Revisiting the Sexualization-of-Young-Girls Debate, Case Study Two: Self-Presentation in Girls’ Dress-Up and Make-Over Online Gaming Practices in Greece

# Details

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## Authors

Tsaliki L.

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girls aged 10–12, in 16 different focus groups (of 4 to 5 girls, each) in 3 primary schools in inner Athens (Tsaliki 2016: 138)

# Abstract

# Outcome

Around the turn of the millennium, research in childhood studies started to view children (human beings) all the more as ‘becomings’, constantly transforming and developing (Prout 2005), their subjectivities connected situationally and dependent on ‘extensions’ in the shape of others, on artefacts, technology and texts (Johansson 2010). Within this frame, and despite the multiple possibilities in terms of resources afforded in virtual worlds, the tweens in this study (as elsewhere, see Skaar 2010) sometimes present a tendency towards uniformity in the subjectivities they create. (Tsaliki 2016: 200)

Therefore, despite concerns on the part of postmodern subcultural theorists that the potential influence of class on youth cultural identities and practices goes missing (Shildrick and MacDonald 2006), my research with young Greek tween girls from different social backgrounds suggests that the girls engage in make-over practices and construct a consuming self beyond class. Instead, their participation in dress-up and make-over gaming practices, and the narratives of personal consumption and styling such practices reveal, suggest there are other forces at work which shape the project and the performance of the self: gender norms about socially accepted (i.e. middle-class) femininity and sexiness, as these are negotiated by ‘technologically mediated consumer-oriented subjectivities’ (Evans et al. 2010, 118). (Tsaliki 2016: 200)

At the same time though, the micro-narratives and practices discussed here (and in Chap. 6 ) suggest that girls are both learning about and acting out the contradictions of femininity. Their make-over practices provide a space for play and for the performance of femininity as a process of constant negotiation. They negotiate the tropes of dominant femininity with the culture of ‘girlie’—where the use of the tabooed symbols of women’s enculturation (Barbies, make-up, fashion tips, high heels) are not seen as signing up to the marketplace and the male gaze (Tsaliki 2016: 201)

Rather than thinking, then, in terms of a homogenization of codes of representation—so that all women who want to have the ‘look’ end up looking the same (Gill 2007a, b; McRobbie 2009), the girls’ virtual worlds point towards the diversity of forms of self-presentation (Duits and van Zoonen 2006; McNair 2009). (Tsaliki 2016: 202)