the style of all spectacular subcultures (Ibid., 102). But what is it exactly communicated if spectacular subcultures are an intentional communication?

According to Hebdige, style is bricolage. Bricolage refers to the process where something has a certain meaning in "common sense", in the mainstream culture. In other words, an object and a meaning constitute a sign, and then a bricoleur of a subculture takes this object and places it within a different context. As a result, the object conveys a different message. There is a change of role of the daily objects which surround us e.g. safety pins are taken out of their domestic usage and pinned on jackets, jeans, skirts or through the cheek ear or lip, in punk subculture. Nevertheless, punk accomplished more than upsetting the wardrobe. By arguing style is a revolt, Hebdige supports that punk not only disturbed the "casual" style and gave a completely new meaning to various "common" objects but it undermined every relevant discourse from dancing to gender performance.

Hebdige refers to style as homology, too. By combining Levi-Strauss, Willis and Hall he argues that symbolic objects in a subcultural group are made to reflect the aspects of group's life. These symbolic objects i.e dress, music, language, rituals, appearance etc., are the missing link between the group and its relations, situation

and experience. Even though, certain semiotics in subcultures are difficult to be assigned to a certain meaning, other semiotic facts are undeniable. For instance, the punk subculture was created through and with specific transformations of a whole range of commodities, values, common-sense attitudes, etc. as to enabled its members to “restate their opposition to dominant values and institutions” (Ibid., 116). However, certain semiotics escape our knowledge and comprehension. Quoting Hebdige, the key to punk style remains elusive (ibid., 129).

Finally, by referring to style as a signifying practice, Hebdige accepts the polysemy of punk “texts” and in general, subcultural texts. He adopts Tel Quel’s group approach of signifying practice which sees language as an active, transitive force which shapes and positions the ‘subject’ while always itself remaining ‘in process’ capable of infinite adaptation (Ibid., 118-9).

1.3.2. Pomerantz and her “agentic” girls.

The same line of thinking, on how style is an active force in order to prove how girls become agentic through it, is shared by Shauna Pomerantz. Everyone, male or female, gets dressed. By dressing/covering our bodies, with clothes and other accessories, we enter into various “forms of recognizability”. In her book Shauna Pomerantz (2008) shows the necessary doubleness of these acts of recognition. One becomes recognizable through what Butler calls “circuits of recognition.” Each one of us must become recognizable within those circuits, or be cast out. In order to be addressed at all, acts of dressing must first locate the subject within the already existing sign system, as a recognizable actor (Ibid., xii). Pomerantz, by interviewing high school girls in Vancouver, Canada and observing their everyday lives inside the school’s facilities, activities and courses, deconstructs the binaries in which girls are always positioned as the “other” to the dominant and active and argues that they are agentic. In her study, girls become agentic through style. More specifically, dress is a system of signs, a form of a language which makes people become autonomous subjects, however illusory that autonomy may be (Ibid., xiii). According to Pomerantz, dress is what sets individuals as intelligible. In contrast with Hebdige,

Pomerantz's research does not only focus in one style. Instead, she studies various forms of it. There is one more thing they agree on, which is that dress is a system of signs, a language. Pomerantz's book seems to examine more thorough the idea of style and its "agenticness" than Hebdige's does, probably because it does not only pay close attention to subcultural styles and expands in many groups with different style, while Hebdige mainly focuses on the punk subculture, while he also structurally excludes women.

1.3.2.1. Style as a form of disciplinary power and as a threat.

More specifically, in her first chapter the author outlines the Britney Spears look which seems to be the most popular among girls at the given time. This specific style was all about short skirts, exposed midriffs, visible bra straps and generally anything that could make someone say that a girl is "slutty" which is what happened when it firstly appeared. What Pomerantz tries to do in her book is take a different approach by pushing beyond those judgments in order to understand girls' style as a "deep surface" (Ibid., 2). She is not trying to point out how girls should dress. Instead, through the thorough examination of various styles, she wishes to show how girls' style is a valuable factor of getting into girls cultural practices, self-expression, identification and agency. She argues that:

Through style, we can trace women's liberation and attempts to resist and expand gender norms, standards of feminine beauty, and the carefully patrolled borders of the heterosexual body. But we can also trace moral outrage, bylaws, and dress codes designed to keep girls and women in line (Ibid., 3-4).

At this point Pomerantz refers to how style sometimes may be a "form of disciplinary power" which defines what is acceptable and what is not. Nevertheless, girls even in the 1930s till nowadays challenge what is an appropriate female attire but not without reactions, mostly negative, by the media or by the general public. In particular, the previously mentioned Britney look, raised numerous negative reactions. For example, an article including a picture of a skinny girl wearing fishnet

stockings, ripped jean shorts, glittered bikini top, with a tattoo between her breast and messy hair accompanied with a headline “Mom I’m ready for school!” , delivers the “problem” to the general public. Just like the punk subculture in Hebdige’s research, this style seems to be a threat. It is even more obvious in the school context where girls were supposed to be a distraction for boys and teachers while male sexuality was never encountered in a similar way. This situation drove many principals to change the dress code rules by banning everything they thought as distracting and “inappropriate”. As a result, anything opposing to the dress code was considered as “what a slut looks like” (Ibid., 9). Not taking into consideration any variations in style which might be among the “opposing” girls, a “single certainty” was formed to represent them and of course the main reason for wearing “inappropriate” clothes was due to a low self-esteem and for the attraction of the male gaze. We can realize from the first pages of Pomerantz’s book how female bodies were perceived already. Girls are always placed in the heterosexual matrix and everything they do and/or wear is in correspondence to what boys would want. What most people fail to acknowledge is style, even the one considered by the general public “slutty”, is a significant form of identity construction and negotiation within the school, where it becomes a “particularly powerful social marker” (Ibid., 11).

1.3.2.2. Pomerantz’s notion of identity.

Pomerantz uses the word identity throughout her research but not without acknowledging it is a problematic one. She argues that it offers a valuable way to theorize the relationship between the self, other, and society. Yet it is always in erasure and far from complete and stable. The instability of the subject lies in its constitution in discourse and it is shaped by it, as it defines both the self and the society for us. Thus, discourse is the one which names and classifies individuals as particular kinds of people, leading particular kinds of lives which are all connected to the social world through the subject roles that they occupy. The former may seemingly create an idea of stability which is in fact false as it changes through space and time. According to Pomerantz:

Viewed through this lens, identity is fluid, open, and incomplete, produced within the specificity of time and space, discourse and subjectivity, self and society. We co- and reconstruct our identities through identificatory processes that occur in relation to, and not independently of, the social world (Ibid, 14).

Subjectivity for Pomerantz is where the interior (mind) and the exterior (body) connect.

1.3.2.3. What style actually is.

In chapter two, the author agrees with Hebdige by referring to style as a system of signs which have meaning within a given context. To suggest that explicit values or “maps of meaning” may be applied to this or any cultural practice only severs it from girls’ fluid and unpredictable expressions of identity (Ibid., 33). For her, style is a cultural practice which has meaning in girls’ lives, in contrast to the beliefs of other people who support that they are naïve and unaware of what they are purchasing. Girls’ style is, generally, perceived as too frivolous, too mainstream, too co-opted, too conventional, too sexy, too inappropriate, and too boring [...] not political enough, not resistant enough, not agentic enough, not powerful enough, and not “authentic” enough to be taken seriously by many academics (Ibid., 35). Pomerantz of course acknowledges the influence media, marketing and global capitalism have towards girls.

Similarly to Hebdige, Pomerantz notes that girls’ style is viewed as a form of ideology, conformity and pathology. Firstly, as a form of ideology, it symbolizes girls’ unconsciousness in relation to the capitalistic system. She refers, as well, to the naturalness of ideology, the commonsense, which according to her translates to what is needed for the capitalist system to function by concealing whichever economic oppression. In addition, she argues that is not only an economic oppression but a social and political one, in total agreement with Hebdige. In this sense, girls are depicted as “natural consumers” and victims of capitalism. Only during the 1970s and 1980s, women’s consumerism was viewed through another lens. There was the idea of pleasure and fantasy in activities such as reading fashion magazines and romance novels, and watching of soap operas and films. In this

context, shopping was enhanced with a new meaning. Women's fashion at the given time had to do with power, fantasy and self-expression, socialization and bonding with other women. But what is the case for girls' style as ideology? Girls were and still are viewed as marketing targets. This was confirmed by many when the Girl power movement made its appearance. The only thing one had to do was to "sell" the suitable myth in order for the girls to buy it. Girls are trained to think that the only power they have is "their purchasing power". The missing link between the girl oriented products including films, music, fashion etc. is, interestingly, style. Girls consume style through numerous sources such as teen dramas, websites, celebrities, TV shows etc. From the 1920s to nowadays clothing and fashion have remained essential to the formation of the teenage girl market and to capitalism (Ibid., 47). Consequently, a dependable relationship between manufacturers, marketers, and storeowners was created with girls and vice versa. Girls are not buying anything placed in a window. Instead, they have an opinion which marketers were not always able to predict. Therefore, style is a means used not only by the market but also by girls towards the market in order to exert their influence as consumers who do not shop what they are told to.

Secondly, as a form of conformity style is denied to girls because it is viewed as a form of subcultural resistance and mostly belonging to men, since fashion is viewed as a powerless form of nonengagement in the conformist sphere of mass culture (Ibid., 50). Dressing as, for example, their pop idols girls are viewed apathetic and non political. Popular culture, action, resistance, creativity, authenticity of subculture are related to boys, whereas mass culture, passiveness, compliance, conformity, naturalization of habits are related to girls. By revisiting Hebdige's view on style, Pomerantz quotes McRobbie (1991, in Pomerantz 2008) and realizes that in subculture, style is a meaningful cultural practice—but only for its male participants. As girls and women are ignored as subcultural participants, they are also denied access to the signifying practices associated with style. While male subcultural style "means," female subcultural style does not (Ibid., 52).

Probably the only time female subcultural style "means" is with Riot Grrrl, an all-girl punk group which through their songs addresses important female issues of

oppression e.g. sexual harassment, and through their style, deconstruct stereotypical femininity. Riot Grrrl was often characterized as an “authentic” subcultural form in contrast to Spice Girls which was seen as “inauthentic”. The previous reveals the binary tension between older teenage girls and young women with younger teens and tween girls accordingly. In addition, the “authenticity” and “inauthenticity” suggest that “only certain girls have entre into the hegemonic world of popular culture, where girls can engage in practices of power through fandom, cultural production, gendered communities, and style” (Ibid., 55). For Pomerantz, “authenticity” and “inauthenticity” are merely depended on each other and not opposed. The one needs the other as to define itself. If it were not for mainstream girls’ culture, there would not exist a subcultural one to revolt to it. Having considered all the above i.e. how conformity through style is feasible when girls, bodies and identities are always in process or when even in groups where a particular conformity is required, if you look closely it is easy to spot differences among the members.

Thirdly, girls’ style is seen as pathology. Pomerantz uses an example of a photographic essay which depicts “Girls Culture” (title and theme) as to show girls’ cultural practices in North America during the 1900s. Girls’ lives during this period seem to be in constant struggle, including self-mutilation, anorexia, narcissism, weight loss, sexual harassment, objectification by men, the overwhelming desire to be beautiful, and their obsessive need to be looked at and adored (Ibid., 59). In addition, they suffer under the pressure of the media and their peers. Girls are mainly depicted as insecure, having low self-esteem and distracted by their appearance and looks. Hence, style is constituted as pathology. Moreover Pomerantz notes that even in academic discourse, girls’ cultural practices are seen as symptoms of low self-esteem. From the latter, their looks are always derived which are directly linked to their actions. Seductive clothes and dyed hair mean that they do as they are pleased and black clothes in combination with messy hair mean depression. According to Pipher (1994, in Pomerantz 2008), the previously mentioned, are perceived as the incompetence of girls to understand and “master” the culture. Pomerantz adds to the latter by using Brumberg’s argument on the

“individualistic” activities of today’s girls’ cultural practices which consist one more reason of the previously mentioned “symptoms”. Style plays an important role in the binary good-bad girl. “Regular” jeans, “simple” T-shirts and no makeup translate into what a good girls looks like and everything out of it into what a bad girl looks like. Furthermore, style as pathology relies on the idea that girls develop in a linear and natural manner that moves from girlhood to youth to adulthood in an inevitable progression (Ibid., 62). Everything that falls out of this line is concerned as a psychological “problem”. But, following this line of argumentation, all the pleasure, the desire to look differently and the experimentation with new styles are disregarded. According to Pomerantz, style opens the door for fantasies that might otherwise seem impossible, dangerous, or intimidating. Through it, the boundaries of what is a girl and how girlhood looks like are blurred. While agreeing with Pipher’s opinion that prevailing culture does not concern itself with the well-being of girls, Pomerantz argues that style is often a savior and is used as a way to deal with this situation and generally the difficulties of their realities.

1.3.2.4. East Side High and findings.

In the next chapter, the author begins to discuss what happened during her research in East Side High (ESH). At the beginning, she is asking the interviewed girls if there are discrete groups in their school. All of them describe the most recognizable (not in the sense of popular only) groups and many of them felt ostracized by some “cliquey and exclusionary” ones. The “labelling” of groups depends on the person interviewed and that led to the appearance of numerous social groups. In addition, one of the girls draws a “map” of where you can find which group. For ethnographers, mapping the school is what makes it intelligible to the readers. The school, on the other hand, is the place where the student identities are brought together and where these identities occur. And just as the identities of girls are contextual, so does and the identity of the school. Pomerantz, views girls’ stories as rhetorical performances in order to acknowledge the differences within and among the stories of experience, how they are told, and what it is that structures the telling and the retelling.

First, each story represents a girl's desire to authenticate her own understanding of what was going on in the school [...]Second, each story represents a girl's desire to persuade me (Pomerantz) of what was going on in the school [...]Finally, on a third level, I (Pomerantz) hope to "persuade readers of the credibility of my interpretive efforts" (Ibid., 68-9)

By calling them rhetorical performances she wants to underline the performative aspects which are making the school i.e. the regulations that give it social structure, the bodies that give it purpose and the internal and external discourses that institutionalize it as that thing we call "school". The school can be considered as an institution in which bodies become recognizable and understood or the exact opposites of the previous. A school is performed by insiders and outsiders. The latter's discourses of what they think is going on in school shapes it and have an impact on the insiders and consequently in the rhetorical performances of the girls in Pomerantz's research.

The author describes the city where her research takes place in order to place school in a context and then she describes school in order to place its students in a context. Also, she portrays the ways in which the outsiders (students in west side schools) view the ESH girls ("cheap", "skanky", "cliquey", "spoiled"). Nevertheless, ESH girls, the insiders, believe that their school has a reputation of a "nice" place because this is the way they see it. In addition, they support that it is a place where diversity (multiculturalism, social and curricular variety) is respected in contrast to other schools, although it is previously mentioned the way some girls feel about not being able to join some social groups. They see their school as a place where there is equality, there are not actually groups and everybody is getting along well. On the contrary, Pomerantz observes multiple social hierarchies and they are mainly among Canadian-born and those who came from outside of Canada, among academic and vocational programs, among the various Asian groups, and among the preppy girls and those who classified themselves as alternative, sporty, or dressy. But due to the large number of students it was not always easy to know who is supposed to be "on top" at all times (Ibid., 77). There are many programs within ESH and as result they

appeal to students needs, while providing them with their own space inside the school.

Continuing, Pomerantz describes some programs (regular program, aesthetician program, French Immersion program) through the way girls view them. This allows girls to express their opinion for their own program as well as for the other ones which are examined. It also allows stereotypes and beliefs to emerge through their opinions. Consequently, girls' rhetorical performances of the school construct the stage where their identities are shaped. In their turn, their identities shape school itself. However, the researcher met girls who desire to both occupy and not occupy subject positions at the same time. In these ambivalences, the possibility of keeping school identities in "play" emerged as girls worked toward maintaining the contradictory elements of their identities, without forcing those subject positions to conform to a tidy notion of the self [...]Girls' ambivalent performances of girlhood, as they were expressed through style, created space in the school for a disruption of conventional girlhood, as well as additions and expansions to previously established notions of girlhood (Ibid., 92).

According to Pomerantz, the most popular groups are the preppy and sexy ones, who mainly adopt the Britney and Jlo looks, the latter being the most fashionable. Good reputation and dressing "good" are coincided. Popularity though, is linked to the display of skin. Brands vary depended on groups and economic capital. Many preppy (popular) girls in order to be able to afford the expensive brands, as to be part of the particular group, own a part-time job. Heterosexual dating was part of this group's identity as well. This group's members are recognized through the mainstream, heterosexual matrix of "emphasized femininity" or "the maintenance and practices that institutionalizes men's dominance over women (Ibid., 97). As a result, girls with different sexual orientation than the heterosexual are excluded of this group. The same applies to girls who are not skinny and consequently cannot "be in style", because style does not come in every size according to an interviewee.

Alternative, Goths and Punk is another category which Pomerantz examines. This is a category every person belongs to, not following the mainstream culture. The key

criterion for girls to occupy the “alternative” subject position, was to be recognized as different. Alternative girls were the exact opposite of Britney’s and JLo’s. But, they were sexy as well without exposing skin or being skinny and heterosexual. “Alternatives” belong to a more inclusive group than the previously mentioned one. Both groups, though, often judge each other without recognizing that they would not exist, were it the case of either one ceasing existing.

Another group is constituted by comfortable, appropriate and dressy. This group is consisted of the girls who cannot afford the preppy subject position and neither do they care to be alternative. It includes many styles inspired from Britney and JLo looks but without caring about expensive labels. The girls who wear this style deem it to be much “classier” than preppy style and they do not show skin because they do not feel comfortable with that. They are also judging preps about their “inappropriate”, according to them, appearance and the inexcusably expensive labels they wear (Ibid.). These girls are mainly in beauty school and they are characterized by a family mentality which means that they all look out for each other, care for each other’s reputations, and make sure that they watch each other’s backs. But they are judged by almost every other girl group about being “trashy” though there is not an exclamatory difference from preppy style, because they represent the distinction between working- class and working-poor vocational girls and middle- and working- class academic girls(Ibid., 114).

The last group Pomerantz analyzes belongs to sporty, skater and tom-person. These styles belong to girls who wear and do “boy” things. In addition, they do not care to find a boyfriend depending on what they wear and occupy themselves with sports. More specifically, an interviewee of this group feels that her sporty look announces to other girls that she is happy with her body and that she does not feel the need to change. The same interviewee does whatever is in her hands to be as far from the preppy style as she can be but by feeling pretty as well. On the other hand, tom-boys do not have this interest in dressing “girly” or being recognized as conventionally attractive. Skater girls sand in opposition to emphasized femininity too (Ibid., 118).

While preppy girls held the most power in the school by designating which dressed bodies mattered and which ones did not, each style within the range offered its own form of inclusion and exclusion, inside and outside [...] Girls never described their own styles without also describing the styles of other girls [...] in order to make clear that they were these kind of girls and not those kind of girls (Ibid., 119).

Comparison is a “key factor” in negotiating their identities. Even though, it seems that girls have fixed subject position, at the same time they conceive themselves as “having the power to change “who” they were within the school’s social world” (Ibid., 123).

Furthermore, Pomerantz observes differentiated forms of agency through style. On the one hand, there are the girls who through their “standing out” in a crowd and “uniqueness” become agentic. On the other hand, there are the girls whose style generates an aura of power and authority that for many is entailed with an impression of self-esteem and confidence, express their agency (mostly preppy girls) (Ibid. 137).

Concluding, Pomerantz argues that girls with the most power to negotiate how others see them are the ones who feel less constrained and accordingly girls with the least power feel the most constrained in the school. The former, though, feel sometimes the need to express girlhood in a specific way. As a result they lose some of their freedom. The latter, being aware of their positionings, use their knowledge to negotiate school identities within their own social scenes, groups, and cliques and gain some freedom (Ibid. 152). Finally, the author underlines the importance of understanding that the significance of style does not only lie in how other see it, but in its contextualized signification within the school; it is an important factor towards mis/recognition, dis/identification, subjectivity, power and agency.

1.4. The Greek reality

In the international literature there is no other research beside Pomerantz's on how girls negotiate their identities and constitute their subjectivities through style in school system and how the latter affects it or not. In the Greek context, style within school is mentioned in only one research, that of Pechtelidis (2004). Pechtelidis researches the ways students' constitute their subjectivities within the school system by resisting to the normative models in it. He refers to the "child's body" as having the most important role in the power relations created in the school context (Ibid., 156). In addition, he argues that the school system tries to control their bodies and put them inside norms by making them "obedient, useful, able to be ruled through the organization of the analytical program, the regulation of the school's spacetime, the hierarchical supervision, the classification and their 'objectification'" (Ibid.). He stretches that he does not find the body as something passive but as active which is constructed by and constructs itself as well in the reality in which it belongs (Ibid.). Furthermore, he argues that there are rules so written as unwritten which regulate how students' bodies must appear in school. These rules refer to how a "decent" appearance i.e. clothing, hairstyling, personal care (make-up, the length of the nails, peircings etc.) must be (Ibid., 157). "The surveillance of the students and their regularization, i.e. their submission to rules for their compliance or their reinstatement to 'normality' are more efficient methods than physical punishment" (J. Varela, in J. Solomon & G. Kouzelis, 1994, in Pechtelidis, 2004, 159). Also, the researcher refers to student's style as an "important aspect of life in school" (Ibid. 254). With style he means, besides the aforementioned appearance, the movement, the gestures and the facial expressions as well (Ibid.). All these constitute a factor which differentiates students among them and make them approach or decline from the normative standards. Nevertheless, he understands style as a means of symbolization which produces various meanings according to the signifier. For example, he observes that boys use in a different way their bodies than girls whereas the latter use more implicit ways in order to resist the school's rules than the former ones.

Chapter 2: Theoretical framework

In this chapter, I am going to analyze the following themes: identity (both individual and collective), the self, subjectivity, agency and recognition. To accomplish that I will use Jenkins' theory of social identity; Hegel's dialectics of desire, the struggle of life and death and mastership-servitude; Butler's theory of performativity and agency combined with Benhabib's criticism on them; and Honneth's theory of forms of recognition and non-recognition.

2.1. Identity

2.1.1. Sameness – Difference.

According to Jenkins (2014), identity is the human capacity to know "who's who" and "what's what" (6). In "Social Identity" he argues, the foundation of identity lies in the difference and the sameness of persons. Furthermore, he uses the term "identification" to describe the process (which identifies someone or something) (through which someone or something is identified) and underlines the importance of understanding that the identification per se, is not a trait we possess, but rather is defined by what we do. Moreover, he argues that identification makes no sense outside relationships and hence, outside the so-called "social". People provide other people with information through the clothes they wear, their movement, their "body language", the way they speak, the magazines they read etc., without them even noticing. By trying to acknowledge who is who and what is what, a multi-dimensional classification or mapping of the human world and our places in it is created, as individuals and as members of collectivities (Ibid.).

At first, identity was considered as what people have in common with other people. It had nothing to do with difference. When identity politics came to the spotlight, groups of "diversity" such as women, lesbians, gays, disabled people etc., expressed a new way of thinking of identity, with difference and pluralism having a positive value. Afterwards, much attention was drawn to difference. Jenkins proposes two arguments on why we should not only pay close attention to difference itself. It is well known that one knows who or what they are by

establishing where their difference lies, when it comes to others. Differentiation from' permits 'identification with' to take place, and is thus, logically prior and apparently more significant. Difference almost appears to have become the defining principle of collectivity [...] (Ibid., 21). For Jenkins, to say that a person is something, is to say that he/she is not something else, as well as whom they have things in common with. To support his first argument, he criticizes Hall's and Butler's opinion on identity being entirely distinct from difference and concludes that "identification with" ignores that it is "a matter of classifying oneself and others and that classification depends upon the interplay of similarity and difference". To know, then, who is who, entails classification and hence, similarity and difference. Jenkins' second argument is established on understanding social change. More specifically, if one focuses only on difference and tries to understand social change, he will make illogical and meaningless inferences, since there would be no "accord with observable realities". In addition, a shared characteristic of history and social change is the collective mobilization in the pursuit of shared objects. Most theorists of difference, besides Butler, use notions of collectivity such as "culture or society that are in considerable tension with their fetishisation of difference" (Ibid., 25). According to Jenkins, they might have no other choice. His final point on why one should not focus only on difference in order to think about identification and identity and his conclusion of the second argument, is that theories in general -including social theory- are based on three linked processes: abstraction, generalization and comparison. Only a very limited scope for generalization and comparison is left to a humane world, in which priority is given to difference.

2.1.2. Individual and Collective

Talking about identity and identification, one is undoubtedly led to talk about individual and collective. This happens due to the fact that you cannot refer to either one of them, without referring to the sameness with and the difference from other people. Not everyone though, respects the value of collectiveness as much as they do of individuality. Jenkins, on the other hand, tries to offer a view in which

collective identity and individual identity are not understood as intrinsically different phenomena. He argues that:

- *with respect to identification, the individually unique and the collectively shared can be understood as similar in important respects;*
- *the individual and the collective are routinely entangled with each other;*
- *individual and collective identification only come into being within interaction;*
- *the processes by which each is produced and reproduced are analogous;*
- *the theorization of identification must therefore accommodate the individual and the collective in equal measure (Ibid., 40)*

Relying mainly on Mead, Goffman and Barth, he suggests that the world is understood in three orders, namely, the individual order, the interaction order and the institutional order. The first one, inspired by the work of Cooley and Mead, is the human world as a construction of embodied individuals but also by their selfhood which is according to Jenkins "thoroughly socially constructed". He understands selfhood as a result of continuous interaction during which the individuals "define and redefine themselves and others". Thus, selfhood is a "synthesis" of the "internal" and the "external". The second one, inspired by Goffman and Bourdieu, is the human world as a construction of relationships between people. He argues that, it is not enough simply to assert an identity; that assertion must also be validated, or not, by those with whom we have dealings (Ibid., 44). People can only control that much of the signals delivered to others about themselves. Goffman (1969) calls it "impression management strategies". According to him, people use these strategies as to achieve goals and pursue interests (consciously). Bourdieu emphasizes on the improvisational quality of interaction which is encouraged by "habitus". Habitus is the domain of habit, which, in the presentation of self, operates neither consciously nor unconsciously, neither deliberately nor automatically and is collective, individual and embodied at the same time (Jenkins 2014, 44). The third one, inspired mainly by Barth and Cohen, is "the human world of pattern and organization of established

ways of doing things” (Ibid., 42). Jenkins problematizes the group identification-categorization revisiting the internal-external dialectic. He refers to Barth and Cohen, who share a view of identity found at the boundaries between internal and external, as well as group identification and categorization by others. Also, Barth draws a distinction between nominal and virtual identity, where the former refers to the name which, for example, share some individuals and the latter to the experience which may differ amongst them. Furthermore, Jenkins underlines the importance of institutions-organizations and classification. The first ones, are groups with which individuals may identify and the second one, is a process which can take place through them. Of course, he acknowledges the power relations which are bound up with them and consequently identities. Concluding, identity for Jenkins is the interplay of the three already mentioned orders which always exist simultaneously.

2.1.3. The Self

The Self and one’s identity are two separate concepts but many perceive them as one. This happens chiefly due to the following schema: when the former is being referred to, the latter usually emerges too. The meanings of the word self according to Oxford Living Dictionaries are (amongst others):

- A person's essential being that distinguishes them from others, especially considered as the object of introspection or reflexive action.
- One's particular nature or personality; the qualities that make one individual or unique².

According to Jenkins (2014), the meanings of the word self, parallel the general meanings of similarity, difference, reflexivity and process which are attributed to identity. In addition, he spots the fact that, although the literature on the self is vast, there is a common place in the distinction between the self and the person. In other words, he spots a distinction between the internal and the external. How, then, can we understand others’ selfhood, if it is an amalgam of the self (internal) and the

² <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/self>

person (external)? As quoted by Cohen (1994) “Selfhood rests on the essential privacy of meaning; in what else might it consist?” (142). Jenkins does not entirely disagree with Cohen. He accepts the “privacy” but up to the point where it is not an ontological debate of the existence, nor of the self itself in order to ask what we can know about it. He creates a binary but interrelated relationship among selfhood and personhood and connects the internal, the private and the mind to the former, while the external, the public and the appearance are connected to the latter. Selfhood and personhood for Jenkins are completely and utterly implicated in each other, interdependent and this makes sense if we consider how e.g. external impacts affect our internal emotions.

Using Ryle’s critique of the Cartesian dualism (mental-physical), he argues that the way individuals understand themselves bears no difference from the way they understand others (Ryle 1963, in Jenkins 2014, 57). With the aforesaid argument, he inserts the concepts of observation and retrospection in the self. Ryle, though, views retrospection as impossible until the end of interaction. Hence, introspection [...] is observing oneself rather than observing others (Ibid., 52). Reflexivity, as a result, contains observation and retrospection and is the same, whether one considers themselves or others. For Mead (1934) reflexivity is the principle which connects the internal (mind, self) with the external (society):

It is by means of reflexiveness – the turning-back of the experience upon himself – that the whole social process is thus brought into the experience of the individuals involved in it; it is by such means, which enable the individual to take the attitude of the other toward himself, that the individual is able consciously to adjust himself to that process, and to modify the resultant of that process in any given social act in terms of his adjustment to it. Reflexiveness, then, is the essential condition, within the social process, for the development of mind (134).

Of course one cannot observe themselves in the same way they observe others, but this observation and understanding of others has almost the same amount of “imperfection” as observing and understanding oneself. Although the binary internal (self) - external (others) emerges again, this time appears with a notion of

coexistence and mutual assistance through the process of formation of the selfhood and its connection with others.

Can we overcome the distinction between the self and the person or better, as they are usually referred to, the mind and the body split? Elizabeth Grosz (1994) challenges the mind/body split by affirming that the body and the mind are neither two distinct entities operating in mutual exclusion nor entirely the same entity. Instead they lie somewhere in between, as the metaphor of Mobius strip helps to explain:

Bodies and minds are not two distinct substances or two kinds of attributes of a single substance but somewhere in between these two alternatives. The Mobius strip has the advantage of showing the inflection of mind into body and body into mind, the ways in which, through a kind of twisting or inversion, one side becomes another. This model also provides a way of problematizing and rethinking the relation between the inside and the outside of the subject, its psychical interior and its corporeal exterior, by showing not their fundamental identity or reducibility but the torsion of the one into the other, the passage, vector, or uncontrollable drift of the inside into the outside and the outside into the inside (Ibid., xii).

Where psychical interior and corporeal exterior connect to and wind around each other, that is the exact meeting point where the embodied subjectivity is produced. Lois McNay (1999) seems to share a similar approach to the mind-body debate. She argues that the body is a dynamic, mutable frontier as the point of overlap between the physical, the symbolic and sociological. The body is the threshold through which the subject's lived experience of the world is incorporated and realized (Ibid., 98). As a result, the concept of embodiment enables feminists to talk about the body without reducing women or girls to their bodies, avoiding charges of biological determinism that have plagued feminist discussions of the corporeal self for decades (Pomerantz 2007, 17).

2.2. The post-structural female subjectivity and agency.

According to Lacan and Irigaray, the feminine is never a mark of the subject and could not be an “attribute” of the gender; it is rather the signification of lack. In addition, the former argues that the ontological specification of being, is determined by a language structured by the paternal law and its mechanisms of differentiation. A thing takes on the characterization of “being” and becomes mobilized by that ontological gesture only within a structure of signification that, as the Symbolic, is itself pre – ontological. As a result, there’s no access to “being”, without prior inquiry into the being of Phallus, because the Phallus is the signification of the Law - a law which takes sexual difference as a presupposition of its own intelligibility. The Phallus is the signifier. The Other (in our case the girls) is the object of a (heterosexualized) masculine desire and the site of masculine self – elaboration. Also, Lacan argues that having the Phallus is the position of men but being the Phallus is the position of women because for the Phallus to be the Phallus, the other is presupposed. This analogy reminds us the failed Hegelian reciprocity between the master and the slave, in which there is an unexpected interdependency of the master upon the slave in order for the former to establish his identity and what he really is. It also seems to be of great inspiration for Butler’s theory. If we stay inside this binary disjunction of “being” and “having” the Phallus, we will not stop returning to the inevitable “lack” and “loss” (Butler, 1997).

The self is always partial and unfinished, contingently forming and reforming in relation to others, social structures and our own multiple and contradictory subject positionings. The poststructural subject is a linguistic category, place – holder, a structure in formation and it may be constituted through language. Yet, it is not wholly determined by it (Ibid., 10). While discourse leads us into subjecthood (naming, classifying us as a certain kind of person), it simultaneously offers us attachment to the social world through the subject positions or social roles that we occupy as a result of our discursive constitution. Being able to “speak” as a subject does not, however, enable us to escape our discursive positioning, nor does it mean we precede discourse as a “doer behind the deed” (Butler 1993). Instead, the suturing of discourse and subjectivity produce a fluid and multiple subject who is

both able and constrained by discourse at the same time. In calling attention to this fluidity, Butler (1990, 1993) refers to identity as performative. Subject positions are produced in language. Is this language capable of “injuring” us if we are not linguistic beings? Is this vulnerable position towards language a result of constitution within it? According to Butler (1995):

Discourse is not merely spoken words, but a notion of signification which concerns not merely how it is that certain signifiers come to mean what they mean, but how certain discursive forms articulate objects and subjects in their intelligibility. In this sense “discourse” is not used in the ordinary sense [...] Discourse does not merely represent or report on pre-given practices and relations, but it enters into their articulation and is, in that sense, productive (138).

In other words, language is what we do and also what we affect, “the act and its consequences” (Ibid, 8).

In addition, Butler (1990) in the concluding chapter of *Gender Trouble*, returns to the question of agency, identity and politics. More specifically, she argues:

The question of locating “agency” is usually associated with the viability of the “subject,” where the subject is understood to have, some stable existence prior to the cultural field that it negotiated. Or, if the subject is culturally constructed, it is nevertheless vested with an agency, usually figured as the capacity for reflexive mediation, that remains intact regardless of its cultural embeddedness. On such a model, “culture” and “discourse” mire the subject, but do not constitute that subject. This move to qualify and to enmesh the preexisting subject has appeared necessary to establish a point of agency that is not fully determined by that culture and discourse. And yet, this kind of reasoning falsely presumes (a) agency can only be established through recourse to a pre-discursive “I,” even if that “I” is found in the midst of a discursive convergence, and (b) that to be constituted by discourse is to be determined by discourse, where determination forecloses the possibility of agency (Ibid., 142-3)

Benhabib (1995), argues that “a speech-act theory of performative gender constitution cannot give us a sufficiently thick and rich account of gender formation that would also explain the capacities of human agents for self-determination (Ibid., 110). Moreover, even though she essentially agrees with Butler’s performativity theory, she emphasizes that it does not distinguish the “gender-constitution” from “identity-constitution” as clearly as the former would like. In order to clarify some of the doubts she expressed on some “emancipator implications of certain narratological strategies” (Ibid., 112), Benhabib uses the debate between Linda Gordon and Joan Scott. Through this debate Benhabib problematizes the construction of female agency which is juxtaposed to the aforesaid authors. On the one hand, Scott emphasizes gender as ‘difference’, marked by the otherness and absolute silencing of women (Ibid., 114). On the other hand, Gordon uses gender to describe a power system in which women are subordinated through relations that are contradictory, ambiguous, and conflictual -a subordination maintained against resistance, in which women have by no means always defined themselves as other, in which women face and take choices and action despite constriction (Ibid.). These are just two of the conceptions on gender which according to Benhabib do not seem sufficient enough. Benhabib accepts undoubtedly the conception that women are the Other and visits Cornell’s argumentation on the spaces within which are articulated the legal claims of these Others in order to understand how in this type of discursive women are constituted as subjects. Cornell understands equivalent rights as equality of capability and well-being, where capability reflects a *person’s freedom* to choose between different ways of living [...]“the very devalorization of the feminine and the definition of heterosexuality as ‘normal’ makes it difficult for women and homosexuals to participate in their community without the *shame* of their ‘sex’ or their sexuality”; “the division between normal, heterosexual and abnormal, homosexual ‘sexual identity’ *as long as that identity is based on consent between adults-is a cultural construction*” (Ibid., 116). Benhabib argues that justice is not only the nonviolence towards the Other as Cornell supports, but also the respect of the Other as well, without, though, romanticizing the Other as Butler seemingly does. Last but not least, for Benhabib the agentic female subject is not necessarily formed through carrying out “the emancipatory aspirations of women” (Ibid., 29),

because in this way there is a “death of the autonomous, self-reflective subject, capable of acting on principle” (Ibid.). In contrast to Butler, who argues that agency translates to the formulation of the subject, Benhabib finds possibility of agency through the dissolution of a stable self.

2.3. Recognition

Honneth is another figure, considerably influenced by Hegel’s dialectic. He analyzes the importance of mutual recognition for the social life in his book “The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts” (1996). He uses Hegel’s argument, that subjectivity is constituted through mutual recognition in combination with Mead’s more empirical work on this argument and acknowledges three forms of recognition: love recognition, legal recognition and recognition through solidarity.

2.3.1. Love recognition

The first form refers to the parent-child relationship and to the adult love and friendship relationships in general. For Hegel, love represents the first stage of reciprocal recognition, because in it subjects mutually confirm each other with regard to the concrete nature of their needs and thereby recognize each other as needy creatures (Honneth 1996, 95). Honneth connects these kind of relationships with “basic self confidence”. To better understand this connection, he draws on the psychoanalytic work of Donald Winnicott concerning the object-relations theory of early childhood experience. Honneth decides to use the object-relation theory, due to its ability to convincingly portray love as a particular form of recognition only owing to the specific way in which it makes the success of affectional bonds dependent on the capacity, acquired in early childhood, to strike a balance between symbiosis and self-assertion (Ibid., 98).

Human life begins with a “phase of undifferentiated intersubjectivity” an “undifferentiated oneness” between the mother and the child called symbiosis. This is the phase of absolute dependency where both participants are entirely dependent

on each other for the satisfaction of their needs and are incapable of individually demarcating themselves from each other (Ibid., 99). On the one hand, mothers by identifying themselves with their baby during pregnancy, they adapt their emotional attention to their children. On the other hand, the infants are completely dependent for the fulfillment of their needs on their mothers. Gradually, the mother begins to “emancipate” by expanding the social field of her attention. This de-adaptation of the mother is accompanied by the child’s capacity for cognitive differentiation between self and environment (Ibid., 100). Consequently, the infant leaves behind the phase of “absolute dependence” and enters the one of “relative dependence”. In order for the child to cope with this transition, it uses two psychological mechanisms, the “destruction” and the “transitional phenomena”. The first mechanism translates into aggressiveness towards the mother who is perceived as independent and as a way to test her limits. In parallelism to Hegel’s dialectic, the child tries to destroy the mother in order to be itself independent. Furthermore, the second mechanism emerges in the child’s effort to accomplish balance between independence and symbiosis. As a result, the child develops relationships of love and aggression with objects. According to Winnicott, the transitional objects are used as a substitute of the mother. The child is capable of being 'lost' in interaction with the chosen object only if, after the separation from the symbiotically experienced 'mother', the child can generate enough trust in the continuity of her care that he or she is able, under the protection of a felt intersubjectivity, to be alone in a carefree manner (Ibid., 103). Concluding, Honneth argues that the initial desire of merging between mother and child can only become a feeling of love once, in the unavoidable experience of separation, it has been disappointed in such a way that it henceforth includes the recognition of the other as an independent person (Ibid., 105).

2.3.2. Legal recognition

The second type of recognition has nothing to do with the first one. The only reason they can be understood as two types of one and the same pattern of

socialization, is that the logic of each cannot be adequately explained without appeal to the same mechanism of reciprocal recognition (Ibid., 108). According to Hegel and Mead, when one understands himself and the “generalized other” as bearers of rights, only then the former understands himself as a “legal person”. In contrast to love recognition, the legal can emerge only in the course of a historical development (Ibid.).

In addition, for Mead the legal recognition translates in the situation where the self and the other respect each other as legal persons only because they follow the social norms on which rights and duties are based, to be distributed in the society. Also, this kind of recognition can only take place in traditional societies. In contrast, for Hegel the legal person is situated in modernity and can only emerge once it becomes dependent on the premises of a universalist conception of morality (Ibid., 109) where the interests of every person are equally respected. Furthermore, legal subjects in this situation recognize each other as person capable of autonomously making reasonable decisions about moral norms (Ibid., 110).

2.3.3. Social esteem, recognition through solidarity

Although Hegel and Mead express different understandings on legal recognition, they are in agreement on its specific function: in order to be able to acquire an undistorted relation-to-self, human subjects always need a form of social esteem that allows them to relate positively to their concrete traits and abilities (Ibid., 121). On the one hand, for Hegel this translates into “ethical” life. On the other hand, in Mead it is found as the institutionally concrete model of the cooperative division of labour (Ibid.). In contrast to the previous form of recognition where there is recognition of the subject itself, in this form we have recognition of the particular qualities that characterize people in their personal difference (Ibid., 122). Legal recognition has as a medium the modern law, which expresses the universal features of human subjects. On the contrary, this type of recognition uses a symbolical framework of orientation, in which ethical values and goals together, form the cultural self-understanding of a society (Ibid.). The appraisal of particular

characteristics creates a “value-system” and provides criteria by which social esteem is judged. According to Honneth:

Within the status group, subjects can esteem each other as persons who, because of their common social position, share traits and abilities that are accorded a certain level of social standing on the society's scale of values. Between status groups, one finds relations of hierarchically graded esteem, which allow members of society to esteem subjects outside their estate for traits and abilities that, to a culturally predetermined degree, contribute to the realization of collectively shared values (Ibid., 123).

Furthermore, after framing these three forms of recognition, Honneth analyzes three forms of non-recognition accordingly.

2.3.4. Forms of non-recognition

Honneth calls the refusal of recognition “disrespect”. More specifically, with the help of Hegel and Mead, disrespect, refers to the specific vulnerability of humans resulting from the internal interdependence of individualization and recognition (Ibid., 131). Every sense of the self one holds for themselves depends on the “back up” of others. If the others “disrespect” this “back-up”, the identity of the former is threatened by collapse. In addition, Honneth divides disrespect in three groups of experiences, as he calls them. What distinguishes these groups lies in the way they affect the individual’s “relation-to-self”.

The first group has to do with the non-condescended physical maltreatment of a person. Honneth argues that the latter humiliates a person to a worse point of destruction than the other forms because the person’s pain is not merely physical but a combination of it with a feeling of being defenseless towards another subject “to the point of feeling that one has been deprived of reality”(Ibid., 132). Physical abuse is a form of disrespect which does lasting damage to a person’s basic confidence (Ibid).

In contrast to the first group, the remaining two are constituted in a process of historical change. The second form of disrespect refers to the experiences which affect a person's "moral self-respect". In this kind of experiences, an individual is deprived of, excluded from, its rights and as a result feels ostracized and not capable of doing moral judgments. On top of that, the individual, having not been recognized as a bearer of rights, loses its self-respect and can no longer relate to oneself as a legally equal interaction partner with all fellow humans (Ibid., 134).

Finally, the third form of disrespect refers to individuals and groups as well. As Honneth already argued, there is a value-system which defines the status of individuals within a society. If this system is constituted in a way by which it demotes the beliefs and ways of life of an individual or a group, consequently it does not give the opportunity to this individual or group "to attribute social value to their own abilities" (Ibid.). As a result, the individual or group are not socially accepted and are also deprived of an opportunity of self-realization through/in the aforementioned value-system.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1. The research's purpose

My research aims to examine the identity constitution of girls' through style within the school context. More specifically, I aspire to understand and analyze the way style helps girls to not only construct their identities and subjectivities through it but also the way it makes them agentic. Girls are usually the ones who are stigmatized or criticized because of their image. They are usually perceived as victims of capitalism, passive, objects of another's gaze, sexualized and almost always in a binary relationship with the "masculine" where they are the Other. I want to deconstruct this binary masculine-feminine and show how girls in my study are indeed agentic.

I choose to examine how girls' style develops in the school system because I want to see if the former is a factor towards "groupification" and/or

marginalization in this specific context. In addition, I want to look into the ways the school system itself restricts girls' bodies and the reasons around them. Empirical research around this subject is nonexistent in Greece. Finally, this research's end is to present girls' realities through their voices and experiences in order to show how something which seems of little importance it is crucial after all.

3.2. Method of research

As DeVault and Gross (2012) argue "the simple thing to say is that interview research is research conducted by talking with people. It involves gathering informants' reports and stories, learning about their perspectives, and giving them voice in academic and other public discourse. Talking with others is a fundamental human activity, and research talk simply systematizes that activity" (2). However attractive the previous opinion may seem, it neglects the factor of the "complexity of human talk" and "the dynamics of power involved in any empirical research". In order to avoid the aforementioned problems I chose to follow the qualitative method of feminist interview research.

The feminist scope is vast so I define feminism broadly as a set of practices and perspectives that affirms differences among women and promotes women's interests, health, and safety, locally and abroad. It is a diverse and differentiated social and scholarly movement, but, for most adherents, it includes the aspiration to live and act in ways that embody feminist thought and promote justice and the well-being of all women (Ibid., 3-4). The semistructured interviewing is favored by numerous feminist researchers and it is the tool of interviewing I chose to use as well. The semidstructured interview includes predetermined questions which gives the interviewer the ability to discard some questions, modify others or even add new according to the given interviewee's needs (Robson, 2007). For the purposes of this research I use both open and close (yes/no) ended questions. The former allows the interviewee to express freely their opinion and the latter helps me to lead the conversation where I aspire to do, especially when the interviewee is off subject.

In this “feminist context” the researchers need to recognize that experience recounted is always emergent in the moment, that telling requires a listener and that the listening shapes the account as well as the telling. Furthermore, both telling and listening are shaped by discursive histories (so that fragments of many other tellings are carried in any embodied conversation) (Ibid., p: 10). The majority of feminist research is conducted by women researchers with women interviewees. There is a commitment from the side of the researchers to find common ground with the participants which is helpful in a way of bringing differences into view because it is often instantly created an assumption of an automatically direct and comfortable relationship between the feminist researcher and her woman interviewee (Ibid., p: 11). From my personal experience through this research I am in agreement with the aforesaid argument, as the girls I interviewed felt comfortable and “open for talk” with me. Furthermore, in order to examine in depth the performativity of girls’ identity within school I also used the method of participant observation. The combination of these two methods helped me validate the information provided by the participants and view the researched material through various angles.

I attended classes and sometimes participated just like a casual student in them during the class for 2 two weeks. The reason it was for such a short time is because I had to wait almost the entire school year for the legal permission for research within the school’s premises from the Greek Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs. At first, I tried to overcome it by getting the teachers’ and parents’/legal guardians’ council permission. Unfortunately, they requested for Ministry’s permission which came into my hands by the time school was one week away from Easter holidays i.e. the first week of participant observation. During this week I distributed to all the junior year girls a consent paper which had to be signed by a parent or a legal guardian in order for them to be able to participate to the interview-part of the research. The presence and the research of mine were almost compromised by a teacher who did not want me within the school although I obtained all the legal documents and parents’-guardians’ permission for the participation of the girls in the research. She forbade me to attend her classes and organized a teachers’ council in order to vote for my presence and research in this

school. Fortunately, the majority of the teachers did not have a problem with the conduction of my research. Immediately after the Easter holidays i.e. the second week of observation, I conducted the interviews in the school's library. It was important to do everything quickly because the Panhellenic exams were starting the following week which meant that I could not conduct any research then.

Finally, the selection of the school was not made randomly. At the beginning I wanted to do a comparative research between a private and a public school. In the region of Argypolis I had the opportunity to easily get the permission of a private school's headmaster to conduct my research in his school. Nevertheless, the permission from the Ministry for the research in the public school was delayed. Consequently I could not do it at the same time with the private school's one the lack of time at the given moment. As a result I chose the public school in order to bring the research back to the majority's Greek reality.

3.3. The participants

At the moment of research, in the junior year were enrolled 42 girls, split in 3 classes. I got back the parents'/guardians' permission for the participation document signed from only 15. 8 of them were from B1, 2 from the B2 and 5 from the B3. I chose randomly 7 girls to participate in my research and 1 on purpose because from my standpoint her style was utterly differentiated from the others. The interviews took place on the April of 2017 and they were from 40-60 minutes. Before the interview the girls were informed about the research in general and were affirmed by anonymity. All the interviews took place within the school's premises.

3.4. The data analysis

All the interviews were transcribed and afterwards analyzed in three main themes: the constitution of personal identity through style; the constitution of group identity through style; the recognition that girls achieve through style and consequently the subject positions which emerge through it. In a qualitative research, you have to analyze the data in order to answer your research question

(Creswell 2012, 286). As Creswell argues the analysis contains the detailed review of the data as well as the development of themes or general categories driven through them (ibid., 287). The describing and the developing themes, as he names them, are the ones which give answer to the researcher's questions. In my analysis I described the opinions and the incidents the girls referred to in vivid details and utterly "picturesque". In addition, besides the describing, the use of "developing themes" was helpful to analyze my data. The developing themes aid me to find similar codes and gathered them together such as labels, "groupification", marginalization etc. Consequently, bigger and more inclusive categories emerged containing "regular themes", "unexpected themes", "main and secondary themes" as Creswell names them. For example the main theme was style and the secondary was the constitution of girl-student's subjectivity through it. Moreover, by interviewing 8 girls on the same subject I was able to analyze the themes through multiple perspectives. When "saturation" came into a theme or to all of them, I moved to the next one or stopped the interviewing accordingly. Finally, I "layered" the analysis of the themes which were derived from the data. The latter means that I "present the data through the use of horizontal interconnected themes. The secondary themes fall under the main themes and the main themes are contained into more general categories" (ibid., 291).

Chapter 4: The data analysis

In the following chapters I will try to analyze the findings that came to surface from the interviews in three main themes. The first one refers to the constitution (or not) of individual identity through style; the second one to the constitution (or not) of group identity through style; and the third one to the recognition, with which subject positions emerge, that girls achieve (or not) through style.

4.1. Identity constitution through style

I believe it (style) is one of the most amazing things that could ever exist in a person's life because through it you can "cultivate" yourself so outside as inside, experiment. Experiment by changing your style until you'll understand how you can specify it. I did it that way. I passed through many phases until I end up to what I am now. It's like saying your own story about yourself. When the other person looks at you, you catch their eye and you just say your story. At the best case where you are different you intrigue them even more. Although, this doesn't happen to everyone, I want to believe that it's happening!

A.R. "rock" style

Just like A.R., girls unanimously believe that style is a way by which a person expresses their character. Style for A.R. is a story-telling and a way of diving into yourself in order to understand yourself. In an almost similar way N.K. argues the following:

Generally I believe that style is the first impression you make to someone, obviously, and it is without speaking, without even having the chance to say something the thing that expresses yourself; namely, the basic parts of your character and not only! For example, someone could say that when you see another person who wears dark colors the latter is sad, but it's not only that. It may say many things about your psychology and your character and about everything I believe!

Both girls agree that style is a medium of saying something to another person without even using words. Interestingly, N.K. talks about parts of someone's character which come to surface through style, whereas A.R. does not specify it by implying that character and style are not only interrelated but also identical. A.R.'s opinion is backed up by E.K. as well who argues that "in an ideal world, I believe it is the personal expression and what someone feels inside to 'take it out' through clothing [...]". On the other hand, similarly to N.K. stands the view of E.S.:

For me I believe that style is something that expresses you and you do it in order to feel good with yourself. It expresses some of your personality's aspects and

sometimes how you behave. It expresses too many things. It is of course a part by which you show to the other person whatever you are, but also that you're not defined by it.

Even if girls understand style in a quite same way, only half of them refer to style as a way of dressing their body i.e. clothes, makeup and hairstyling.

L.V.: *What would you say that style means for you?*

E.C.: *I would say that it's, generally, the way we behave but also the way we dress. That.*

The same question answered by E.F. as following:

Maybe style has to do both with the way we dress and our hairstyle. Even with our behavior occasionally. Everyone, is supposed, to have their own. They dress specifically and have an outside character besides the inside one and they present it outside and many times people can draw conclusions from it.

When the interviewees were asked about the meaning of style they referred to feelings, mood, personality and almost everything and anything that has to do with the "inside", as well. As a consequence, the questions that followed had to do with whether or not they find a connection between the inside and the outside and given the fact that the "inside" is not something stable whether they believe style is changeable accordingly.

4.2. Inside-outside connection/interrelation

E.K.: *[...] let me give you an example. The girl who does my nails, if you see her, if I saw her on the street, I believe that it's a subject of prejudice, her character has nothing to do with the way she dresses. She's covered with tattoos and all that and it's nice but if you see her, she's very serious, down to earth... Do you understand?*

L.V.: *On the one hand there is a connection and on the other hand there is not?*

E.K.: *Yeah! That! When I see a girl with pink hair and many piercings and tattoos I say that she's yolo, whereas she is not that style, she is not like that.*

Even though, E.K. spots an interrelation between the inside and the outside, when it comes to a person who has an outside of the “normative style” and she associates with them she does not adopt the former point of view.

On the other hand, the rest of the girls clearly state that there is indeed an interrelation between the inside and the outside, without this interrelation defining neither the former nor the latter.

E.F.: *It is not for fact. It just that people use to connect them (the inside with the outside). It doesn't mean that appearance and inner world are absolutely connected.*

L.V.: *You previously mentioned that it (style) is our character which comes out. So, is there a connection after all?*

E.F.: *Yes, but not in the absolute sense of it.*

N.K. follows the same line of argumentation by saying that:

Let me give you an example. Pink! Thank God that now I see many boys who do not have a complex with that. Contrary, I see others that are going crazy and say “there's no way I'm wearing pink”. What if you wear pink? Does gender have color? Does anyone say that pink is for girls and blue is for boys? Are they separated in colors? Wait a moment! Are we going to call the other person gay because he wears pink! It has nothing to do with that! Whether he is or he is not. At least you cannot know for sure. It is a bit complicated. Yes, you can say that it shows the personality but not 100% of it.

L.V.: *Probably a part of it if I understand it correctly? Is there a connection between inside and outside?*

N.K.: *Yes, yes, yes.*

In contrast to the aforesaid opinions, A.T. and E.C. express a sure and firm affirmative answer by saying “of course there is a connection!” and “Yes, there is for

sure! There is”, without analyzing it further. In addition, A.R. is even more explicit with her answer on the same subject by arguing that “of course there are these people who aren’t what they appear to be but I believe that nowadays these cases are extremely rare”.

4.3. Fluidity and restrictions.

The process of understanding how identity is constituted inside the school premises led me to believe that it is of utter importance to know if there are any restrictions by “unwritten rules” and/or by prohibitions, usually oral, by the teaching staff, and if there is an “acceptable” – “not-acceptable” standard. In order to explore the aforementioned topic I tried to understand, first and foremost, if girls’ view their identity as fluid or stable by changing or not their style accordingly.

4.3.1. Fluidity (or not)

Opinions on the fluidity or not of identity in accordance with the changeability of style, are more or less the same. Girls find style as not stable. More specifically, N.K. who describes it as a “game” and an “activity”, argues:

N.K.: Yes it changes. For many people remains stable for many years or it might change at some point. Some others change it daily because they think it is a game, “one day I’ll be like this and the other like that”. It depends on the circumstances namely what you have to do during the day. For example, an office job demands something more “serious” and another one something more casual. Let’s say you’re a coach, so you’re dressed casual but even in that case you can adjust it depending on your mood.

L.V.: Do you change it depending on what you have to do during the day? For example you start like this in the morning and end up like that in the afternoon? How you handle this?

N.K.: Usually yes. At school, for example, I wear something casual, cozy, at home something even cozier and if there is a night out you take more care of it because it is

the socializing you will do and consequently it is demanded a more serious appearance. You're not at school anymore [...] I'm going for a night out so I have to be more "presentable".

Similarly to N.K. girls, almost unanimously, view style as something that changes. Even though girls share the previously mentioned point of view, they add different variables in the reason why this change occurs. N.K. attributes the changeability of style to the change of mood, place and circumstances. For E.S. it depends on the mood as well, but also on the way others look at it. She argues that "if someone looks at it in a strange way or many look at it in a strange way and I realize that I don't like it, I will change it." The latter is a factor of changeability for A.T. too, who argues that "Yes, it changes for sure. But ... I don't believe I can truly be whatever I want. Even though I'm a person who doesn't care what another person might say about me, it is obvious that you take it seriously." E.S. and A.T. add the "other people" factor in the reasons why style may change. E.K. ascribes changeability of style to the place by saying that "In school, for example, I will dress completely different than if I went somewhere with my mother, or for a family night out or something like that." Furthermore, E.C. believes that "[...] it has to do with the place but with fashion, too [...]". In addition, A.R. attributes her modification of style to her mother's illness and to her will of being as discreet as she could be:

A.R.: Everything started when my mother got cancer and there were times I was crying a lot and that was the point when I started wearing black because it was a very intense period. [...] back then I was "approaching" the gothic style, everyone was saying it to me and then I started to specify it. I'm wearing black but I'm a happy person [...]

L.V.: You said it is because of your mother's illness. Did you do it because you were feeling badly and this came out in this way, for example being "unnoticed" by wearing black clothes?

A.R.: Definitely I wanted something like that because when I was going to school I didn't talk to anyone and yes in other words I wanted to be "unnoticed", but now

essentially I want to be noticed, not in a way of being pretentious, just by looking at me and saying “wow! She’s different!”

In addition, A.R. believes that style at some point, becomes more stable and is relative to age: “[...] I believe that from a young age it (style) changes and as you grow up it becomes more stable”.

Moreover, N.K. observes that she alters her style depending on which group she associates with:

[...] I saw a big difference in a group I started to associate with in high school, who don’t dress in style, they have style. It made an impression to me the fact that they didn’t use too much make-up and they didn’t care about it (!) and I was coming from a group which wanted to, watched videos on YouTube (on how to do their make-up). Personally, I really like make-up. So, I saw a difference and felt like a “child”. We were totally chill and whenever we went out we didn’t care about a thing. On the other side (in the other group), it was all about doing our make-up, dressing up, not by feeling obligated to but because you felt like it in the group. Thus, I believe many times that style is affected by that as well.

This “alteration” of style is not mentioned by any other interviewee. Alteration of style for E.D. besides the mood changes, occurs when she watches a movie, likes a style in it and decides to adopt it “but this will not happen for a long time, meaning that I get bored easily enough”. Finally, only E.F. says that her style does not vary at all, whether she is or not inside the school’s premises but generally it is something which changes.

4.3.2. Agency

It seems that style for the girls is a way of discourse, it is active like feelings and emotions as well as changeable and for many it is not stable but fluid, flexible. They use it to negotiate how others view them and even in cases where they do not want to “stand out” within school and feel like a part of the “mass”, they use it to show that they wish to show - as A.T. does- who formerly did not own a low profile style and realized that “I do not have to impress somebody in school. If there were a boy I

liked I would totally dress up and use more make-up [...]”. Similarly, N.K. who seems like having a more stable image within school, talks about the “big change of the weekend”, the “highlight of the week”. I asked her if there is a change in her style inside and outside of the school and she argued that:

There is change, yes [...] The big change happens during the weekend that I’ll go out. Then the bam happens! [...] it is the different of the week. The highlight I could say. It is the time where you do THE appearance and shoot that photo and it goes really on!

Although, N.K. self-defined herself as owning a “cool” and more athletic style, she does enact subtle modifications to it by having long painted nails because she likes to “treat herself” as she told me during a class we attended sitting side by side.

Furthermore, E.F. who says that she does not feel comfortable wearing tight clothes and following fashion is not something that she does neither, wears “always ‘close’ clothes” (i.e. not with long cleavage nor tank tops). Nevertheless, she makes herself feel comfortable through her choices of clothing and wants others not to see her as a “passive being” or that they can “manipulate” her, but appear as “feisty”. Outside of the school, E.F. attends dance lessons. During the lesson she says that she feels “free” and that she could “stay only with the sport’s bra on”.

E.D. defines herself “whatever”, “random”. When I tried to define it as something else in order to check if she might appeal to it, she persisted on the “whatever” style with pride. She argues that she has something “unconventional” and wants to stand out through her resistance to fashion which as she says “for me fashion doesn’t exist”. Just like E.D., A.R. wants to stand out too. She has a “rock” style and says that she does not care what anyone would say about her. She embraces her “difference” and argues that “I dress differently than other girls”, “At the best case where you are different you intrigue them even more. Although, this doesn’t happen to everyone, I want to believe that it’s happening!”. In addition, during an incident in the subway where a man insulted her style (it will be described more extensively in chapter 4.5.4), she passionately defended it and did not sit idle.

With the same passion E.S., self-defined as “simple”, defends herself while being aggressively criticized about her weight by arguing “that’s the way I am whether you like it or not! I can’t do anything about so accept me as I am or not, I don’t even care”.

In every aforementioned case, style is a way of discourse, or better yet, a discourse itself. According to Butler (1995), subject positions are produced through discourse which is “not merely spoken words, but a notion of signification which concerns not merely how it is that certain signifiers come to mean what they mean, but how certain discursive forms articulate objects and subjects in their intelligibility” (138). All of the girls use style to feel comfortable with themselves, to transmit messages to other people, to feel unique. In other words, style is translated as “the act and its consequences” (Ibid., 8) in a parallelism with Butler’s notion of what language is. Consequently, girls’ subjectivities are constituted in language, making them agentic and certainly not passive as many would believe.

4.3.3. Restrictions, “acceptable” – “not-acceptable”.

When girls are asked about whether or not they believe there are restrictions within the school they are divided. On the one hand, there are those who believe that they feel free to express themselves as they please. On the other hand, there are those who feel a bit inhibited due to various reasons. Nevertheless, almost all girls, even the former, argued that the “acceptable” – “not-acceptable standard” is obvious.

More specifically, when I asked N.K. whether or not there is freedom concerning the choice of clothes, make-up, hairstyling etc. inside the school, she answered:

N.K.: *No. There’s no freedom unfortunately.*

L.V.: *Why?*

N.K.: *Because it is judged. And ok, us kids, in the age we are, we're a bit cruel sometimes. Because you create your character with this strict "oh god! How you came here looking like that!"*

N.K. as many other girls, believes that restrictions are not only "unwritten rules" but also emerge from other students' opinions. In addition, E.S. who embraces the same line of thinking, believes the following:

I could say that there isn't a total freedom, because you have at the back of your mind, what others may like. It depends on the person. One may think of it more than someone else. But there is no a total freedom because they think about it. They think that the majority won't like this earring so I may as well not wear it. There are also those who will say this, they will think it but they will say "ok I don't care I'm going to wear it! I'm wearing it for me not for the others!"

For E.S. total freedom is a utopia. Even if you do as you please and wear whatever you like, you will pass through the process of thinking what others may say about your style. Although she argues that the opinion of her co-students plays an important role in the constitution of a style in the majority of the girls, she finds the professors' judgment of having much more "power" than a student's. E.F. refers to professors as well by saying that from their point of view "the child must be a bit prissy in school, their clothing not extreme as well as their behavior". On the contrary, E.K. believes that professors "don't occupy themselves with that". Nevertheless, she argues that there are rules which are modified through time and people follow them and try to adjust according to them. E.C. who also believes that there are "rules" which restrict the way they dress in school, while she holds the belief stretches that these rules restrict only girls.

On the other side, there are the girls who do not believe that there are rules which indicate what they should do. For example A.R. argues:

Personally I have the freedom because it's a public school and no one sets limits, nor anyone ever told me anything about my piercing and my ripped jeans and my t-shirts which may have curse words on them or something like that or bands. So, I

don't think there is any restriction. I dress as I would have dressed to go out besides the make-up.

E.D. is even more explicitly affirmative than A.R. by saying that there is definitely freedom in the way she wants to appear in school. A.T. espouses the same point of view as the aforementioned girls. She adds only one restriction which took place during the previous school years that had to do with the forbiddance of shorts, for girls, during the summer school days.

More than half of the interviewees mention the same incident on their last year of lower secondary education in which they were forbidden by the headmaster/headmistress to wear shorts and in some cases they would have been expelled if this were the case.

When I asked girls about whether or not there is the acceptable – not-acceptable standard in their school, the majority of them replied affirmatively but they did not give the same explanation. A.R. for example said:

I believe that it (the acceptable) is what the Kardashians brought, that you definitely need to have curves. All the girls who try diets they do them to lose weight from the belly but be more "chubby" on the hips and legs at the same time. I believe this prevailed at my school because many try to imitate it or the fact that the make-up and contouring have become very mainstream. I do it as well but I don't do it always, I adjust it. Or generally that septum is the most mainstream piercing because it can be hidden. I do it because I want to fit it in my style but others do it just to have a piercing. Consequently, this is what I define as mainstream. I do something not because I like it but because I don't want to be "out".

A.R. by talking about what acceptable is for her, touches many important points. Firstly, she defines acceptable as the mainstream trend, namely, what prevails in the contemporary society. In the microcosm of the school, she observes as the popular trend the Kardashian style. Secondly, she presents style as bricolage by mentioning that she uses the same method of make-up as someone who belongs in the Kardashian style but she adjusts it to her style. In the same way, she has the most

mainstream piercing but modified in a different sense in order to fit it in her style. Finally, she argues that if someone does not do as much as mainstream girls do, even if they do not like it, they will be marginalized.

When it comes to the other interviewees they mainly define the not – acceptable which for them is something that is “provocative”. N.K. believes that the “provocative” will be definitely gossiped and the reason the acceptable – not-acceptable standard exists, is because:

They say that the school is a miniature of the society and this is where you create foundations of how you will be in the future, so you have to behave accordingly. Because you won't go out walking with, how can I say that now... with a super mini skirt! You have to be descent in school and plus they say that you have to respect your teachers and not appear however you want to.

[...]

L.V.: *what connection may have respect with that?*

N.K.: *I don't know. I believe that these are just clichés of the Greek society that have remained [...]*

In addition, even though N.K. acknowledges that something is a cliché, she nevertheless seems to believe that the “provocative” is not acceptable within the school area. This “cliché” of “provocative” style along with a style which uses piercing and black clothing seems to approximately constitute the “profile” of a not-acceptable girl. E.C. supports this line of thinking by arguing that the acceptable is something that is not provocative. Similarly does E.D. who, when asked about what she would define as acceptable and justify it, said “the girls who dress more decent”, “in order to be more...girls! Isn't that what they say? Isn't this the label? To be more decent?”. A.T. and E.F. find as not-acceptable someone who “has piercings, wears black clothes, like emo” and “wears a top very very ‘open’ or being covered in tattoos”. E.F. in contrast to A.T., believes that this kind of style would bother the adults and the teachers, whereas the latter speaks from her standpoint. Finally, E.S. and E.K. do not provide a specific definition of what acceptable and not-acceptable is

within school. More specifically, E.K. “I don’t believe that it is officially specified. This is nice, isn’t it? You can just tell from others’ behavior and how they treat you”. Additionally, E.S. argues:

Acceptable I believe is something that... it is not something specific, but if the person ‘supports’ her style, very well (!)... It is as I said before when it radiates self-confidence, it will always be acceptable. I believe that! It is not a rule because there are other people, but I believe they are a small percentage. It is not something specific. Punks could be acceptable or those who are simpler may not be acceptable. I believe it depends on how you support your style. If you support it well, it will be acceptable and if you are self-confident. I believe that.

The latter, even though she argues that it is not something specific continuously, she translates acceptable as self-confident and not-acceptable as what acceptable is not.

4.4. Groupification-marginalization

According to Jenkins (2014) identity is constructed mainly as someone being “same with” and/or “different from” someone else. In the following chapter I will analyze how girls use or do not these notions, in order to form groups and/or marginalize other girls and/or groups accordingly.

4.4.1. Style as a constitutive group factor and labelization through it.

“Yes for sure! Firstly, style is an excuse to start a conversation which will lead to a second one and eventually to a friendship. So, style for sure doesn’t categorize you but includes you in social groups. Especially if you are in a place let’s say for example the gym, the other can’t come wearing jeans. You would say “where are you going buddy?” (laughs). It leaves you with a strange impression, while the others with sportswear are a group. In our school for example if a girl comes with high heels, ok everyone can do as they please, but there will be comments on it [...] So whether you differentiate or you are at the same style with the group and be included [...].

N.K. “cool” style

According to this opinion style is an important factor not only to socialize and form a group with other girls who have the same style as you, but also to be included at all. On the one hand, throughout the whole interview with N.K. she argued that everyone should do as they please, but on the other hand she points out that if someone acts out of the “norm”, they will be criticized for that and ostracized even though she has not and will not do this to anyone. N.K.’s opinion is embraced by almost all of the girls. Namely, E.S. argues that it is in the human nature to be accepted by others and there are people who, in order to achieve that, use their style. Her opinion is in complete agreement with N.K.’s about the importance of style as a constitutive group factor.

I believe it (style) plays an important role (in groupification) because for example I may not stick with a group which is more punk because our music taste isn’t the same and I believe our behavior won’t be the same as well.

In accordance to the previously mentioned aspects lies the one of E.K.:

“It (style) could be a factor in order to create one (group) but it could be totally irrelevant as well. More specifically, someone can rely on the fact that we have the same style, which is different than the others, so we can start associating and talk about our common interests in style, so let’s start a group. But I don’t believe that Goths are socializing only amongst them but may be with a hipster too.”

In contrast to N.K. and E.C., E.K. expresses a doubt on how important style may be for the creation of a group. Her opinion is supported by A.T. who says that she does not think that there are “groupifications” according to style. On the other hand, though, she points out that “if you see a group you won’t see someone who is very different from the others and if they are, they must fit together really well”.

A.R. expresses a more radical view on how in-school relationships are formed:

Because school is the biggest group a person our age spends most of their time in, I believe that many people judge based upon the appearance whether they’re going to associate or even to talk to you.

A.R. by adopting a rock style is more “viewable” than the other girls, who mainly have a casual style. For her, it was difficult to be included into a group and for many years she *“just wanted to look like the others”* in order not to be gossiped. She explains that in this way she would not be different and could be placed on the “safe side”. Throughout the year I took her interview, she had already found people to associate within school, whom she approached because their style seemed to match.

On the contrary, E.D. does not agree with the previously mentioned opinions. She finds that “it (style) is not important at all, meaning that you have to know someone for what they are and what their beliefs are and not for what they wear [...] Personally, though, I may see someone really dressed up and not go talk to them but it depends on me and my mood at any given time”.

E.D. also talks about “famous” girls, one of the distinct groups some of the interviewees refer to, who according to her, seem to dress more “stunningly”. E.F. adds to E.D.’s perception of popular girls, who are “more extroverted” and “lovable” towards the other students. When N.K. though refers to famous girls, she connects their popularity not only with their looks but with their social media popularity as well:

[...] They (popular girls) want to be more “mature” than their age. It is like it has been say it like a hundred years, but at my time, 200 likes meant you’re famous! In a good photograph what you wear matters! We had a girl in our school that was wealthy and one time she wore a Victoria Secret sweat suit. “Wow” we were saying, “look what she’s wearing”, “she got an iPhone and her backpack is Vans”. At some point these were tiresome but at the given moment it was really important, it was a theme of conversation what she was wearing; the fact that she wore brown lipstick and mascara at school early in the morning. [...] To us, the first graders, made an impression [...] everyone was saying what Victoria Secret stands for and we learnt what Victoria Secret is. So, I knew she had an iPhone and from her I learnt the “weight” of owning an iPhone [...].

For N.K. famous girls are the ones to look up to if you want to be somebody. Another group mentioned by E.S. is the “nerds” who are those that have a low profile. Nevertheless, she argues passionately that there are no labels in this school:

[...] We are not so much in cliques in our school. We are more or less all together [...] we don't have so many cliques like in the U.S.A., like...no way!

This point of view is amplified by other girls as well. When E.F. was asked if there are any labels at first she answered that it is a very intense phenomenon in contemporary society. Although, when the question was orientated towards school, she said that *“it is not very common in our school. Not very common. Generally, we don't have extreme student looks”*. E.C. and E.K. illuminate another angle of “labelization”. The former, argues that:

There are labels. I don't know in what extend, but generally there are. This has to do with how much you know the other person. Even if I say something about a girl of B1, because I don't know everyone in school, I won't say...I will say it looks like that today because she is dressed like that, but she is not like that. In general though, I believe you might say it!

According to E.C. the label someone gives to someone else, has to do with the extent of their association. E.K.'s opinion finds her in agreement with E.C. as she argues that *“Basically, if you don't know someone you cannot ascribe them to a label”*.

When I asked A.R. about the existence or not of labels, she answered firmly in an affirmative way, but she gave a different explanation than the other girls.

There are labels for sure because everybody says “Oh! She's a nerd”, “Oh, she listens to rock music, she's very different and not for us” and I absolutely believe that boys attribute many labels. I believe that the main factor is boys, because at this age they want romantic relationships with girls, they want to do this and that, you know... you've been through that. So, they attribute many labels. But girls do it as well, because they look at you and judge you and they don't bother to know you. So,

for sure there are labels “Oh! She’s a nerd” or “Oh! She’s very fake she uses too much make up”.

A.R. adds the “boy factor” to the process of labelization and seems that the latter is the starting point of labelization for her, as well.

A common place of the majority of the girls is that there are neither labels, nor distinct groups which are based solely in style and marginalization depending on it in their school. More specifically, it is presented as an inclusive and “label free” school but as much as they try to hold on to that image, they refer to both labels and criticism.

4.4.2. Marginalization

“Sometimes my style or my sexual orientation was responsible for that (marginalization) [...] they were “putting me aside” because I didn’t fit in. Namely, they were judging a book by its cover.”

A.R. rock style

A.R.’s interview is different from all the others altogether. By the term different, I do not mean unique in a spectacular way because all the interviews are unique in their own way. This specific interviewee illuminates the way her style, being out of the school’s norm in contrast to the other interviewees, marginalizes her as a person.

In general, girls do not feel marginalized due to their style and do not marginalize other girls because of it as well.

“L.V.: Have you ever considered yourself “different” and not accepted? For example, just because you have a different style from other girls or groups.

E.K.: Because of my style, no. I do not think that I am different considering my style. Maybe if I was, I would have felt it. I do not feel that I have been rejected by someone, because I do not quite try to get into a group. I don’t know. I believe that if

I do that, it will come out really wrong and it will be fake. But I don't think that my style was a factor for me to be rejected from a group or something like that."

E.S. shares the same point of view:

"L.V.: Are there any girls with whom you might say you would not socialize because they "look like that"?"

E.S.: No. At least in my school I haven't seen a phenomenon like that."

Most of the girls espouse the aforementioned opinions besides A.R. and N.K. The latter, although at first claimed she had never marginalized another girl because of her style, only at the end of our interview she said:

I just now realized it! I've done it to a girl! We argued some time ago but just now I realized the connection of that argument with her style!

N.K. had an argument with another girl from her school mainly because of her behavior according to her first mention on this subject. Only at the end of the interview she realized that one of the things that bothered her was also that girl's style, which was a bit "provocative" and "too much" as she stated.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, A.R.'s style and sexual orientation (bisexual) caused her sometimes extreme marginalization. Throughout her interview, she stretches her will to be perceived as a "good person" and how wrong it is "to judge someone by their looks". She refers to what she has been through as bullying, which later drove her to anorexia:

A.R.: [...] all these years I didn't have many friends and everyone put me aside or cared only for themselves, they were associating with me only to take something from me and then goodbye [...] I wasn't happy with my life, I wasn't getting out of my house, I didn't want anything. I wasn't eating, or sleeping either. I had anorexia. I overcame it with time.

L.V.: All this began because you do not look like everyone else?

A.R.: *Yes. And that's why I have the belief that people are mean from time to time.*

A.R.'s case was the only one which was so radically different from the others. She is the only girl who experienced marginalization so intensively.

4.5. Subjectivity through recognition

As it is aforementioned in the theoretical framework, Honneth acknowledges three forms of recognition, through which subjectivity emerges: love recognition, legal recognition and recognition through solidarity. According to Honneth, recognition must be mutual in order to be successful. In order to examine if the girls achieve any form of recognition, I firstly asked them to describe their style, to give a "label" to it. All of them did it without even hesitating. Numerous styles came up, such as "casual", "kardashian", "rock", "cool", "whatever" etc. Girls easily recognize what they are for themselves. As a result, after they have "self-identified", I had to see if the recognition is reciprocal, if they are being recognized by others in any of the aforesaid forms.

4.5.1. Love recognition

As Hegel argues, mutual recognition is vital for the constitution of the subject (Honneth 1996). In order to examine the latter, I asked the interviewees the amount of importance they put into what the show to others through their style and what they believe or know that others think about their style to see if others (friends and other students) provide them with the necessary validation for full recognition. More than half of them argue that it is of utter importance to show something through their style, while most of the remaining others by the way they talk about style stand with the former's opinion. More specifically, A.T. says that it is "the most important thing" to show something through her style. Similarly, A.R. argues that "it's important because it has an amount of influence towards the other person, because you understand from there (style) the character of the other and what draws you to

them". E.C. and E.F. find it important too and provide a similar line of argumentation as A.R. does.

Furthermore, girls unanimously argue that their friends, as well as other students, validate what they believe of their style. After E.K. defined herself as "casual" and "calm", I asked her if this is acknowledged by others and she made a clear distinction between others and her friends, with the former not acknowledging completely who she really is because she seems like "not doing too much stuff" and her being smiley when talking about the latter's opinion about her who know that she goes "crazy and stupid". N.T. believes that the others see her as she does herself, too. She described her style as "cool" and she also talked about "the people who know her" who have a slightly different opinion from the others. Nevertheless, all girls are "accepted", are recognized from their friends and their peers at the given time of the interviews. According to Honneth (1996) this form of recognition is the first and most important one. On this form the subjects depend, in order to fulfill their emotional needs.

4.5.2. Legal recognition

According to my understanding of Honneth's legal recognition, adjusted in the school system, it could be examined both from Mead's as well as from Hegel's point view with some modifications. From the first one as a kind of recognition which takes place in traditional societies and respect comes through social norms on which rights and duties are based to be distributed in school; and from the second one as a form which is situated in modernity and can only emerge once the interests of every student are equally respected. Therefore, girls who believe that they fit into the school's "norm", in this case the more "casual" and the "kardashian" style, and follow the rules, seem to be recognized. Many girls, as it was previously mentioned, acknowledge the "popular" girls which fit right into this norm. Concerning themselves, it is difficult to admit that you belong to a certain norm, to a "mass" as some of them call it. A.T., for example, says "[...] I try to follow these rules. But either way I don't believe I'm a person who likes something strange. I more of the... not the

mass but... that's a bad word... but...". Even though she admits that she belongs to the "mass" because she does not like something "strange" i.e. out of the norm, she finds that position disturbing. Nevertheless, by owning this position, she gains partial recognition. Full recognition for A.T. emerges when she says that she follows the "rules" of style within school. But when you appeal to a normative style, does not that mean you follow "rules" which indicate what is acceptable and what is not? In this spirit, the majority of the girls occupy A.T.'s position beside A.R. who by having a "rock" style is set outside of the "mass" and consequently not recognized. If this school is taken as a "traditional society" then most of the girls are fully recognized. What if it is situated in modernity? Will again the majority of the girls be recognized?

If the school is situated in modernity, where one can only suppose we live in, it means that interests of every girl are equally respected and subjects in this recognize each other as persons capable of autonomously making reasonable decisions about moral norms; in this case what their style can be within school. As a result, the girls who believe that school does not provide them with the desirable freedom, in accordance always to styling matters, cannot be fully recognized. In addition, girls who find not-acceptable some styles inside school means that they do not believe the other person is incapable of making decisions of their own considering style and again not being fully recognized. In the first category, belong three girls and in the second almost all of them. Consequently, even if the school is placed in the modernity girls cannot be fully recognized.

This form of recognition cannot be absolute due to the fact that it can emerge only in the course of a historical development (Honneth 1996, p: 108). Nevertheless, it can give a glimpse of how much recognition girls can gain in the school system through a form of recognition which refers to societal norms, school's rules and traditional-contemporary societies.

4.5.3. Social esteem

Social esteem is the third and last form of recognition according to Honneth (1996) and, as it was previously mentioned in the theoretical framework, it refers to the recognition of individual characteristics of a subject. The latter are classified into a “value system”, which is created by the appraisal of particular characteristics and thus provide the criteria by which social esteem is judged. As it emerged through the interviews, it seems that a certain stereotype of what a girl’s style within school comes continually up and that is the non-provocative, the “decent” one. In other words, the norm of the school at the given time. As I previously mentioned, almost all of the girls fit in the normative style beside A.R. and E.D. who believes for her style that does not follow fashion and is “unconventional”, at the moment of the interviews. Some years ago though, neither did A.T. who did not appeal to the decent and non-provocative style. On the contrary, she had the “provocative” label attributed to her and because of her style some students were saying “she’s ‘been’ with everybody and stuff”. Only later when she wanted to change this opinion others held for her because of her style, conformed to the more normative “kardashian” style and gained social esteem. The exact opposite holds for A.R.’s story, who argues that she was not like that during the first years of high school. She tried to fit in by not differentiating herself from her peers and in that way not getting gossiped, in order to be on the “safe side”. In other words, she adopted a normative style, so that she gained social esteem and then later she self-identified as something out of the norm and got disrespected³ by being judged and bullied⁴.

In overall though, some girls point out that in comparison to boys, they do not have equal treatment i.e. not being as high on the “value system” as they are. E.C. argues that “most of the rules restrict only girls” and many girls believe that they were forbidden of wearing shorts in school during summer because of the boys, their “sexuality” and their “hormones” as A.R. says who strongly believes that there is a distinction between boys’ and girls’ treatment in accordance to style. N.T. through a description of an incident, makes this distinction of boys-girls even more apparent:

³ In Honneth’s terms.

⁴ Bullied according to her saying.

“[...] university students are coming from the philosophy department and attend some courses. A man and a woman teacher turned to us and told us ‘a small request from the girls, because we know you when you hear about men you get all dressed up and full of make up like you’re going out to the club’. Ok... how can you say that? [...]”. In this case, even teachers make a clear-cut distinction between girls and boys by diminishing girls’ style as constituted only in accordance to fulfill men’s desire. E.K. also believes that “boys can come to school however they want and they won’t be gossiped and girls if they’re a little...in other words if you see a boy wearing always sweatpants you say ‘ok’ but if you see a girl always in sweatpants you say ‘she doesn’t care so much’. Considering the above, it seems that half of the girls are lower in the “value-system” because of their gender alone and due to that, they lose social esteem.

4.5.4. Forms of non-recognition

According to Honneth, as it is more thoroughly analyzed in chapter 2.3.4., there are three groups of experiences of disrespect i.e. non-recognition. Throughout the interviews, one incident came into surface which belongs to both the second and the third group. The former has to do with the person feeling excluded from their rights and the latter with the person (or group) not being able to be recognized, since the previously mentioned value-system excludes them of having self-realization through it. The incident described by A.R. as following:

A.R.: For example some view me as Satan’s child [...]

L.V.: Do you get similar comments like that in or out of school?

A.R.: Yes but not that many in school anymore. I don’t give them the right to do it because they know that if they say something I will have something in response. It’s not that I’m gonna cry anymore [...] one time an old man, around 70 years old, started telling me “why you dress like that and you’re not religious” which I am, I’m Christian, I don’t have something with religion, “you are Satan’s child and your parents haven’t raised you right” [...] I tried to calmly explain to him that this is not

an opinion to have and you have to look at the bigger picture but then I got mad because he started to yell at me and everybody in the subway were looking at us. Nobody came into our wagon. Because I was that mad I took out a make-up removing towelette, I took off my make-up and left it on his hand and said to him "ok now?" and I left. I went wherever I wanted to go on foot because I wanted to calm down [...]".

Even though the described incident did not take place in school as A.R. argues that similar have already happened in the past when she was harshly judged by her co-students. This particular incident though highlights the way a person's subjectivity can be harmed or lost because they do not own a normative style. As I previously mentioned, it can be analyzed through both forms of non-recognition. On the one hand, the 70 year old man tried to exclude A.R. from her right to express herself by shouting at her and verbally insulting her. According to Honneth if this form of non-recognition happens to a person, they are ostracized and lose their self-respect. On the other hand, the fact that A.R. occupies a style which is out of the norm, does not position her high in the value system. The latter means that her beliefs and the way of life, are not valued in the same way as the ones of a person who has a normative style. In addition, when we are talking about style, it means that we refer to something mainly visible and public i.e. value-system's position is apparent. As a result, a second way of viewing this incident is that the man in the subway by insulting A.R., deprives her of an opportunity of self-realization by showing at her that she is out of the norm and thus, not equally valued.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

At the beginning of this research I was determined to find out how student-girls' bodies are restricted. Afterwards, by observing the reality of girls' in their everyday school life, I made up my mind. I saw the way they were dressed and used their style to express everything and anything. Through participant observation I tried to be a part of their groups. They confided in me their secrets and they spent their weekend. On the one hand I felt welcome and wanted in the school but on the other hand I

was an outsider and I could feel it, mainly through the way many students were staring at me. During the interviews I conducted the girls seemed enthusiastic and happy to talk about themselves concerning style. Through my conversations with them I was able to understand the importance of style in their life. Even the girls who did not think of it as something of utter importance, they used it, without even knowing it, in order to express themselves. Style proved to be a component part of their selves and a way of expressing their mood, their feelings and for some, a way of showing sexuality and sexual orientation.

The gender stereotypes were not missing during the interviews as well as the strong link between style (outside) and character-personality (inside). For example, almost everyone referred to some girls as “whores” because they were dressed “provocatively” and although some of them did not adopt this opinion, they argued that many both inside and outside school did. The outside depends on the inside and “the inside depends upon the outside for shape, definition and validity, opening up the inside to perpetual renegotiations” (Pomerantz 2007, 92). The previous may apply both concerning the insiders and the outsiders of school, as well as the inside and outside of girls. Even if some of the participants believed that they could have the style they wanted in school, written and unwritten rules were always present verbally and nonverbally. They could make their presence visible, for example, through an observation a teacher might make about an outfit, but also in girls’ mind as well, who will put thought in what they are going to wear to go to school. The way one will dress in school will not dress outside it. It is the context and society’s rules which imply how someone should be. Nevertheless, the previous did not make them passive beings. On the contrary, they used their style; they owned it; and they negotiated it. Style was a discourse for them and they became active and agentic through it. They, sometimes, achieved that by defying the rules and sometimes by obeying them, but by doing “adjustments” to them in order to fulfill their desires. Furthermore, as I observed, in contrast to what some of the girls told me, groups are formed indeed according to style, even if they do not notice and/or admit it. Girls were part of groups and their styles actually matched and they were not members of some others with which they differentiated from.

Finally, girls were made visible through their style and they accomplished their subjectivity through it. By obeying or not the “rules”, the “mass”, the “norm”, they constituted their identities and subjectivities and became who they wanted to be; they became themselves. Something that seemed regular and insignificant at the beginning is of utter importance after all.

Appendix

Interview's main⁵ questions.

Constitution of identity through style

1. What style means for you?/How you define style?
2. Do you believe it is something that changes? If you yes, in which cases and why?
3. What is your style?
4. How you would define yourself in accordance with style within school?
5. Is it the same inside and outside of the school? If not, what changes and why?
6. Do you believe there is a connection of the inside and the outside?

Groupification and marginalization

1. Have you ever been marginalized because of your style? If yes, why do you believe this happened?
2. Have you ever marginalized someone because of their style? If yes, why?
3. How important you find style for the formation of groups?

Style and school system

1. What do you believe is the "thing" that defines your style within school? If yes, what is that?
2. Are there any restrictions within school? If yes, what are they?
3. Is there freedom in the way you dress, make-up, do your hair etc. within school? If not, why?
4. If someone disobeys the rules within school what is happening then?
5. What do you define as acceptable and not acceptable in school?
6. What happens if someone is "not-acceptable"?
7. Who do you believe defines what is acceptable and not acceptable?

⁵ I define them as main because it is a semi-structured interviewed which means that questions were adjusted to the participant and some may be added.

Agency

1. How important is to show something through your style?
2. What do you think you show with it?

Recognition

Love recognition

1. How you see yourself?
2. How you believe others/your friends see you?

(Legal recognition & social esteem emerge through questions which fall under other categories as well)

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