

Perspectives of Adolescents on Developing Gender Role Attitudes in Relation to Their Online Practices Within the ‘Boef’ Community

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Abstract

In an attempt to gather insights into points of view toward gender role attitude development in relation to online practices within the Boef community, a qualitative study was carried out in which data was collected among seventeen adolescents between thirteen and twenty-one years old. In order to create a clear and accurate perspective on these points of view, the main research question was divided into two sub-questions: one focusing on the masculine gender role, the other on the feminine gender role. For each sub-question, data was collected by means of conducting semi-structured interviews and organizing focus groups. Subsequently, NVivo was used to perform a content analysis (Boeije, 2010) which resulted in three main themes and multiple subthemes: attitudes toward gender roles in general, attitudes toward gender roles in relation to Boef, and perspectives on how online practices within the Boef community relate to developing gender role attitudes. The results of this study have led to the conclusion that there appeared to be a resemblance between attitudes toward gender roles in general and attitudes toward gender roles in relation to Boef. For instance, regarding both attitudes, masculinity was linked to behavior only; whereas femininity was mainly linked with features of appearance. However, also remarkable differences were found within the specifics of the descriptions. In addition, the results of this research suggest that adolescents are capable of choosing between different attitudes towards femininity. Moreover, adolescents perceive Boef as a social media celebrity who is able to show them an example of how to become popular and successful. Lastly, features of online platforms seem to provide adolescents with new insights on their attitudes toward gender roles. For instance, respondents described how they use examples on social media to model their own attitudes.

Keywords: Gender roles, social media, attitude development, adolescents, Boef

Introduction

Dutch vlogger and rapper Boef, who has become known for his vlogs and music videos on his YouTube channel since 2016 (Heerma van Voss, 2017), has been brought into disrepute multiple times during the last few years for posing discriminating and misogynistic statements, both online and offline (De Nieuwe Maan, 2018). Especially the mishap of calling three young girls ‘kech’, Arabic for prostitute, after they had offered him a ride home has been under close scrutiny. Multiple media sources have excessively shared their concern regarding Boef’s aberrations. In addition, the recently established Music#MeToo foundation has taken offense at the misogynistic behavior of Boef along with other Dutch hip hop rappers and has even filed lawsuits against them (Bouyeure, 2019). Moreover, the growing concern is evident among parents: some even boycott his music at home (Kraak, 2018). Despite this societal concern, Dutch hip hop music is dominating the charts according to Spotify’s 2018 streaming numbers in The Netherlands (Duijsings & van Niekerk, 2019). Whereas hip hop historically was peripheral to mainstream music, it has now become commercialized and is infused into other areas of popular culture and media (Petchauer, 2009).

This increasing popularity among hip hop artists is also reflected in Boef’s growing number of subscribers to his social media accounts (Heerma van Voss, 2017). Social media allows Boef’s messages to directly reach his audience, which mainly consists of young adults (van Gijssel, 2019), and to potentially pass on values that go against the societal discourse. However, there is still a scarcity in research into the different ways that young adults interpret gender-related messages through media (Light, 2013). Wright (2016) poses that social media amongst other new technologies emerge at an increasingly fast pace, so it is reasonable to assume that “new opportunities and challenges associated with identity expression will undoubtedly follow suit”. From a pedagogical perspective, it is important to understand how adolescents experience their own development within an online fan community as this provides new insights for a pedagogue’s role to play. Moreover, it is interesting to explore whether the societal cause for concern is justified. Taking both arguments into consideration, it is essential to represent the voice of young adults: what are their perspectives on developing attitudes toward gender roles in relation to their online practices within the Boef community?

Identity formation is the process of personality development in which individual characteristics and a sense of self are acquired (Erikson, 1994). Erikson acknowledged that this is a lifelong process, but “adolescence and emerging adulthood represent the first and potentially the most important period for identity development during the life cycle” (1994).

During this period, the focus of identity exploration lies largely in “reflecting on who one is in relation to one’s family, peers, and immediate community” (Davis, 2010) and modeling those around them and “integrating the behaviors, attitudes, and values [...] into their own personality” (Erikson, 1994). However, identity development must be understood and cannot be separated from its social and cultural-historical context (Rogoff, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978). From this perspective, an individual learns and develops through and from others, and from ‘aspects’ from their surroundings; also described as ‘culture’. For this reason, it can be concluded that identity development is a holistic process.

For modern-day adolescents and young adults, the task of identity development takes place in a world of omnipresent social media use (Wright, 2017). Consequently, digital media technologies have initiated many new contexts for adolescents to express and discover their identities, “from social network sites, cell phones, and instant messaging platforms, to blogs and vlogs, virtual worlds, and video-sharing sites.” (Davis, 2013). As mentioned earlier, identity exploration partly occurs through immediate community interaction. This community interaction nowadays also takes place online as a result of ‘social networking’ (Abbas & Karadavut, 2017). Rotman & Preece (2010) defines this new concept of an online community as:

“[groups] (or various subgroups) of people, brought together by a shared interest, using a virtual platform, to interact and create user-generated content that is accessible to all community members, while cultivating communal culture and adhering to specific norms”.

Within online environments, media figures play a key role as they mirror a range of possible selves young people might wish to adopt (Giles & Maltby, 2004). However, online environments have evolved considerably within the last decade (Barron et al., 2014). Consequently, media figures such as Boef have now become part of an *online* community, which means that they can directly interact with fans. In turn, this grants fans the opportunity to follow and observe his private life closely.

Media figures do not only play an important part in shaping values and beliefs, but also in developing gender role identity (Giles & Maltby, 2004). A gender role can be described as ‘the expected behavior toward an individual, based on the individual’s sex’ (Boehnke, 2011; Kessler & McKenna, 1978; Lindsey, 2011) and ‘includes different components such as interests, skills, activities, and clothing’ (Kessler & McKenna, 1978).

Adolescents take ideals of what it means to be a man or woman partly from media figures, who present physical and behavioral gender ideals (Arnett, 1995).

Boef, as an important media figure, characterizes himself as being a part of street culture and considers it his duty to share his way of life with his online followers (Vuijsje, 2016). Both his vlogs and music videos represent conventional gender roles within this street culture. In this culture, there is a dominant masculine attitude in which competition, respect, and defensibility are evident and in which women are propagated as submissive and observed as lust objects (El Hadioui, 2013; Copes & Hochstetler, 2003). In addition, compulsive heterosexuality and resorting to violence are regarded as important masculine behavior. Moreover, when boys show 'soft' or 'feminine' behavior, they risk to become humiliated (Phoenix, Frosh, & Pattman, 2003).

Moreover, Boef can be placed within hip hop culture. Qualitative research by Stephens & Few (2007) proposes how specifically female personalities depicted within this culture have a potentially large influence on Afro-American adolescents' attitudes in regard to both their view on femininity and male behavior toward women. In addition, "hip-hop is cited for supporting hyper-masculinity, which is intertwined with misogyny" (Adams & Fuller 2006; Perry, 2004; Rose, 2008; Sharpley-Whiting, 2007). It needs to be addressed that this research aims to reflect on the relation between hip hop and street culture within Dutch society.

When researching questions about children's behavior unique to their particular cultural context, the aim is not to look for a universal truth, but rather to give a description of the child's experiences and what this means to them (Super & Harkness, 1986). As such, this research is of qualitative nature. In order to get a clear and accurate view on the attitudes of adolescents toward gender role development, the main research question has been divided into two sub-questions: one focusing on the masculine gender role, the other on the feminine gender role. As a result, an answer to both their attitudes toward their masculine and feminine gender role development can be given.

Different studies advocate for taking diversity in attitudes and variables explaining gender role development into consideration (Crouter et al., 2007; Fan & Marini, 2000; Kucinkas, 2010; Nelson & Keith, 1990; Sagara & Kang, 1998). Moreover, Giles & Maltby (2004) discussed that it might be valuable to compare different ethnic groups and cultural values in researching the function of media figures during adolescents. For these reasons, it seems valuable to apply an intersectional approach within this research (Crenshaw, 1991). This approach acknowledges "the human being as irreducible to a single characteristic, but as

a nest of multiple, interacting characteristics” (Halimi, Consuegra, Struyven, & Engels, 2016). Throughout this research, it will be explained how and to which extent intersectionality has been taken into account.

Method

Design

When researching questions about children’s behavior unique to their particular cultural context, the aim is not to look for a universal truth, but rather to give a description of the child’s experiences and what this means to them (Super & Harkness, 1986). This is the reason for choosing a qualitative research approach. The methods used within this research aim to study the child while being constantly aware of its cultural context (Kessen, 1979). As this research focuses on gaining insights into online activities of adolescents, it is of explorative nature (Neuman, 2014). Within this research, no hypotheses were set up. This was decided to avoid the risk of guiding or manipulating the process of data analysis to a certain extent (Evers, 2007).

Sample

Data were collected from 9 adolescents (n=9; 5 boys, 4 girls) in interviews and 8 adolescents (n=8; 8 girls) in focus groups. Criteria for selection were that participants followed Boef on social media, actively took part in online discussions, and were familiar with his vlogs and music (videos). In addition, their age needed to correspond with the considered age range of adolescence according to Clarke-Stewart & Parke (2014): 12 to 18. However, the age range was extended to 21 by the researchers as it was difficult to recruit a satisfactory number of participants within a limited time period.

It was attempted to recruit adolescents with many different backgrounds to ensure diversity among participants. According to Christoffersen (2017), “this is an obvious precondition to measuring intersectionality”. Participants were recruited by means of the snowball method: an initial number of participants who were recruited using the researchers’ networks were asked to name other Boef fans, who were subsequently asked to participate (Boeije, 2010). A disadvantage of this method was that there was no full control over forming a diverse sample. For the individual interviews, however, a heterogeneous sample was established; which is in accordance with Christoffersen’s statement. Both focus groups, on the other hand, consisted of girls only. Nonetheless, carrying out focus groups offered the researcher to use the interaction within the group as a source of further insight (Blaxter, Hughes & Tight, 2010). It also provided for a more in-depth focus on prominent results from

the interviews. Moreover, by creating two different research situations, using both focus groups and individual interviews, the validity of the research was increased (Baarda, de Goede & Teunissen, 2005).

Additional background information for each participant and for both the authors of this research can be found in Appendix I. In intersectional research, it is important to take the positionality of everyone involved into account (Lutz, 2015). The researchers of this study are aware of the fact that they differ from the sample in for example age, gender, education and cultural background. This has been taken into consideration throughout the entire research process.

Data collection

After having received consent for participation of each respondent, parents or caretakers of respondents under 16 were approached and informed about the research project by means of informed consent (Boeije, 2010). Subsequently, prior to each interview and the focus groups, respondents were being informed about recording the interview session and asked for permission. Participants were also being made clear that they could withdraw from our research at any time, because they did not know beforehand that gender roles were being discussed (Boeije, 2010). Data collection took place during April and May of 2019 and was done at places respondents felt most comfortable with. The mean duration of the interviews was 42 minutes and 45 minutes for the focus groups. The interviews and focus groups were carried out with the use of a topic list, which served as a reminder of questions and topics that mattered and acted as prompts when losing track during the interview (Boeije, 2010). The topic list was made by virtue of the constructs within the research question and can be found in Appendix II. It should be noted that various constructs go hand in hand, as is clarified in the introduction.

Gender role attitude development. A gender role can be described as ‘the expected behavior toward an individual, based on the individual’s sex’ (Boehnke, 2011; Kessler & McKenna, 1978; Lindsey, 2011) and ‘includes different components such as interests, skills, activities, and clothing’ (Kessler & McKenna, 1978). Gender role attitudes are people’s beliefs about these aforementioned behaviors (Frieze & Ciccocioppo, 2009). ‘Development’ within this construct refers to identity development, which are people’s explicit and implicit responses to the question: “who are you?” (Vignoles, Schwartz, & Luyckx, 2011).

Online practices within the Boef community. On social network sites, people can create a profile which shows personal information. For example: name, age, occupation, etc., along with photos and / or videos. In addition, social media platforms display your (online)

friends and you are able to traverse friend lists (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). As a result, social network sites offer the opportunity to bring people together by a shared interest and create an online community (Rotman & Preece, 2010). Adolescents use social media platforms to mediate their relationships with friends, romantic partners and broader groups of peers (Ito et al., 2009). The 'Boef' community within this research can be defined as the group of people who all participate in the virtual platforms Instagram, YouTube and Snapchat to follow rapper and vlogger Boef and interact with his generated content, i.e. by means of liking photos or reacting to comments.

Data analysis

The authors of this research individually analyzed different transcripts due to time and practical constraints. As a result, one author analyzed both focus groups and 6 interviews and the other author focused on the analysis of 9 interviews only. NVivo was used to perform a content analysis (Boeije, 2010) which resulted in three main themes and multiple subthemes. These will be elaborately discussed in the 'results' section. After data analysis, both the author's outcomes were compared and discussed and appeared to be in correspondence with each other. Besides content analysis, memos were made to reflect on the researchers' role and specific experiences with regard to intersectional issues. These were subsequently discussed between the authors. In two cases, the interpretations of both researchers were checked by contacting the participants following the period of analysis. This was done to avoid misrepresentation on behalf of the researcher (Mays & Pope, 2000).

Due to time constraints, both the interviews and the focus groups were conducted by either one of the authors of this research. As a result, no observations could be made concerning noteworthy behavior of participants or the interactions between the researcher and participant. However, when multiple researchers collect data, analyst triangulation is taken into account and potential bias is reduced (Patton, 1999). For example, the interpretations of both the researchers' results were compared during data analysis. As a result, no discrepancies were found; which contributes to the reliability of the data.

Results

Gender role attitudes toward femininity

Fourteen adolescents were interviewed in an attempt to answer the question: what are their perspectives on developing attitudes toward femininity in relation to their online practices within the Boef community? The age range of the participants was between thirteen and twenty-one years old. Three boys and three girls were interviewed through individual

open interviews. Next to that, two focus groups were organized in which the participants talked to their peers about different topics regarding the research question. The first group consisted of five girls and the second group of three girls.

While analyzing the data, two categories were distinguished between the expressions of the adolescents. The first category is called 'descriptions of femininity', expressions assigned to the first category give an insight on the similarities and differences between the adolescents' descriptions of femininity and those they relate to Boef. The aim of this category is to determine the current situation of the adolescents learning process on femininity. The second category is called 'the perspectives of the adolescents'; the aim of the category is to show more insight on what the opinions of the adolescents are on how they find they are able to learn about attitudes toward femininity through Boef's social media content.

Twelve different respondents (86%) made comments within the first category and their comments were divided between two themes: descriptions of femininity in general and descriptions of femininity regarding Boef. As a description of femininity in general eight respondents (57%) mentioned features on appearance. For example, when talking about appearance as a description of femininity in general the adolescents mentioned make-up, taking care of ones looks and behave politely. In addition, when talking about their description of femininity regarding Boef three respondents (21%) mentioned features on appearance. Namely, they mention appearances containing having a big butt, using a lot of make-up and using plastic surgery.

A contrast was noticeable regarding the perspectives of the respondents toward femininity. Namely, when describing femininity in general, four adolescents express that each person differs based on their personality and not on their gender (29%). On the contrary, five respondents (36%) described femininity in general as a comparison to masculinity. For instance, they expressed how they think that women are more vulnerable, smarter and at a young age already more mature than men. In addition, when talking about femininity regarding Boef four different respondents (29%) explained that although Boef might sometimes insult women, they believe he actually thinks there is not really a difference between masculinity and femininity. But, within this theme, five other respondents (36%) expressed how they think Boef must find men are more dominant over women. Therefore, the respondents named contrary aspect regarding their description of femininity as they describe the similarities between the sexes, as well as the differences.

In addition, eight respondents (57%) expressed how they think a woman can make personal choices about the way she is showing her femininity. For example, "I think that

normal women, they think more like, I do not want to be around you if you talk like that, if you behave that way. But that some women actually like it when men act like that.” (A., female, age 14, personal interview, May, 5, 2019). This quote illustrates the way a respondent differentiates between 'normal' and 'other' women. Mentioning that the way Boef behaves and treats women is something to like or not to like, suggests that this is a personal choice. Also, the idea of multiple ways to show femininity is expressed when one of the respondents uses the word 'meiden'[girls] when talking about femininity in general, but when talking about femininity regarding Boef she names them 'wijven'[a 'loose' translation would be bitches]. Therefore, these examples suggest there might not be one true definition of femininity within the perspectives of the adolescents, but different attitudes a woman can choose from.

The second category, the perspectives of the adolescents, aims to give more insight into the adolescents' perspectives on developing their attitudes toward femininity through Boef's social media content. In this category, statements made by nine respondents (64%) were assigned to one theme: the learning process. Seven respondents (50%) express how Boef and his content on social media serve as an example to them. They described how seeing his popularity and the popularity of the women around him makes them insecure and want to look like Boef or these women. They also described the fear of other people taking an example of the way Boef interprets femininity. One respondent described how focusing on the content of one artist can make you more vulnerable for the influence of this artist, as it gives you just one example on how femininity can be interpreted. These results show that the adolescents feel social media gives them the opportunity to observe and take an example to Boef's attitudes.

In addition, four different respondents (29%) mention how the online community gives them new insights. As one of them explained: social media have the possibility to spread many different kinds of opinions fast and make its users discover content without explicitly looking for it, it brings one a lot of new information. In addition, another respondent during one of the focus groups describes how Boef's social media content can also lead to the normalization of an attitude. With her peers she discussed that with the use of social media, Boef has introduced the word 'kech'. She argues that 'kech' has become a way to callout girls like herself of whom people might think they behave in an inappropriate feminine way: “Yesterday also [...] someone said to me as a joke, a friend of mine, you really are a kech!” (K., female, age 16, focus group, May, 13, 2019). Mentioning the way the word 'kech' is used by a friend as a joke, illustrates that the introduction of this word by Boef, in her experience has normalized the use of it. This possible normalization of using the word 'kech' was

expressed by a total of six respondents (43%). Thereby, two of them also described how Boef changed the normality of other perspectives on femininity, namely appearance and behavior. As this paragraph illustrates, the respondents have expressed how the features of social media might relate to the way they develop their attitudes toward femininity.

In summary, this section aimed to get more insight into the responses on the research question. Analyzing the data collected through both individual interviews and two focus groups among a total of fourteen adolescents, provided two categories. Next, the first category was divided between two themes. The first theme contained the expressions of twelve respondents (86%) about descriptions of femininity in general. Where the second theme contained the comments of eleven respondents (79%) about the descriptions of femininity regarding Boef. Within these themes it was shown that eight respondents (57%) mentioned features on appearance as a description of femininity in general and three respondents (21%) expressed features on appearance when talking about femininity regarding Boef. In addition, within both themes four respondents (29%) made remarks about the definition of femininity being on one's personality and not linked to one's gender. However, when describing femininity in general, five respondents (36%) described this concept naming comparisons toward men. Also, within the theme descriptions of femininity regarding Boef, four respondents (29%) expressed themselves using comparisons. Finally, eight respondents described (57%) the possibility of a woman choosing between different ways of showing her femininity. The second category aimed to give more insight into adolescents' perspectives on the development of their attitudes toward femininity through Boef's social media content. Seven respondents (50%) expressed Boef serving as an example them. Moreover, ten adolescents (71%) mentioned through the specific features of a social media community Boef shows them new insights and might cause a normalization of certain attitudes toward femininity.

Gender role attitudes toward masculinity

Nine adolescents were interviewed in an attempt to answer the sub-question: what are their perspectives on developing attitudes toward masculinity in relation to their online practices within the Boef community? The age range of the participants was between thirteen and nineteen years old.

In total, three broad themes emerged from the data analysis: (a) personal views on masculinity in general; (b) typical behavior they assign to Boef and how they relate this to masculinity, and (c) perspectives on learning from social media and role models. All

respondents listened to Boef's music on a regular basis and the majority followed him on social media extensively. Whilst a few of the interviewees (22%) mentioned that they sometimes read and commented on Boef's media content, a majority (67%) agreed that there was no interest in participating in an online discourse; i.e. by posting comments themselves or interacting with other fans online. However, many respondents were able to explain that social media in general and role models play a significant role in their own identity development or the development of others. For this reason, the last theme focuses more on this issue rather than what was aimed for in the research question.

Interviewees were asked to share their personal views on masculinity. All respondents related this concept to masculine behavior. A division could be made in behavior that boys recognized in themselves; the way they actually felt; behavior that girls recognized in boys, and behavior that girls would rather see in boys. It is interesting to see that parallels can be drawn between these categories. For example, 'machismo' was literally mentioned by multiple interviewees as typical masculine behavior (44%; 2 boys, 2 girls) and was thus similarly labeled. Machismo can be described as strong or aggressive masculine pride. Respondent 1 (male) for example mentioned that he 'can come across really tough'. This respondent also said he identifies himself with Boef as he is familiar with street culture himself. This could explain his view on masculine behavior. On the other hand, respondent 5 (male) also assigned this type of behavior to himself, whereas he is a thirteen-year-old college student and not personally familiar with street culture at all. Moreover, two female respondents (age 13 and 14) also felt that boys in general 'boast' and 'act tough'. These statements show that machismo or acting tough come to mind when assessing masculine behavior, regardless of background. Another issue that both one girl and one boy mentioned was that 'boys are less serious than girls'. The male respondent mentioned that "if you ask any average twenty-year-old boy about life, you will find out he is less serious than a girl his age". This is an interesting remark, which will be addressed again in the next theme.

Other issues that boys assigned to masculine behavior were 'standing up for yourself' (22%) and 'showing respect to girls' (33%). The latter however is contradicted by one female respondent (age 14), who claimed that 'boys boast about how many girls they slept with' and 'boys can only be nice to me when they're not with friends'. This could indicate that she has had unfortunate encounters with boys in the past, which might be of influence in speaking about this matter. However, too little is known about personal circumstances of this respondent to put these statements into a bigger perspective.

A last thing to consider about views on masculinity in general is the information that two male respondents gave about the way they actually feel as a man: they both said that they are actually 'quite sensitive' on the inside. In turn, two girls mentioned that they wish 'boys would act less tough' and one girl thought it is 'attractive when a boy shows his true feelings'. These statements support the notion that boys feel the behavioral need to act tough and macho, whereas they actually feel different on the inside.

Interviewees were also asked to identify masculinity in Boef. A recurrent issue all girls and boys discussed during the interviews was a sense that Boef likes to 'show off' in terms of money and achieved successes. Five respondents linked this behavior to masculinity (3 boys, 2 girls). In addition, 'machismo' and 'boasting' were mentioned by two boys and can be linked to 'showing off'. For example, one interviewee said: "well, he [Boef] just talks about how much money he has, and sex, and that he is just really big". Another recurrent issue was that nearly all boys (44%) addressed Boef's misogynistic behavior when talking about masculinity. The female gender of the researcher may have influenced this outcome. For example, one male respondent continued to emphasize gender equality after having talked about Boef's lack of respect for women. One divergent discourse emerged when talking with Respondent 1 about Boef's misogynistic statements, as he directly stated that "you shouldn't take his [Boef] statements seriously". This inconsistent reaction may be due to the fact that this respondent is a major fan of Boef. As mentioned earlier, this respondent identifies himself with Boef on different levels, so when talking about this issue it seemed as if he felt the need to defend the rapper. Also girls discussed Boef's lack of respect for women (n=4), but some added that this is rather collective 'manly' behavior amongst hip hop artists or 'boys like Boef'. However, two girls (age 13 and 17) posed that they feel Boef or 'boys similar to Boef' actually do have respect for women. For example, one of the girls said: "I think it's silly, because you show an image of yourself to young people, so young people could copy what you show... But at the same time, you are actually normal, and you can also treat someone normally. So, a woman for example, or his girlfriend". In general, all girls felt very strongly about Boef's female unfriendly behavior and did not approve of this. Some more specific examples of Boef's misogyny were 'dominating women' or 'women being dependent on men' (33%; 1 boy, 2 girls) and 'only paying attention to a girl's looks' (11%, girl). A last distinctive issue that emerged is that Boef's lyrics should not be interpreted too literally, according to all except one male respondent. This could support the issue that is mentioned in the previous paragraph about 'boys being less serious than girls'.

Learning from role models nowadays mainly happens through social media, because these are the platforms on which they represent themselves, as is mentioned in the introduction. In this section, a connection is therefore implicitly made to social media when talking about learning from role models. A common view amongst interviewees when it comes to learning from role models is ‘copying behavior’, which boils down to the fact that young adults feel the need to copy behavior when they look up to a person; i.e. by means of having achieved success or being attractive. It is noteworthy that the majority of girls said that boys ‘would also want many women and be rich’ (33%); whereas boys (44%) mainly focused on looking up to material possessions. This means that there seems to be a discrepancy in how boys and girls think about each other. One male respondent diverged from the other respondents by explicitly expressing his concerns about copycat behavior. This respondent is originally from Syria and is close to and familiar with ‘boys from the streets’ in the Netherlands. He feels they might be heavily influenced by Boef’s utterances because they can relate to him more. For example, he said: “Don’t show them that school is not right for you. He just says ‘go and make money’, work illegally, crazy stuff, don’t go to school. In some songs he says: ‘fuck school, fuck books’”. This is supported by a girl of Moroccan descent, who said: “I think he.. Has a great impact on young people. Well, imagine, Boef hasn’t finished his school... Then children might think ‘oh well, Boef didn’t finish school but he has become very famous’ [...] children might think they don’t need an education or something”.

Together these results provide important insights both into the way young adults believe they learn from role models and into the way they perceive masculinity in general and in relation to Boef. When girls speak about typically masculine behavior, there is only one respondent who believes that boys in general show no respect to girls. Other female respondents rather link this type of behavior to ‘boys like Boef’. These findings are supported by the fact that most boys acknowledge to recognize this in Boef’s behavior; but claim to possess different norms and values and show different behavior themselves. However, it needs to be mentioned that some girls felt that boys might be susceptible for ‘only wanting good-looking girls’ like Boef; but boys appear to focus more on material possessions. The only boy in this sample who defends Boef’s misogynistic statements says that ‘girls can manipulate boys with their emotions’.

When trying to identify what young adults learn about masculinity in relation to being a fan of Boef, young people seem to be aware that behavior is easily copied; especially when exposed to it on a regular basis or when intrinsically interested in something. Moreover, these young people observe a growing popularity of hip hop music in the Netherlands and place

Boef within this genre. Interestingly, many respondents speak in terms of ‘them’, when they speak about young people being influenced, instead of speaking about themselves. Furthermore, four respondents (3 boys, 1 girl) specifically mention that they feel Boef should do as he pleases and that his behavior does not affect them in any way.

Conclusion & discussion

In an attempt to answer the main question, the results from both sub-questions about masculinity and femininity will be compared in this section. The relation between the answers will be discussed and substantiated.

It was established that there appears to be a relation between the adolescents’ attitudes toward gender roles in general compared to their attitudes in relation to Boef. When describing attitudes toward masculine behaviour, comparisons were made to machismo. When talking about machismo and acting tough, many adolescents stated that they recognized this behavior within themselves or other boys. Moreover, when talking about Boef and the concept of masculinity, participants talked about the way Boef depicts machismo and “shows off” in terms of possessions and status. These results show a resemblance to the representation of gender role attitudes within street culture, as stated in the theoretical introduction by El Hadioui (2011) and Copes & Hochstetler (2003). In addition, there is fear of being weak as there is no parental control within street culture (El Hadioui, 2011). Moreover, van den Brink (2002) states that within the last decades adolescents have become more autonomous and their self-esteem has grown. They have therefore become more vulnerable to losing their self-respect. This is why showing vulnerability to your peers becomes something that needs to be avoided (Pels, 2003). As machismo creates status and respect among the peer group (El Hadioui, 2001; Pels, 2003), the attitudes toward masculine behavior, as participants have described, can be explained.

In comparing attitudes toward gender roles in general and attitudes in relation to Boef, another result was found. When analyzing expressions toward masculinity, it stands out that most descriptions are linked to behavior. This is remarkable, since most respondents mostly spoke about women’s appearances when talking about general attitudes toward femininity. When reconsidering descriptions of feminine gender roles within street culture, it is noteworthy that girls are mentioned to be observed as lust objects (El Hadioui, 2013; Copes & Hochstetler, 2003). As such, in being an object of desire, physical appearance is an important feature. Chrisler and McCreary (2010) describe this phenomenon by explaining the relation between attitudes toward masculinity and femininity. As women can be used as an object to

facilitate men in their attempt to gain status and therefore respect, females are judged by their appearance instead of character or intelligence.

However, when reflecting on the relation between attitudes toward femininity, in contrast to the introduction of this article, there seems to be a difference between the way participants described femininity in general and femininity in relation to Boef. For example, femininity in general was described as taking care of one's looks and wearing make-up. In contrast to this, respondents mentioned having a big butt, using plastic surgery and wearing a lot of make-up when talking about femininity in relation to Boef. Moreover, respondents expressed how they feel femininity can be shown in different ways. According to them, girls can make a choice in depicting femininity. An explanation for these statements can be provided by taking into consideration that street culture can be of primary or secondary socialization. This can result in different attitudes toward the representation of gender roles (Anderson, 1999). The process of primary socialization applies to adolescents who have grown up on the streets, whereas secondary socialization concerns adolescents who are not fully integrated within the street life. Because the latter have grown up among other social cultures as well, they have alternative norms to choose from (Bourdieu, 1977). As such, they can easily switch between different lifestyles because they are psychologically detached. Besides, they often do not agree with some aspects of street culture; for example regarding views on femininity (El Hadioui, 2011). This was also evident in utterances about respecting or disrespecting females. When taking the participants' cultural backgrounds into account, it can be assumed that next to street culture they have other social cultures to choose from. These differences in cultural socialization might explain the differences between appearances the adolescents described. Moreover, this presumption was confirmed by one respondent who feels street culture has been of primary socialization to himself and some people he hangs out with. This explains how this makes him more able to relate to Boef's attitudes.

The main goal of this research was to gain insights into the perspectives of the adolescents on *how* they develop the attitudes described above, in relation to their online practices within the Boef community. When analyzing the results concerning this question, a main theme that could be established was "seeing Boef as an example". In particular, most adolescents described how they feel the way they develop their attitudes toward gender roles is, among other things, by copying some of Boef's attitudes (boys) or women's attitudes closely related to him (girls). For example, the majority of boys described how they project his behaviour to themselves; desiring to gain the same popularity, status or possessions. In addition, many girls described how they desire to copy the appearances of women who serve

as their role models. A resemblance between the descriptions of the adolescents about their identity developmental process and the theoretical research is shown. As stated in the introduction, attitudes are developed during adolescence by reflecting on the relations between one's self and one's immediate community (Davis, 2010). In addition, following Boef on social media seems to give adolescents some insight into the way he has achieved his popularity and success. This corresponds with earlier stated literature, describing how media figures play a key role within the identity developmental process of adolescents (Giles & Maltby, 2004). Thus, there seems to be a relation between the respondents' perspectives on gender role development and the way Erikson (1968) describes adolescents use behaviors and values of people around them and mould these into their own attitudes. Moreover, it is found that early adolescents are highly motivated to conform to social expectations. This means that among others, messages taken from the larger culture and the pressure to conform to peers, serve as factors that shape an adolescent's attitudes toward gender roles (Chrisler & McCreary, 2010). However, many respondents talked about their fear of other adolescents taking an example to Boef by copying his attitudes toward women. In addition to what is mentioned in the previous paragraph, this statement could be a result of secondary socialization which gives adolescents the awareness of different cultural beliefs and the opportunity to choose among different attitudes (Bourdieu, 1977).

In addition, most adolescents described their parental education as valuable in developing their attitudes toward gender roles. However, they also mentioned that they regard social media as complementary to this process, which subsequently leads to new attitudes. Moreover, they talked about specific characteristics of online communities. For example, they felt that social media offers the possibility to spread and show many opinions. Therefore, being exposed to both Boef's attitudes toward gender roles and attitudes shown in online interaction, following a role model online can lead to new insights. This expression corresponds with Preece's (2010) quote mentioned in the introduction, defining the concept of an online community as a virtual platform where a communal culture can be cultivated, adhering to specific norms. Moreover, participating in (online) hip-hop culture may give adolescents an alternative opportunity to push off their adult beliefs, but still get the acceptance and examples of an educator (Stephens, 2003).

In drawing conclusions within this research, it becomes clear that individual cultural contexts should be taken into account when uncovering perspectives of adolescents. For example, as demonstrated earlier, the attitudes toward femininity seem to differ when street culture has either been of primary or secondary socialization. This supports the notion of

using an intersectional lens when studying gender role development (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013). Although this has been of constant awareness during this research, it has caused some limitations in the results. Due to time and practical constraints, it was not entirely possible to do multiple analyses in order to extensively examine the role of different cultural backgrounds. However, a distinction between the sexes was made to a large extent. Not being able to entirely analyze the results in terms of sectionality has caused the results to be less specific in details. It thus might have provided for generalized conclusions to some degree. For this reason, cultural backgrounds of the respondents should be analyzed more extensively and taken into account in future research.

Because the results of this research confirm previously stated literature, this strengthens the demand to do further research about the relationship between social media celebrities and the development of gender role attitudes among adolescents. Moreover, substantial research has been done on the development of young and middle-aged children, but much less attention has been paid to the development of attitudes toward gender roles among adolescents (Chrisler & McCreary, 2010). As previously stated, theories describe how gender role attitude development differs between primary or secondary socialization of street culture. It is therefore interesting for future research to examine the relation between adolescent perspectives on developing attitudes toward gender roles within an educational setting and developing attitudes through social media. A comparison between theoretical frameworks about adolescent's development within these different settings would provide more knowledge about this process. Moreover, it might contribute to a better understanding of ways adolescents can be stimulated in developing positive attitudes toward gender roles.

In conclusion, this research discovered resemblances between adolescent attitudes toward gender roles in general and in relation to Boef. Moreover, remarkable differences were found; which seem to suggest that adolescents are capable of choosing between different attitudes. The perspectives of adolescents on developing gender role attitudes in relation to their activities within the Boef community describe how Boef, being a social media celebrity, sets an exemplar to become popular and successful. In addition, respondents described how they model the examples Boef provides them within their own attitudes. Lastly, online platforms seem to give adolescents new insights on their attitudes toward gender roles.

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Appendix I

Participant	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Education
1	20	male	Iraqi	mbo 4
2	13	female	Dutch	vwo
3	17	female	Moroccan	hbo
4	19	male	Dutch	mbo 2
5	13	male	Dutch	vwo
6	19	male	Syrian	mbo 4
7	15	female	Dutch	vwo
8	16	male	Indonesian	mbo 3/4
9	14	female	Dutch	vmbo
10	17	female	Dutch	mbo 3/4
11	17	female	Dutch	mbo 3/4
12	19	female	Dutch	mbo 3/4
13	17	female	Maroccon	mbo 3/4
14	18	female	Dutch	mbo 3/4
15	21	female	Dutch	mbo 3/4
16	17	female	Dutch	mbo 3/4
17	16	female	Dutch	mbo 3/4

Author	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Education
1	27	female	Dutch	university
2	33	female	Dutch	university

Appendix II

Demographics

Age

Gender

Ethnicity

Education

Online Boef Community

Can you describe when and how you first came in contact with Boef's work?

Can you explain your opinions about Boef? And about his work?

What do you think makes Boef a successful artist?

How do you feel about reacting on stuff Boef posts online?

Does Boef inspire you with his online activities? In what way?

Did you ever feel like criticizing Boef's online activities?

Development

Can you explain about the way you stay up to date about Boef's online activities?

Did Boef help you develop your attitudes toward certain topics?

Did the online community around Boef help you develop your attitudes toward certain topics?

Can you explain how you tend to develop your attitudes toward certain topics?

Gender roles

How would you describe masculinity/femininity?

What kind of aspects concerning masculinity/femininity do you find in relation to Boef?

How did you develop your perspectives toward masculinity/femininity?

Can you identify yourself to Boef or the women surrounding Boef?

How do you experience masculinity/femininity based on Boef's online content?

Appendix III

Informed consent participants

Ik verklaar hierbij op voor mij duidelijke wijze te zijn ingelicht over de aard en methode van het onderzoek, zoals uiteengezet in de uitnodiging voor dit onderzoek.

Ik stem geheel vrijwillig in met deelname aan dit onderzoek. Ik behoud daarbij het recht deze instemming weer in te trekken zonder dat ik daarvoor een reden hoeft op te geven. Ik besef dat ik op elk moment mag stoppen met het onderzoek.

Als mijn onderzoeksresultaten worden gebruikt in wetenschappelijke publicaties, of op een andere manier openbaar worden gemaakt, dan zal dit volledig geanonimiseerd gebeuren. Mijn persoonsgegevens worden niet door derden ingezien zonder mijn uitdrukkelijke toestemming.

Als ik meer informatie wil, nu of in de toekomst, dan kan ik me wenden tot Anouk de Kok (06-81293304) of Ruby van Vliet (06-28954975).

- Ik begrijp de bovenstaande tekst en ga akkoord met deelname aan het onderzoek.

Naam:

Handtekening:

Datum:

Informed consent parents

Uw kind heeft aangegeven interesse te hebben in deelname aan ons onderzoek onder jongeren die naar Boef luisteren en hem volgen op social media.

Middels interviews willen wij onderzoeken op welke manier jongeren zelf denken te leren van het volgen van Boef binnen een digitale omgeving. De interviews zullen ongeveer 45 minuten duren.

Het is belangrijk te benoemen dat uw kind geheel vrijwillig instemt met deelname aan dit onderzoek. Uw kind wordt daarbij het recht behouden deze instemming weer in te trekken zonder daarvoor een reden op te geven. Uw kind mag op ieder moment met het onderzoek stoppen.

Wanneer de verkregen onderzoeksresultaten worden gebruikt in wetenschappelijke publicaties, of op een andere manier openbaar worden gemaakt, dan zal dit volledig geanonimiseerd gebeuren. De persoonsgegevens van uw kind worden niet door derden ingezien zonder uitdrukkelijke toestemming.

Als u meer informatie wilt, nu of in de toekomst, dan kunt u zich wenden tot Anouk de Kok (06-81293304) of Ruby van Vliet (06-28954975).

- Ik begrijp de bovenstaande tekst en geef akkoord voor deelname van mijn kind aan het onderzoek.

Naam ouder/verzorger:

Handtekening:

Datum: