Climate change and climate action:
Gendered perceptions amongst students in Amsterdam

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FPE	Feminist Political Ecology
HvA	Hogeschool van Amsterdam (Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences)
Inholland	Hogeschool Inholland (Inholland University of Applied Sciences)
NSD	Norsk senter for forskningsdata (The Norwegian Centre for Research Data)
UiB	Universitetet i Bergen (University of Bergen)
UvA	Universiteit van Amsterdam (University of Amsterdam)
VPN	Virtual private network
WTP	Willingness to pay

Abstract

Background: Gender is increasingly researched in relation to climate change and climate action. Less research is done on gender and climate change in the context of countries of the global North. Additionally, there is little focus on the link between youth, gender and climate change, particularly in countries such as the Netherlands.

Research objectives*:* This study sought to explore how male and female Dutch students perceive the threat of climate change and to what extent their perceptions are related to gender. Additionally, this study sought to explore the gendered aspects of the participants' climate action, and the role their gender identity might play in influencing their behaviour.

Data collection and analysis*:* This is a qualitative study. Research was conducted through semi-structured individual interviews. The project draws on a phenomenological approach to explore what the students know about climate change and gender, and how they know it. The data was coded in NVivo and analysed by using thematic analysis.

Findings: This study found that the participants displayed various levels of knowledge about climate change, and what action can be taken against it. In terms of gender, it became clear that at first glance, there were no obvious gender disparities in what the participants know. Rather, gender emerged in underlying ways through the participants' behaviour. There were some areas in which gender appeared as more important than others, including through authority, food habits and transportation. The findings revealed that whilst there generally were few gender differences, the male participants did claim to feel pressure to conform to masculine ideals in ways which embraces non-climate friendly behaviour, for example through the continued consumption of meat. The female participants did not claim to feel such pressures in relation to climate change. Furthermore, it is important to note that there were tensions in how the participants spoke about both climate change and gender. Often their perceptions would not coincide with their behaviour, or they would express one opinion when discussing a topic in a general sense, and then alter their answer when being asked more specifically.

Conclusion: The findings indicate that whilst there were few gender differences, women might be expected to act more sustainably. This is because climate action in terms of a plant based diet, or more sustainable means of travel, does not threaten a woman's gender identity to the same extent that it may threaten that of men. This relates back to masculine ideals materialising through food habits and transportation. The female participants do not seem to

feel such pressures yet, however. Furthermore, the tensions that emerged can reflect how the participants struggle to discuss gender in a way which they had not prior to the interviews. It can also indicate that they do not always entirely agree with the internalised norms of their society, leading to an internal conflict in which they are unsure of what they know.

Key words: *Climate change, gender, youth, masculinity, climate action*

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

"I want you to act as you would in a crisis. I want you to act like our house is on fire. Because it is" (Thunberg, 2020).

Swedish climate change activist Greta Thunberg spoke these words in her January 2019 speech at the World Economic Forum in Davos. In the last decade climate change has emerged as a globally pressing issue and Thunberg is amongst those who are dedicated to convincing the public of the need for climate action to tackle climate change. Whilst climate action has become a prominent debate on the global agenda in the last few years, Thunberg argues that not enough is done and that we will soon arrive at the point of no return. One reason for the lack of such action is that there is dispute surrounding historical responsibility and who should take charge in tackling climate change. In her March 2019 speech, Thunberg argued that "[w]e live in a strange world, (…) [w]here the people who have contributed the least to [climate change] are the ones who are going to be affected the most" (Thunberg, 2020). An example of this is how poorer countries in the Global South are commonly understood to experience the most detrimental effects of climate change. Countries in the global North, on the other hand, have contributed the most, and are therefore argued to have the moral responsibility to take charge in climate action.

Climate change is considered an increasingly complex social issue, one aspect of which is gender. The link between gender and climate change has emerged as highly relevant to climate change discussions, largely because it is argued that women are at higher risk to the effects of climate change because they are more vulnerable (Agostino & Lizarde, 2012). Although a discourse on climate change and gender has become more relevant, it is clear that the topic has generally been dealt with in the context of the global South, often based on a development-perspective with reference to women's vulnerability and lack of agency (Alston, 2013; Connell & Pearse, 2015; Terry, 2009a). Whilst this perspective remains very much present in contemporary research, there is also an increasing amount of literature which focuses on gender and climate change in the context of the global North. Arguably, however, there remains a need for research on gender and climate change in western countries, particularly with reference to the role young people play in climate action. The overall purpose of this study is therefore to explore how male and female Dutch students in Amsterdam perceive the threat of climate change and to what extent their perceptions are related to gender.

The Netherlands is commonly perceived as a gender-equal society with an acceptance of non-conformity to heteronormative ideals. In 2019, the Netherlands ranked 6th on the Gender Equality Index with a score of 72.1 ("Gender Equality Index 2019: Netherlands", 2019). A report by the McKinsey Global Institute on gender equality in the Dutch labour market found that whilst the Netherlands scores high on gender equality indexes, the country scores low on certain gender inequality indicators, some of which relate to women in politics and the labour market (McKinsey Global Institute, 2018, p. 1).They therefore argue that there is continuous room for improvement. The Netherlands furthermore became the first country in the world to legalise same-sex marriage in 2001. Van Lisdonk (2018), in her study on Dutch same-sex oriented young people's experiences, writes that "[t]hese young people have grown up in a society that is known for its tolerance of homosexuality and where this Dutch culture of tolerance is considered a virtue and part of Dutch identity" (p. 124). She continues to argue, however, that uncomfortable encounters which "communicate the message that a same-sex orientation is not 'natural', (…), or part of the normative" (p. 124), are still frequently experienced. Van Lisdonk (2018), therefore, argues that "Dutch society is still heteronormative in many subtle ways" (p. 124).

It is argued that the Netherlands is particularly prone to flooding, a risk which will drastically increase as climate change progresses. Much work remains to be done to mitigate the effects of climate change in the Netherlands, even though Dutch literature reflects awareness of the threats of climate change dating back over a decade (Kabat, van Vierssen, Veerart, Vellinga and Aerts, 2005). Dutch citizens are generally becoming more prepared to take action against climate change, as is demonstrated through the public climate change demonstrations which have been organised in recent years. One such example is The People's Climate March in Amsterdam on March 10th, 2019, where over 40,000 people attended, making it one of the largest public demonstrations in the Netherlands to date. "The People's March is both the result of relentless climate activism that has been [developing] for decades, and the beginning of what [is] to come of the Dutch government does [not] start listening to its citizens and take action" (Gülsöken, 2019, np.)

***Problem statement*:**

As the Netherlands is understood to be a gender-equal society, little research is done on the connection between climate change mitigation strategies and gender. By examining the participants' perceptions and understandings of climate change through a gendered framework, this study hopes to contribute to the small body of research on gender, youth and

climate change in the global North, more specifically in the Netherlands. The research objectives of this study are therefore as follows:

Main objective:

To explore how male and female Dutch students perceive the threat of climate change and to what extent their perceptions are related to gender.

Sub-objectives:

- To explore how the students understand climate change and climate action and whether their understandings are gendered.
- To investigate how the students perceive gender in relation to climate change.
- To explore how the students relate own gender identity to climate action.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Whilst the discourse on gender and climate change will be extensively discussed in chapter 3, this chapter works to adequately present and address gender, and the ways through which gender is constructed and performed. This project will benefit from a theory of gender through which gender can be more broadly explored and understood. As explained by Stimpson and Herdt (2014), "exactly how gender works, varies from culture to culture, and from historical period to historical period, but gender is very rarely *not* at work. Nor does gender operate in isolation. It is linked to other social structures and sources of identity" (p. 2). A framework which is underpinned by perceptions of gender as socially constructed will therefore enable this project to critically explore the ways in which the participants' perceptions of climate change are gendered. It will furthermore allow us to explore gender identity and gender as performance respectively, and how identity, social structures and performance are interlinked.

2.1 Gender as a social construct

In order to elaborate on gender as socially constructed, we must first address the difference between sex and gender. Stimpson and Herdt (2014), discuss the need to "distinguish between sex, a biological category, and gender, a social category and construction" (p. 5). This distinction was popularised in the 1970s by, among others, John Money and Anke Ehrhardt (Fausto-Sterling, 2007, p. 26). As argued by Fausto-Sterling (2007), "Money, Ehrhardt, and feminists set the terms so that sex represented the body's anatomy and physiological workings and gender represented social forces that moulded behaviour" (p. 26). West and Zimmerman (1987), among others, refute the stark dichotomy between biological "sex" and socially constructed "gender", however, and rather argue that the relations between the two are much more complex. West and Zimmerman's "Doing Gender" (1987), offers a sociological interactionist perspective on gender and helps outline the ways through which sex and gender are interconnected and how they are affected and linked to broader structures. In a similar vein, Connell (1995), argues that "gender is a way in which social practice is ordered" (p. 71), and that "in gender processes, the everyday conduct of life is organized in relation to this reproductive arena, defined by the bodily structures and processes of human reproduction" (p. 71). She argues that whereas gender continually refers to bodies, it is "not social practice reduced to the body" (p. 71). Her arguments are furthered in Connell and Pearse (2015), where they write that gender, above all, is "a matter of the social relations within which individuals and groups act" (p. 11).

2.2 Gender identity

The importance of gender identity has been introduced by theorists in various disciplines such as by anthropologist Henrietta Moore (1994), who argues that "gender identity is manifestly the essence at the core of personal identity in many western discourses" (p. 37). Connell and Pearse (2015), argue that in relation to gender categories "identity includes our idea of what (…) belonging means, what kind of person we are, in consequence of being a woman or a man" (p. 6). In fact, "to most people, being a man or a woman is above all a matter of personal experience" (Connell & Pearse, 2015, p. 93). Such experiences include our adolescence and how we grow up, "the way we conduct family life and sexual relationships, the way we present ourselves in everyday situations, and the way we see ourselves" (Connell & Pearse, 2015, p. 93). In this light gender identities continue to develop as one grows up and gains various experiences and expectations. In fact, as argued by Risman and Davis (2013), when addressing how "individuals come to have a preference to do gender, we should focus on how identities are constructed through early childhood development, (…) modelling, and adult experiences, paying close attention to the internalisation of social mores" (p. 744). They continue to claim that "it is clearly the case that women and men internalise norms and become gendered cultural natives" (Risman & Davis, 2013, p. 745). In this way, they argue, gendered selves are products of individuals internalising either a male or a female identity which generally, although not always, creates feminine women and masculine men (Risman & Davis, 2013, p. 747). Gender identity is therefore both a product of societal gender norms, but furthermore shapes gender performance as discussed below. In fact, Healey (2014), reflects the work of Moore (1994), when he argues that "[p]erhaps the most fundamental aspect of a person's identity, gender deeply influences every part of one's life" (p. 2).

Although gender identity is widely recognised in the theorising of gender, the need to move beyond gender identity has been argued by several academics. Mary Louise Rasmussen is amongst these, and in 2009 she published an article discussing the continued significance "of gender identity as a category of analysis within the field of gender theory and research in education" (Rasmussen, 2009, p. 431). In her article she draws on various scholarly works, such as that by Paechter (2006), who argued that "[o]nce we understand that not all masculinities are entirely masculine, or femininities feminine, we may be able to think of ourselves as humans who construct our identities in various ways, some of which are related to ideal typical forms of masculinity and femininity, and some of which are not" (Paechter,

2006, p. 262). Rasmussen (2009), furthers this argument when writing that gender identity is not limited to "'who one considers oneself to be'" (Paechter in Rasmussen, 2009, p. 438), but that gender identity "is often mediated by how one appears to others" (Rasmussen, 2009, p. 438). This relates back to gender as socially constructed. Indeed, she argues that "[f]or some, gender identity is something that is a matter of public interest and debate, and, (…), constituting ourselves as viable sexed and gendered subjects is a project that constantly needs work" (Rasmussen, 2009, p. 438-9). Furthermore, she critiques the ways in which gender identity is argued to be entirely a product from within, and rather argues the extent to which it is shaped by expectations and context. She does not, however, argue that gender identity is no longer an important aspect of theorising about gender, rather the opposite. Her point contends the continued importance of assessing gender identity when exploring gender in theory.

As big a topic as gender identity is, it is rarely discussed in the context of climate change. An exception is Rocheleau et al., (1996), whom addressed identity in relation to climate action already in 1996, in writing that women have begun to "'redefine their identities' in ways which highlight female needs in relation to environmental issues" (p. 15). Whereas much work deals with gender and climate change in a wider sense, there arguably lacks literature discussing how gender identity specifically might influence climate action. Hopefully, this research might contribute to this field.

2.3 Gender as performance

Gender performance is another aspect of my framework. Connell and Pearse (2015), argue that whilst womanhood or manhood are not fixed by nature, they are also not solely "imposed from the outside, by social norms or pressure from authorities" (p. 6). Instead, they argue, "people construct *themselves* as masculine or feminine" (Connell & Pearse, 2015, p. 6). By this they mean that the ways in which we conduct ourselves is what signifies our place in the gender order of a given society. Additionally, however, they explain that whilst we make our own gender, the way through which we practice gender is shaped by the gender order of our society. We are therefore "not free to make it however we like" (Connell & Pearse, 2015, p. 73). This relates to West and Zimmerman's concept "Doing Gender" (1987). West and Zimmerman (1987), argue that "a person's gender is not simply an aspect of what one is, but, more fundamentally, it is something that one *does*, and does recurrently, in interaction with others" (p. 140). In this light, therefore, gender is invoked through our interactions, and reinforced by our actions. Drawing on gender identity as mentioned above, Ridgeway and Correll (2004), argue that gender works as background identity. Instead of being at the

forefront of one's behaviour, gender rather "becomes a bias in the way one enacts the role of [e.g.] manager (…), flight attendant or student" (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004, p. 516). Gender performance, therefore, addresses how individuals are constantly held accountable to their gender. In the words of Connell and Pearse (2015), "people engaging in everyday conduct (…) are held accountable in terms of their presumed 'sex category' as a man or woman" (p. 73).

2.3.1 Masculinities and femininities

Drawing on the conceptualisation of gender above, it can be argued that masculinity and femininity are not possessed or had, but rather performed and shaped by their context. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), argue that "masculinity is not a fixed entity embedded in the body or personality traits of individuals. Masculinities are configurations of practice that are accomplished in social action and, therefore, can differ according to gender relations in a particular social setting" (p. 836). This claim is supported by Schippers (2007) and Elmhirst (2015), who both argue that masculinities and femininities are constructed "through people's everyday practices" (Elmhirst, 2015, p. 62). Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), share some interesting insights on masculinity which might shed valuable light on the gender performance of the participants of this study. They speak specifically of hegemonic masculinity, drawing on Connell's earlier theory, and how it "presumes the subordination of nonhegemonic masculinities" (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 846). As argued by Connell (1995), "no masculinity arises except in a system of gender relations" (p. 71). Masculinity is therefore created as a response to femininity, and neither masculinity nor femininity exist without their contrast to each other (Connell, 1995, p. 68).

When discussing masculinity and femininity, and particularly with reference to gender hegemony, power is commonly mentioned. Rasmussen (2009), for example, argues that there are "arguments still to be had about how relations of power are distributed between femininities and masculinities, and between male bodies and female bodies" (p. 436). Furthermore, she argues that there is also a power struggle "between bodies that are intelligible and unintelligible within the framework of existing categorisations of gender" (Rasmussen, 2009, p. 436-7). Intelligible here is understood to mean recognisable, expected and understandable. Rasmussen (2009), relates her argument to the work of Schippers (2007), who argues that individuals who do not embody intelligible gender have less power than those who do, regardless of gender (Schippers, 2007, p. 436). Women who embody intelligible

gender might therefore have less power than intelligible men, but more power than both women and men who are un-intelligible.

Gender normativity is entirely dependent on the context in which it is performed, both in relation to time and place. Hegemonic masculinity, therefore, is fluid and can only be studied within its context. This calls for the continued re-examination of masculinities. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), offer some views on what should be reformulated surrounding the concept of hegemonic masculinity as it was presented in Connell's earlier theories. One such aspect, they argue, is the process of social embodiment. By social embodiment they mean the ways through which "hegemonic masculinity is related to particular ways of representing and using men's bodies" (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 851). An example includes how "[i]n youth, skilled bodily activity becomes a prime indicator of masculinity" (Connell & Messerschmidt, p. 851). Another example is how "[b]ody practices such as eating meat and taking risks on the road also become linked with masculine identities" (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 851). I have highlighted these examples specifically as they will prove particularly appropriate for the analysis of the findings of this research.

Elmhirst (2015), reflects on gender performance being a repeated act through which gender "comes to appear as natural and fixed" (p. 62). Paechter (2006), argues that "binary conceptions of masculinity and femininity (…) constrain both what we can think and who we can be" (p. 262), a concept which relates back to the discussion of theory of identities as presented above. The ways in which individuals do gender may therefore influence how they do climate action. Following the notion that you are meant to act a certain way according to your sex category may directly impact your behaviour. If in Dutch societies women are commonly perceived as more virtuous and nurturing than men, female students in Amsterdam might do more to act against climate change because they perceive such behaviour as expected to their gender role. Similarly, if no such associations are made to gender in this context, this may lead to different outcomes.

2.4 Application of theory

These dimensions of gender – gender as socially constructed, gender identity and gender as performed masculinities and femininities – are closely interlinked and overlapping, and all shed light on various aspects of how gender operates and how it is experienced. The way gender works as a background identity has been an important tool in identifying the ways in

which the participants' behaviour can be gendered, even when they do not recognise this fact themselves. Utilising the term "gender identity" when interviewing the participants allowed them to explore how their gender becomes a bias in how they act, which led some of the participants to identify the underlying implications their gender has on their behaviour. Additionally, viewing gender as socially constructed allowed for an open discussion surrounding the expectations and pressures the participants might feel from society or from their surroundings, revealing contrasting gendered pressures experienced by the male and female participants. The dimensions of gender as discussed in this chapter teach us more about how the genders are constructed and exist in relation to each other. Furthermore, we learn about how the tensions between the genders can create power dynamics. Utilising this approach in addressing the gendered perceptions of climate change in the Netherlands will therefore allow for a deeper understanding of gender and how it is shaped in the particular context of this study, and help in critically exploring the actions and perceptions of the participants.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

As climate change has gained increasing focus on the global development agenda, the various dimensions and complexities of the issue have been revealed. One such dimension is the debate about historical responsibility, and mitigation and adaptation strategies with reference to the global North and the global South. This debate largely affects climate action on a global scale, in addition to how climate change and climate action is perceived. This is because "international climate negotiations are (…) situated within the broader context of north-south economic relations" (Parks & Roberts, 2008, p. 631). There has furthermore been an increasing focus on the individual and sustainable behaviour. Particularly youth are under pressure to act sustainably. Additionally, there has been growing focus on how gender might affect climate change, particularly with reference to vulnerability, agency and risk. Gender in relation to climate change has mostly been discussed in the context of developing countries in the global South, but has in recent years been highlighted also in the context of the global North. This literature review will explore climate change and climate action in relation to gender, both on a more general level and specifically in the context of the Netherlands.

3.1 Climate change

To introduce climate change and climate action, a report by the Government of Ireland (n.d.), states that "climate change is one of the most serious issues facing the world" (p. 3). "There is a global consensus [that] climate change is proceeding at an unprecedented pace and scale" (Sethi & Puppim de Oliveira, 2015, p. 529), a fact that has caused climate change to "become a global concern" (Uddin, 2017, p. 106). Although climate change is considered to be a global problem, there is much debate surrounding what action to take against it. Essentially, there is discussion over historical responsibility and who is to take charge in climate action, leading to uncertainty in "how to solve the climate unbalance in an effective, efficient and fair manner" (Sethi & Puppim de Oliveira, 2015, p. 529). Generally, it is agreed upon that the global North is largely responsible for the environmental degradation compared to the global South (Parks & Roberts, 2008; Uddin, 2017). Connell and Pearse (2015), also argue that whereas climate change is a threat to humankind as a whole, the greatest risks are experienced by the poorest people in the global South. This divide in contribution and action is also commonly referred to when speaking of gender and climate change, as it is argued that women of the global South are the most vulnerable, and subsequently considered the ones most affected by climate change (Agostino & Lizarde, 2012). This will be further elaborated on throughout this literature review.

On a global level, therefore, it is intriguing to consider the Netherlands' perceptions and action against climate change as it is a country in the global North and therefore amongst the countries that have contributed much to climate change, but is feeling less of the effects. Even so, the effects the Netherlands might face due to climate change have been discussed for years. Kabat et al., (2005), talk about climate-proofing the country, arguing that the Netherlands faces several climate tests such as coping with increased flooding. Already at the publication of their paper in 2005, Kabat et al., wrote that "developing a climate-proofing strategy now is likely to be more cost effective than taking drastic actions later" (p. 284). When discussing climate change effects on the Netherlands, flooding and rising sea-levels are commonly mentioned. This is unsurprising as already back in 2008, "almost one-third of the country [was] located below average sea-level" (VanKoningsveld, Mulder, Stive, VanDerValk & VanDerWeck, 2008, p. 367). Runhaar, Mees, Wardekker, van der Sluijs and Driessen (212), build on the work of Kabat et al., (2005), when discussing adaptation strategies in the Netherlands, and how preparing for the effects of climate change might save economic consequences later. They particularly highlight the need for context-specific strategies (Runhaar et al., 2012). Similarly, van Eerd, Dieperink and Wiering (2015), discuss how the "number and frequency of high-impact floods have increased and climate change effects are expected to increase flood risks even more" (p. 188). They argue that Europe is generally exposed to floods to a larger extent than other natural disasters such as earthquakes or storms. This is particularly applicable to the Netherlands because the country is located "in a delta area with four medium-size, international rivers that flow into the North Sea" (van Eerd et al., 2015, p. 188).

3.2 Perspectives on gender and climate change

Looking into the role gender plays in climate change perceptions and actions, Terry (2009a, p. 1), makes the interesting point that human-induced climate change and its responses, on a superficial level, may seem gender neutral. However, she goes on to argue that "there are complex and dynamic links between gender relations and climate change" (Terry, 2009a, p. 1). Women are commonly depicted as vulnerable when discussing climate change. Connell and Pearse (2015), for example, argue that "a growing number of development practitioners make the case that women are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change" (p. 113). Terry (2009b), draws on this in writing that if "gender is mentioned at all as a climate issue, it is usually with reference to the particular vulnerability of poor women in the South" (p. 6). This is mainly because women make up the "largest percentage of the poor population"

(Agostino & Lizarde, 2012, p. 92). Additionally, it is commonly argued that the reason for women being particularly vulnerable is their dependency on natural resources, as well as the high level of female participation in agricultural production (Connell & Pearse, 2015; Terry, 2009a). Alston (2013), adds to this in writing that "despite increasing evidence that women are more vulnerable, it has become apparent that climate change policies, frameworks, discourses and solutions are rarely gender-sensitive" (p. 8). In order to tackle the impact climate change has on females, women should take part in shaping adaptation efforts in a way that will directly target female risks (Terry, 2009a).

The previous paragraph presents a rather general perception of gender and climate change. There have emerged various feminist perspectives through the decades that look more specifically at the ways through which environmental issues are gendered. These perspectives can be divided into two 'umbrella' groups, the 'ecofeminist' and the 'materialist' group (Sapra, 2017). The latter particularly includes Feminist Political Ecology (FPE), whereas the former refers to a variety of perspectives (Connell & Pearse, 2015, p. 113). Historically, ecofeminism tracks back to the 1970s and argues that there is an "'innate connection' between domination of nature and the oppression of women" (Sapra, 2017, p. 1). Connell and Pearse (2015), explain that in this view, women were "assumed to understand the workings of nature on the basis of their reproductive functions or an innate tendency towards nurturing and caring personalities" (p. 116). As Connell and Pearse (2015), argue, this view was contested; "few ecofeminists then agreed with the strong claims about women's biological affinity with nature, and almost none do so now" (p. 117). In fact, ecofeminism has been heavily criticised (Connell & Pearse, 2015; Sapra, 2017). In light of this, a "current affinity of ecofeminism is focused less on the 'natural' basis for women's agency and more on social dynamics linking women and nature" (Connell and Pearse, 2015, p. 117). Alston (2013), discusses such social dynamics when arguing that "women are more constrained by their responsibilities for the aged and children" (p. 9). These points largely reflect moves "within ecofeminism to adopt a more materialist analysis of the connection between women and the environment" (Sapra, 2017, p. 8).

Such a shift leaves ecofeminism more similar to Feminist Political Ecology (FPE), which according to Elmhirst (2015), is a concept which has "established itself as an influential subfield within gender and development studies" (p. 58). According to Elmhirst (2015), FPE looks specifically at power and politics in regard to the "gender dimensions of key questions around the politics of environmental degradation and conservation" (p. 58). In terms of power

and politics, various academic sources reflect the ways in which women must deal with climate change in a male-dominated context. For example, Sapra (2017), writes that women are often "denied control and rights over resources (…) in developing countries such as India and Kenya" (p. 11), and that "men often have more access to agro-forestry extension work" (p. 11). Unlike ecofeminism which historically viewed the connection between women and the environment as natural, FPE argues that "women's relationship with the environment is based on the fact that women are primarily responsible for tending the land and gathering products from forests, particularly in the global South" (Sapra, 2017, p. 9). In simple terms, FPE argues that "women's oppression is rooted in structural and material inequalities" (Sapra, 2017, p. 1).

Feminist Political Ecology has in recent years assessed the role of gender "through the influence of poststructuralist theories of subjectivity" (Elmhirst, 2015, p. 62). This approach looks at the way through which gender "is constituted in different contexts as a component of multiple and complex subjectivities" (Elmhirst, 2015, p. 62). Such subjectivities include "social differences and axes of power such as race, sexuality, class and place, and practices of 'development' themselves" (Elmhirst, 2011, p. 130). FPE no longer looks just at the role of gender in a particular context, but also assesses the way through which gender is constructed in that context. This effectively shifts the focus of analysis of gender and environment studies. Elmhirst (2015), explains this shift very well in writing that "rather than seeing gender as structuring people's interactions with and responses to environmental change or shaping their roles in natural resource management, the emphasis is on the way in which changing environmental conditions bring into existence categories of social difference including gender" (p. 62). This notion reflects the concept of gender as a background identity, as presented in chapter 2, pages 6-7. It is furthermore a concept similar to intersectionality theory, which is an analytical tool used to "shed light on how structures of power emerge and interact" (Kaijser & Kronsell, 2014, p. 418). Intersectionality can be especially helpful when investigating "how different individuals and groups relate differently to climate change, due to their situatedness in power structures" (Kaijser & Kronsell, 2014, p. 417). As the focus of this particular study is not on the interconnectedness of power structures or class differences, intersectionality will not be applied.

In her discussion of FPE, Elmhirst (2015), has highlighted the importance of gender when discussing climate change. She has furthermore demonstrated how feminist theories have shifted in a way which allows for approaches to climate change that put women at the centre.

Similarly, Arora-Jonsson (2011), argues that "a feminist response to global climate change must not only challenge masculine (…) knowledge about climate change but also the tendency to reinforce gendered polarities as well as North-South divides that tend to slot women as vulnerable or virtuous" (p. 750).

3.2.1 Women and caretaking

Motherhood, or caretaking, is frequently mentioned when discussing women and climate change. It is mentioned in this section because it ties directly back to gender and climate change, and because motherhood plays a part in many climate action areas. In a study on gender inequalities in green practices in Taiwan, Wang (2016), argues that "[t]he dominant notion of appropriate femininity is motherhood" (p. 89). In the study, Wang (2016), explores the ways in which the woman's role as caregiver affects her sustainability behaviour in various fields, including transportation and household activities.

Women's triple burden is commonly referenced in development literature, and frequently presented as reasons for why women may be more vulnerable. As argued in a study on household vulnerability in Latin America by Andersen, Verner and Wiebelt (2016), "[t]he fact that women and girls are often responsible for most of the unpaid care tasks around the household also means their lives are directly affected by the changes brought about by climate change. They often have to walk further to find increasingly scarce food, fuel and water, as well as caring for family members who are susceptible to the health risks linked to climate change" (p. 858). Connell and Pearse (2015), agree with this notion, and argue that one of the reasons why women are "particularly vulnerable to the effects of environmental change (…) is due to their (…) social role as carers and providers of food, and their labour in agricultural production" (p. 113). Similarly, Alston (2013), argues that "[w]omen are more constrained by their responsibilities for the aged and children" (p. 9). It is argued that the expectation of women to be caretakers can effectively hold them back from acting sustainably.

3.3 Climate action and consumer behaviour

Having introduced both climate change and gender in a more general and theoretical sense, it is time to discuss research on climate action, particularly on a more local and individual level. According to Barr, Shaw, Coles and Prillwitz (2010), there has been a "growing emphasis on the role of individual consumers and their potential to mitigate" (p. 474) against environmental problems. What is argued by Barr and Gilg (2006), however, is that individuals are unlikely to conform to large-scale changes as those commonly presented by governments and corporations. Instead, they argue, individuals demonstrate their sustainable behaviours

through every-day practices such as switching off lights when leaving a room (Barr & Gilg, 2006).

The ways in which consumer behaviour in relation to climate change can influence production are covered in various studies. Akaichi, de Grauw, Darmon and Revoredo-Giha (2016), for example, conducted a quantitative study on how consumers perceive the differences between carbon footprint and organic attributes in Scotland, the Netherlands and France. An important concept in such studies is willingness to pay (WTP), by which the consumers' purchasing habits are commonly measured. The study by Akaichi et al., (2016), reported that the "average Dutch respondent is likely to buy the cheapest ethical bananas as long as its price is lower than his/her WTP" (p. 981). Essentially, consumers demonstrate an interest and willingness to purchase more ethical and/or sustainable produce, as long as it does not conflict with their WTP. Canavari and Coderoni (2020), further argue that "[t]he consumer awareness is the foundation of sustainable consumption" (p. 3). They conducted a study on consumer preferences and carbon footprint labels in Italy, in which they argued for the importance of environmentally sustainable labels as a means of educating the consumers (Canavari & Coderoni, 2020). Such labels are an important, and relatively recent, addition to production. In 2005, Melanie Peters wrote an outline of how the Dutch consumer association incorporated corporate social responsibility as one of its main policy areas (Peters, 2005). At the time, she argued that "most consumers are unaware of the importance of their buying decisions" (Peters, 2005, p. 36). One reason for this, she argues, is that "[c]onsumers have very few means to distinguish 'good' and 'bad' products. They lack complete, verifiable information to make choices or even form an opinion on issues such as (…) environmental impact" (Peters, 2005, p. 36). That labels indicating sustainability and ethical values are being utilised therefore shows a step in the right direction (Canavari & Coderoni, 2020; Peters, 2005).

3.3.1 Households

When addressing the sustainable behaviours of individuals, "gendering of home climate change solutions" (Thoyre, 2020, p. 1), has emerged as relevant. Thoyre (2020), conducted a study on "[h]ome climate change mitigation practices as gendered labor" using the US as a case study (Thoyre, 2020, p. 1). Drawing on her findings, Thoyre (2020), mainly argues that women perform more housework than men, which means that additional home climate work is effectively added to women's workload. Therefore, she argues, home climate practices "can expand the gender "climate gap", representing a way that climate change solutions can exacerbate existing gender inequalities" (Thoyre, 2020, p.8). Whereas the work of Thoyre

(2020), was located in the US and thus mainly offers a perspective contextualised in the global North, Andersen et al., (2016), offer some insights based on research conducted in Latin America. They argue that the "fact that women and girls are often responsible for most of the unpaid care tasks around the household also means their lives are directly affected by the changes brought about by climate change" (Andersen et al., 2016, p. 858). The unpaid labour of women is commonly mentioned in development literature and research and is evidently a concept which is globally applicable. Similarly, Wang (2016), conducted research on green practices in Taiwan which largely reflects the abovementioned points. One of her male participants, who had previously demonstrated knowledge about green practices, struggled to answer questions relating to his households' recycling habits and practices and proceeded to claim that this was not his job. When Wang (2016), then asked him "[i]s that your mother and wife's job", he quickly agreed (Wang, 2016, p. 94). This part of her findings demonstrates the way in which green practices are commonly perceived to be the job of women in the cultural and geographical context of her study (Wang, 2016). In her conclusion she claims that "green practices are highly gendered" (p. 94), and argues that "[c]ompared with men, women are generally more willing to engage in green practices" (Wang, 2016, p. 94). A study by Brough, Wilkie, Ma, Isaac and Gal (2016), shared similar findings and argued that women are more likely to embrace sustainable behaviours than men. They conducted a quantitative study with university students, which explored whether the gender gap in sustainable consumption is shaped by an association between green behaviour and femininity (Brough et al., 2016). They argue that "women's likelihood to embrace sustainable behaviors more readily than men may be partially explained by an association between green behavior and femininity that threatens the gender identity of men" (Brough et al., 2016, p. 579), an argument which was reiterated in their findings.

3.3.2 Transportation

In light of the severity of climate change, Polk (2009), argues that [g]reenhouse gas emissions from the transport sector are a prime example where, both commercial and private use of fossil fuels are increasing at alarming rates" (p. 73). In her essay, Polk (2009), continues to argue that "[w]ithin the climate change discussion, private car use is one of the main sources of carbon dioxide emissions [which have emerged due to the] practical efficiency, convenience and comfort connected to car use" (p. 75). Arguably, men and women's mobility patterns are different as women, particularly caretakers, require short back-and-forth trips (Wang, 2016, p. 93). Since this is not generally accommodated for by public transportation systems, this leaves women more dependent on the freedom of car use. In her study, Wang

(2016), argues that women get much blame for carbon emissions through, for example, driving their children to school, when in reality, "in travel for all purposes, women use the car less and drive fewer miles than men" (p. 90). She continues to say that "the transportation sector is dominated by traditionally masculine areas of expertise and interest (Wang, 2016, p. 93), which effectively excludes women's needs from city planning. Polk (2009), shares this view and draws on the early work of Connell when she writes that "[w]ithin the transport sector, different types of masculinity (…) construct different gender patterns of behavior" (p. 75), and that the street is a "masculinized domain" (p. 75). Polk (2009), continues to argue that "[t]he individual behavior and attitudes of women and men in the transport sector (…) exist within a wider social context of gender norms, practices and ideologies" (p. 75), and that it is these norms that cause men and women to have differentiated mobility patterns. Furthermore, she claims that "women's behavior, on average, contributes less to pollution and accidents, than does men's, on average" (Polk, 2009, p. 75). Similarly, a study by Anfinsen, Lagesen and Ryhaug (2019), on gendered perceptions of electric vehicles (EV) in Norway, found that although the men and women of the study were almost equally interested in purchasing an EV, their reasons were somewhat different. Based on their findings, Anfinsen et al., (2019), argue that the female participants were slightly more interesting in the environmental benefits of an EV, whereas the male participants cared more about the mechanical aspects of EV's. Furthermore, their findings show that men were often portrayed as more competent EV drivers, but that this, in part, was caused by the men generally driving more than the women (Anfinsen et al., 2019, p. 45).

3.3.3 Food habits

With climate change becoming a globally recognised problem, much focus is put on individuals' food habits and their sustainability. The benefits of a plant-based diet are becoming widely discussed, both in reference to health and animal welfare, but increasingly also in the perspective of climate change. In their study with young Chinese, Turkish and Dutch adults in the Netherlands, Schösler, de Boer, Boersema and Aiking (2015), state that "achieving the objectives of sustainability, food security and public health in Western countries requires a transition to a less meat-based diet" (p. 152). It is argued, however, that not all consumers are aware of the importance of such a shift in consumption. In their qualitative study on involving consumers in transitioning to a low-carbon society, de Boer, de Witt and Aiking (2016), argued that "research has shown that consumers often underestimate the impacts of meat consumption on the environment, in general (…), and on climate change, in particular" (p. 19).

When applying a gender lens to this discourse, it becomes evident that generally speaking, men consume more meat than women. Sumpter (2015), for example, writes that "research has found that men are more likely to choose to eat meat, particularly red meat, when compared to fruits and vegetables" (p. 104). Similarly, a study by Rothgerber (2013), on meat and masculinity with male and female undergraduate students in Kentucky, demonstrated that women "reported eating completely vegetarian meals more often than did males" (p. 9). Many argue that the link between meat and masculinity is "an echo of the time of the hunter-gatherers" (Shösler et al., 2015, p. 153). Essentially, this is because in such a context, "men have dominated the hunting arena, while women have been largely excluded. This has allowed the product of the hunt – the meat – to be associated with masculinity" (Sumpter, 2015, p. 106). Furthermore, because "modern societies tend to associate gender in opposite terms, meat (…) has been deemed hearty and masculine, while lighter meats and produce are considered healthier and feminine" (Sumpter, 2015, p. 107). Another aspect of the meat and masculinity discourse is the belief that women care more about animal welfare than men do (Rothgerber, 2013). In fact, Rothgerber (2013), demonstrates that "[c]ompared with men, women hold stronger negative attitudes toward animal use" (p. 364), and further that "[g]ender appears to be an important moderator of attitudes towards vegetarianism, animal rights, and the eating of animals" (p. 364). It needs to be noted, however, that there has been a slight shift in the views on meat consumption, and furthermore that such perceptions are context dependent. Schösler et al., (2015), reported different results for the different ethnic groups in their study. Based on their findings they write that "meat-related gender differences crucially depend on cultural context" (p. 157). Their findings proved that there were much fewer differences in meat consumption amongst the native Dutch participants than the other groups, reflecting their cultural norms (Schösler et al., 2015). Furthermore, their findings discovered "that traditional framings of masculinity, emphasising that 'real men' eat meat, combined with a food environment where meat is abundantly available and cheap, may seriously hamper a transition to a less meat-based diet" (Schösler et al., 2015, p. 158). Whilst Schösler et al., (2015), argue that the link between meat and masculinity is less prominent in countries such as the Netherlands, Rothgerber (2013), argues that there remains a distinct link between the consumption of meat and masculinity, to the extent that "it seems reasonable to assume that following a vegetarian diet or deliberately reducing meat intake violates the spirit of Western hegemonic masculinity" (p. 371).

3.3.4 Youth and climate change

As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, the focus on individual behaviour particularly highlights the pressure that is being put on youth to act sustainably. El Zoghbi and El Ansari (2014), argue that as climate change has proven to pose long-term environmental threats, "youth are one of the main population groups who are threatened by the climate risks continuously [throughout] their lives" (p. 118). Their study was conducted with university students in the Netherlands, assessing "the ethical dimensions for climate change, and the implications for their well-being" (El Zoghbi & El Ansari, 2014, p. 118), using in-depth interviews. Furthermore, de Vreede, Warner and Pitter (2013), in their study on youth and sustainability through peer education, argue that "[y]outh taking action for a more sustainable future is critical if communities and societies are to live within their means" (p. 37). The United Nations also recognises the key role youth play in tackling climate change, and work with "youth-led and youth-focused organizations around the world" (Babugura, 2016, p. 320). Drawing on this, Collins (2015), argues that "young people are particularly adept at exerting influence on the ways in which the household as a whole consume" (p.22), effectively leaving the burden of sustainable behaviour on the shoulders of youth. She makes these claims from drawing on qualitative research with British teenagers (Collins, 2015), where she found that the complexity of household dynamics must be acknowledged by sustainability initiatives for such initiatives to be effective (p. 30). In short, she argues that the influence of teenagers is not one-sided, and that parental influence continues to shape behaviour as well (Collins, 2015).

El Zoghbi and El Ansari (2014), argue that "climate change can instill fear or mental worry amongst young people who are concerned with its impacts in their future and unable to adapt or otherwise protect themselves" (p. 118). Interestingly, a qualitative study on young Australians who engage in green practices by Perera and Hewege (2018), found that "young adults perceive climate change to be a "non-local" problem owing to various reasons. They have no local (personal) experience of climate change, are reluctant to engage or are unable to relate local environmental problems, if any, to climate change" (p. 760). This appears to also apply to youth in a Dutch context. Bosschaart (2019), writes that "the Amsterdam student perceives the risk of climate change primarily as a global and national problem and takes the risks to a lesser extent on himself" (p. 4, my translation). Whereas youth in Western countries can recognise the threat of climate change, they appear to struggle to apply this to their own context. Bosschaart (2019), continues to argue that whereas the Dutch students of his research

proved to be fairly knowledgeable about climate change and its effects, they were less inclined to adapt their own behaviour accordingly. For example, his study demonstrates that students in Amsterdam are unlikely to fly less, even when they know of the environmental benefits such an action would have (Bosschaart, 2019, p. 4). The same point was made in a study by Bosschaart, van der Schee and Kuiper (2016), which focused on "designing a flood-risk education program to enhance 15-year-old students' flood risk perception [in the Netherlands]" (p. 272). In their study, they stated clearly that "[s]tudents' personal flood-risk perception is low and they hardly perceive fear when thinking about flood risk" (p. 275), even though flooding in the Netherlands remains a threat which is expected to increase due to climate change (Bosschaart et al., 2016).

3.4 The research gap

As demonstrated, there is an increasing amount of research on climate change and gender in terms of motherhood, food habits, and transportation to mention a few. Particularly motherhood emerges as important, both on its own and in relation to several areas of research such as transportation. I would argue that more research is needed on climate change, gender and youth in a more gender equal setting such as the Netherlands. There is an increasing amount of research on young people and climate change, commonly in terms of households, consumer behaviour and trends. Often such research is conducted through the lens that young people are the generation of the future and thus should take greater charge in the fight against climate change. Gender and youth are important factors in shaping climate perceptions and action, and such a combination is not yet extensively researched, particularly in developed countries such as the Netherlands. Also, as mentioned in chapter 2, there is a lack of research on the distinct link between gender identity and climate action. I hope that this study can be an addition to the research area and help highlight the importance of including these factors when discussing climate change.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this chapter I am presenting and explaining the research design and research methods, the ways through which my research questions are linked to the data collected, recruitment of participants, and the data collection process, including challenges and technical equipment. I will also reflect on the data analysis methods used, as well as the quality of the research in terms of trustworthiness, transferability and credibility. Additionally, this chapter will dive into the ethical aspects of the research, with particular focus on consent and confidentiality and potential ethical dilemmas.

4.1 epistemological approach and research design

This project aims to explore and understand the individual and shared experiences of students in Amsterdam. The most appropriate epistemological approach for this project is an interpretative approach to social science (ISS). Epistemology justifies and evaluates knowledge (Carter & Little, 2007, p. 1317). Neuman (2011), explains that epistemology is the issue of how we know what we know, and ISS "describes and interprets how people conduct their daily lives" (Neuman, 2011, p. 105). ISS provides a good foundation for understanding the experiences of the participants. Furthermore, ISS is a helpful approach as it emphasises human agency, meaning that it sees people as "being able to make conscious choices" (Neuman, 2011, p. 104).

As the aim of this research is to explore and understand the experiences and perceptions of students living in Amsterdam, both in terms of climate change and gender, this project has benefitted from drawing on a phenomenological research design. Phenomenology studies the experiences of particular actors related to a phenomenon (Leavy, 2014, p. 22), in my case gender and climate change. The research design was built on the premise that "all of our knowledge and understanding of the world comes from our experiences" (Leavy, 2014, p. 88), which is appropriate as this study explores what the participants know, and how they know it.

Creswell (2007), and Leavy (2014), both discuss the importance of exposing one's bias when studying a given phenomenon. According to Creswell (2007), the researcher must be careful to "bracket out, as much as possible, their own experiences" (p. 61), in order to be able to fully explain the experiences of the participants. Similarly, Leavy (2014), argues that a researcher must first explore their own views and biases and how these can shape one's unique perception, before proceeding to analysing one's data. I have aimed to do so in section 4.7.

4.2 Study area

The fieldwork for this study took place in Amsterdam, the capital of the Netherlands. I was there for two months, in August and September of 2019. Most of the interviews were conducted in various locations in Amsterdam, such as at the Hogeschool van Amsterdam (English: Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences), and in cafés. Some of the interviews were conducted in Alkmaar, a city outside of Amsterdam, as that location was more convenient to a few of my participants.

Figure 1: Map of the Netherlands and Amsterdam (Google Maps, n.d., accessed May 25th, 2020).

4.3 Recruitment of participants and selection criteria

Prior to my fieldwork I set a list of participants criteria. The participants were to be Dutch students between the ages of 20-25, and studying at either the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences (HvA) or the University of Amsterdam (UvA). I hoped to ultimately have between 10-12 participants, and I also aimed for an even number of male and female participants to better address gender aspects of this project. During the course of my fieldwork some of these criteria were somewhat altered due to availability and convenience. These alterations were of little significance to the research, however.

The first few weeks of my stay in Amsterdam was mostly spent doing preliminary investigations for this project and recruiting participants. The latter proved harder than anticipated though I exploited all the sources which I could think of. One approach was contacting local youth organisation such as Enactus and Urgenda, both of which work within the area of sustainability. I heard back from neither. I further tried reaching out to social media platforms, including the “Students in Amsterdam” group on Facebook where I posted a request for participants, and the UvA Green Office on Facebook. Neither of these led to any recruitments. I emailed several professors at the HvA about my project, and one professor kindly invited me to speak with her class at the beginning of a lecture. I explained my research and encouraged the students to reach out if they were interested, which none of them

did. As I gained so little response from these approaches it took me a while to recruit enough participants. Eventually I succeeded. My first participant was recruited through handing out flyers at the HvA. I had furthermore corresponded with Dr. Adwin Bosschaart[1] at the HvA, who was kind enough to reach out to his students, asking if anyone would be willing to participate in my research. Three individuals responded to his inquiry and he forwarded their contact details to me. Out of the three I ultimately interviewed one, and he subsequently sent me the contact information of an additional three people who were interested in participating. I also asked my Dutch family whether they could help, through which I managed to recruit a few more participants. Ultimately, I ended up with a total of 10 participants: 5 men and 5 women. They are all Dutch students in Amsterdam between the ages of 19 and 26. Six of the participants are students at the HvA, and three are students at Inholland University of Applied Sciences. One participant studies at the UvA. Snowball sampling (Punch, 2014), thus turned out to be the most effective sampling strategy, and I recruited most of my participants through other participants. A summary of the participants is listed below.

Summary of participants list

Table 1: List of participants in individual interviews, using pseudonyms:

Name	*Gender*	*Age*	*Place of Study*	*Study area*
Reuben	Male	26	HvA	Teacher in Geography
Gijs	Male	24	Inholland	International Business Management Studies
Bram	Male	24	Inholland	International Business Management Studies
Willem	Male	20	HvA	Teacher in Geography
Sam	Male	24	HvA	Teacher in Geography
Amber	Female	25	HvA	Teacher in Mathematics
Felice	Female	19	Inholland	Green Biotechnology
Nina	Female	23	HvA	Teacher in English
Lotte	Female	19	HvA	International Business
Eva	Female	19	UvA	Information Science

[1] Dr. Bosschaart has given me his written consent to include his name in this way.

4.4 Methods of data collection

The primary data for this project was collected between August 1st and September 27th, 2019, through individual interviews which was my main source of data collection. Secondary sources have been used to aid the project.

4.4.1 Individual interviews

My main source of data collection is semi-structured individual interviews which I conducted during my time in the Netherlands. I chose semi-structured interviews, because as explained by Punch (2014), semi-structured interviews let the researcher follow a set list of questions whilst simultaneously allowing the participants to elaborate. The interview guide was a tool which was used in a flexible way, so the participants were encouraged to speak freely and not feel restricted by the questions of the guide. The goal was for the participants to share their experiences beyond the list of questions (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018). Aside from one instance, all the interviews were conducted one-on-one. The location of the interviews varied depending on what was convenient for the participant. The one interview which differed from the rest was a double interview featuring Gijs and Bram (see table 1). This was out of convenience as we were all at the same location simultaneously. Interestingly, I found that this interview led the participants to explore their opinions in relation to each other, which highlighted differences between them. This is particularly interesting because Gijs and Bram are very similar in terms of social positioning; they are the same age and follow the same study programme at the same university. They have also grown up in the same town.

The interviews ended up being different lengths, with most of them being around 30-40 minutes long. The differences in length were mainly due to the answers given by the participants. In some instances, the participants would give lengthy answers and tell anecdotes, and in others the participants would give short, close-ended answers. With all the participants I conversed both prior to, and after the interview itself. In some cases, we remained in conversation for over an hour after the interview, discussing both the topic at hand, and getting acquainted. This was both nice as I got to know the participants better beyond the interview setting, and it allowed a better insight into the answers they gave throughout the interviews. These conversations also served as a debriefing of the interview (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018). The participants were all friendly and seemed enthusiastic about participating. Whilst snowball sampling can lead to having many participants from the same social setting which might shape the final outcome, in my case it also meant that the individuals who did end up participating did so because they found the subject interesting and wanted to take part in the research. Regardless of the final length of the interviews, they all

provided good material about the topics at hand. The interviews were all conducted in English, except for one which was conducted in Dutch and since translated by me into English.

4.5 Ethical considerations

As argued by Orb, Eisenhauer and Wynaden (2000), "ethical issues are present in any kind of research" (p. 93), as is the case with mine. Particularly the issues of confidentiality and consent played a great role in my fieldwork, and special considerations were put in place to ensure that my research procedures were ethical. This project and its methods of data collection was approved by The Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) prior to my field work. My NSD application included both my interview guide and the consent letter I later presented to my participants. With the approval of the NSD I started my fieldwork in August of 2019. As stated in my NSD application, I have processed all my work on my personal laptop. To make sure the data was safe I have a password on my laptop, and I furthermore used a VPN (virtual private network), which I gained access to through the University of Bergen. This means that all data files were stored at the UiB server using the VPN connection through the whole research process.

4.5.1 Consent

Prior to each interview I had two approaches through which I gained the consent of the participant, as informed consent is at the core of ethical considerations in qualitative research (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018). Firstly, I had a verbal conversation with each participant, explaining the purpose of the study. I clarified that they have the right to withdraw their contribution at any time, also after the interview, and that they were not obliged to answer any questions if they did not want to do so. I also specified that they could stop the interview at any time, and I highlighted that their name and identity would remain entirely confidential throughout the research process and in the thesis. I asked if they would allow me to record the interviews and assured them that the recording would only be heard by me. Secondly, I presented the participant with the consent letter as approved by the NSD. The letter stated the same as was discussed in our verbal conversation, and furthermore described why they were selected to participate, who is in charge and how to reach us, and what their rights as a participant are. All the participants were given time to read through, and the interviews proceeded after the participants had signed it. By signing they gave their consent to participate and to be recorded, and for their contribution to potentially be sued in further research in case I choose to develop this project at a later time (e.g. for a PhD).

4.5.2 Confidentiality

As mentioned, I carefully explained to the participants that they would remain anonymous (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018). In line with this, I made sure to never start the recording until after they had introduced themselves and to refrain from recording any personal information, as to leave no digital trace of their identity. To further protect the anonymity of my participants, I have replaced their real names with pseudonyms throughout this project. Arguably, as the participants' place of study and degree are both stated, it is easier to identify the participant. As argued by Punch (2014), however, anonymity is "often a matter of degree, rather than being clear-cut" (p. 48). The participants are amongst a number of students studying the same degree, and I believe that this information provides a useful background to the participants' perceptions and understandings. I have therefore chosen to retain it.

4.5.3 Trust and honesty

It is important to gain rapport with the interviewees in order to ensure that they feel mutual trust with the researcher. Admittedly, this project does not concern what is generally considered sensitive information. There are, however, some areas of the interview guide which may be easier to answer if you feel comfortable with the person asking the question. This is why I found it important to have conversations with my participants before and after the interview itself. An example of this is how Reuben admitted that he enjoyed playing with barbies when he was younger, a point which will be explored in the chapters to come. He told me that he doubted everyone would so willingly admit this in an interview unless there was an element of trust.

4.5.4 Data management and analysis

With the consent of the participants, the interviews were recorded. The audio files were added to my password-protected computer with anonymous labels (e.g. "interview #1). The audio files were only kept on the computer until I had finished transcribing them. The VPN was always activated when I worked on the project. After the interviews were transcribed, the transcripts were added to NVivo, where I coded them. The interviews were then analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I worked with how the data materialised under different themes, with focus on climate change and gender separately, as well as together. I then grouped and analysed the themes in relation to my research questions.

4.6 Trustworthiness of research

When conducting research, an important aspect is the trustworthiness of the findings. The ways through which one measures trustworthiness of qualitative work differs from

quantitative work, "[s]ince qualitative research is focused on meaning and interpretation in cases which are unique and context-bound" (Yilmaz, 2013, p. 318). Credibility, dependability and transferability are commonly highlighted as important to qualitative work.

4.6.1 Credibility

Shenton (2004), argues that in terms of credibility of one's research there are certain measures a researcher can take in an attempt to "promote confidence that they have accurately recorded the phenomena under scrutiny" (p. 64). Essentially, credibility works to prove whether the findings of a study are credible, compared to what has been discovered by other studies. Additionally, it is important that the research seems credible to the participants, meaning that they find the result of the study to be true (Yilmaz, 2013, p. 320). The latter can be gained, for example, through repeating and confirming the participants' statements during interviews to make sure I have understood them correctly, something which I did at several points in my exchanges with the study participants.

A common measure of credibility in academia is thick description (Shenton, 2004; Yilmaz, 2013; Tracy, 2010). Thick description means explaining and describing the context and the situation of the research in great detail, leaving room for the reader to assess the extent to which the "overall findings 'ring true'" (Shenton, 2004, p. 69). I have therefore tried to deliver thick description of the research process in my empirical chapters, in hoping that this will increase the credibility of my project. Punch (2014), adds to this in discussing how qualitative research is not context-fee. Rather, he argues, the findings of a study are directly related to the context in which such a study is conducted (Punch, 2014). Punch (2014), therefore argues that thick description can help the reader understand the findings. Furthermore, Yilmaz (2013), argues for the importance of exposing one's bias in order for research to be credible. I have attempted to outline mine in section 4.7.

4.6.2 Dependability

Dependability is important to the trustworthiness of data because it assesses whether the findings are congruent with the raw data (Shenton, 2004). Additionally, dependability assesses the consistency of the research process (Yilmaz, 2013). Shenton (2004), further argues that it can be difficult to meet the standard of dependability because of "the changing nature of the phenomena scrutinised by qualitative researchers" (Shenton, 2004, p. 71). In attempting to meet the dependability criteria, I made an interview guide which was used as a tool throughout this study in a flexible way. Although I allowed the participants to elaborate and discuss those topics which they found most intriguing, all the interviews did follow the

same structure, as is the case with semi-structured interviews. I also made small changes to my original recruitment process, but these changes were insignificant and clearly disclosed.

4.6.3 Transferability

Transferability is the extent to which this research can be applied to other, similar settings. Punch (2014) argues that the second aspect of thick description (as mentioned above) is to "provide sufficient information about the context of the research so that a reader can judge the transferability (…) of its findings" (p. 160). Utilising thick description, therefore, aids both credibility and transferability in this project. Naturally, this study is very small and conducted over a short time period. Hopefully, however, this study can help highlight the ways in which gender and climate change are related in the context of the global North. More research would be necessary for there to be more certainty, and transferability, on this issue.

4.7 Role of the researcher and reflexivity

As previously mentioned, I aim to outline my own biases and motivations before proceeding to analyse my findings. Through doing so, I hope to enhance the credibility of my work. In this section I also cover the challenges I experienced when conducting my fieldwork.

4.7.1 Personal motivation

When covering my own views and bias, I should start with one of the main aspects of this research: Gender. I have grown up a cis-gendered girl and have frequently felt the pressures of societal expectations upon my behaviour and appearance. As I started University, I studied International Development, in which I was taught about gender and how most development issues have some gender aspect to it. This has opened my eyes to all the ways through which women around the globe are at a general disadvantage. As a result of this, I expected the female participants to express similar experiences to my own in the interviews, whereas I expected the male participants to express less gendered pressures and expectations. This may have influenced my conversations.

At university I also studied climate change, both on its own and in relation to gender. It has been made clear to me that climate change is accelerating at an unprecedented pace and scale, and that if change is not made immediately, we are likely to reach a point of no return. Whilst this has greatly motivated me to pursue issues of climate change, it has also left me somewhat critical of those who do not deem climate change a pressing issue. I believe my motivations have translated into my research, both through striving for a good research process that would yield interesting results, and my meetings with the participants.

Furthermore, my personal situation is similar to that of my participants which I believe has made it easier for me to connect with them. I have grown up in Norway, which bears many similarities to the Netherlands in terms of culture, climate change and gender. Both countries are developed countries in the global North, and both score highly on global assessments of gender-equality. My nationality is also partly Dutch, so I have a close, personal connection with both countries. I speak both languages, and I have frequently visited my family in the Netherlands although I have lived my whole life in Norway. Furthermore, I am the same age group as my participants, and I am also currently studying at a university. These factors combined quickly built rapport with the participants. It also led to nice conversations beyond the interviews themselves, as I would commonly converse with my participants for quite some time after we had concluded the interview.

4.7.2 Challenges and limitations

My biggest challenge, as I outlined in section 4.4., was recruiting participants. I got little response to my initial inquiries, so much of my time in Amsterdam was spent trying to reach out to various organisations, lecturers and individuals who I thought might be able to help. Time in this sense was also a challenge, as I might have been able to recruit more participants had I had more time. Luckily, Dr. Adwin Bosschaart was able to help me, and after I conducted my first interview it became easier to find participants through snowball sampling.

Another aspect which I found challenging was how to balance my interviews. As someone doing primary research and in-depth interviews for the first time, it was hard to assess the necessary balance between engaging with the participants and leaving them to elaborate on their own accord throughout the interviews. A level of interaction felt necessary for the participant to speak openly. However, I also wanted to be mindful not to shape or lead their answers with comments or inputs of my own. Brinkmann and Kvale (2018), demonstrates ways in which the interviewer can guide the topic and ask follow-up questions, without contributing their own position on the issue. Ultimately, I tried to gauge what was appropriate with each participant as they are all unique, and to learn from each interview for the next. I also took feedback from the participants in relation to how they felt the interview process had gone, and used this to improve.

CHAPTER 5: CLIMATE CHANGE AND CLIMATE ACTION

This chapter looks specifically at how the participants understand climate change, and how they feel it affects them on a regular basis. It furthermore aims to assess the participants' behaviour in relation to climate change, as well as their own perceptions of climate action. As the geographical location of this study is Amsterdam, the participants' responses will reflect this context. Additionally, their perceptions might be shaped by their young age. Young people commonly experience a different form of pressure in relation to climate action than older people do. Whilst this chapter presents the participants' perceptions in a general sense, it will also explore whether these perceptions reveal gendered disparities. For example, whether there are gendered ways through which the participants engage with climate action, or if the participants' knowledge about climate change is influenced by their gender.

5.1 Effects

This section starts by assessing the various effects of climate change which the participants identified. This includes both effects that they have personal experience of, and effects which demonstrate their general knowledge on the threat of climate change.

5.1.1 Rising sea levels

As one third of the Netherlands is located below sea level, it is unsurprising that about half of the participants mentioned rising sea levels as an effect of climate change.

> *Me: And how do you think the Netherlands is affected by climate change?*
>
> *Nina: I think, um, the changes we are noticing and would notice, even more the water, because we are below sea level, and then the more of ice cap melts, the water getting more high, so I think that's what we would notice the most and the dunes here, and the sea banks are not really holding back the water anymore, so that's what we're noticing right now.*

Similarly, Gijs and Bram agreed that the rising sea levels posed a more immediate threat to the Netherlands:

> *Gijs: Well I think the obvious one is the water is rising, we're below the water level. Think that's pretty much the main reason why we, what will harm our country, the Netherlands.*
>
> *Bram: Yeah I think that's the biggest one as well, the rising of the sea levels.*

This largely demonstrates how the geographical location of the participants is important in shaping their understandings and knowledge. The participants are easily identifying threats to their own surroundings. Although the participants have not yet experienced rising water levels, it is commonly believed to be amongst the biggest threats of climate change in the Netherlands.

5.1.2 Ice

Similar to rising sea levels, many participants identified changes in ice as an effect of climate change. Several of the participants spoke of ice melting in some capacity:

> *Me: What do you think about when you hear the words climate change?*
>
> *Gijs: Ice melting, and it becoming warmer. Yeah that's the first thing that comes to my mind.*

Bram, Felice, Nina and Lotte mentioned ice melting on a more global scale, such as ice caps and the North and South poles. On a more local level, Felice described how she has experienced a change in the presence of ice in her surroundings over the last few years:

> *The winters are increasingly worse. It could of course be a coincidence but in the years 2010 to 2012-2013 I could ice skate year after year during winter, but the last 5 years there hasn't even been ice on the lake, and I live by the water so I really notice it. It could of course be a coincidence that [the lake] froze good for a few years and not anymore, but you do notice it.*

Ice skating has always been an important part of Dutch culture. In former times, an eleven-city race across the country was organised every year the ice was thick enough. The race, which is called Elfstedentocht, has not been organised in the last 22 years as there has not been enough ice to conduct the race (Niesner, 2019). In the same way as rising sea levels, melting ice is significant to the geographical location of the participants and is therefore an effect which they can easily identify. Felice's experience with being unable to go ice skating reflects the national problem of the discontinuance of the Elfstedentocht.

5.1.3 Changing weather

Most of the participants mentioned changing weather as a climate change effect they both knew of and had experienced for themselves. Willem, for example, shared the following insights about climate change effects:

> *Well of course the melting of the ice caps, the rising of the sea of course...weather getting warmer, countries are...they say it's getting more like different weathers than*

they're used to. So for instance, Spain from the last week is getting these extreme rainfalls they never really expected, so you can definitely see there is some movements with climate change into the weather.

Willem continues to discuss climate change on a national level, drawing on his own experiences:

I have to say that the summers in the Netherlands are getting extremely hot, so in the summers it's getting like 32, almost 40 degrees, which back in the day never really happened. Same with winter, we used to have like a lot of snowy winters, and this year and every year it's like are we getting snow this year? No, probably not.

Especially warmer summers was identified by several of the participants, and many talked about how they had experienced this for themselves. The interviews of this study were all conducted in September 2019, and both Nina and Lotte mentioned how unusual it was for us to be able to sit outside at this time of year, as it would normally be too cold.

5.1.4 Natural climate change

Whilst all of the participants could identify various effects of climate change, both ones they had experienced for themselves and ones they knew about from various sources of information, half of the participants also mentioned that climate change, to some degree, is a natural process. For example, I had the following exchange with Reuben:

Me: (...) what do you think about when you hear the words climate change?

Reuben: I think, immediately, about like people are really scared about this, in [a] geography context, it's just [a] really natural process that has been there even when humans are not there.

Me: So what do you think has caused climate change?

Reuben: I think umm... It's like a normal, natural process.

Similarly, when discussing climate change with Gijs, he said the following:

I think it's important to distinguish that there has always been climate change, but since apparently humans are increasing the process of climate change now, and I think that's probably not a good thing because nature is slow, slow system, but yeah there's always been climate change that's definitely there.

Although some of the participants argue that climate change, in part, is natural, they leave no doubt that humanity has greatly increased the pace and scale at which climate change is

currently progressing. None of the participants are therefore denying that climate change is real, or that the current threat of climate change is anything but a man-made issue. Sam makes this distinction clear:

> *Sam: As a geography student [I know that] a lot of the climate change is being caused by nature itself, like volcanoes and the other natural disasters. But the big pollution, the big air pollution is from agriculture I believe, and that's because we have too much, I will say it in less neat words, shit from cows and other farm animals, and the second place I guess is the heavy industry and the third places are transport, all the infrastructure.*

It is therefore important to establish that none of the participants of this study are climate change sceptics; they all believe that it is a very real threat to the world, and they also believe that it to a large extent is the result of human consumerism and the pollution of large industries and corporations.

5.2 Sources of information

When looking at what the participants know about climate change, it is interesting to assess *how* they have gained such knowledge. Access to knowledge is vital in shaping one's understandings and perceptions of climate change and subsequent action. Several flows of information were identified by the participants.

5.2.2 Media

A source of information which came to light throughout the interviews was media in its various forms, including news broadcasting and social media platforms. For example, when discussing the issues of information with Gijs and Bram, the conversation went as follows:

> *Me: Do you frequently hear about climate change, from your surroundings or the media?*
>
> *Bram: Media, yes. It's like beating a dead horse. But, um, from my family or friends, little to none.*
>
> *Gijs: Yeah I guess it's not really something you talk about that often. But obviously you read about it all the time in the news.*

It became evident from various interviews that the participants experienced climate change to be a prominent topic in the media. The language used by Bram above indicates a level of annoyance at the extent to which climate change is covered by the media. The idiom "beating a dead horse" is generally used to establish that one believes further discussion on a specific topic to be pointless. From how Bram uses it in this example it is clear that he is tired of the

constant media coverage of the topic. Other participants expressed similar opinions. In my discussion with Sam, for example, I asked the same question regarding whether he frequently heard about climate change, to which he had the following response:

> *Yes, very much, yeah. It's like a storm of words you hear every day, and I think it's also making some people a bit...like they don't want to hear about it anymore. So we're spamming them with climate change, the words climate change, and sometimes it works in the wrong direction.*

Similar to Bram, Sam also uses a powerful phrase when referencing the media coverage of climate change. Describing it as a "storm of words" draws negative connotations, indicating that this is something constant, powerful, and hard to escape. Sam also clearly states that this form of constant coverage can make people tired of hearing about it. Arguably therefore, whilst the media is a powerful source of information it can also mean that the extent to which climate change is discussed can create a disinterest to further engage with the topic. This relies entirely on the form of media outlet, the way in which it is covered, and on the individual who consumes the information, however. Although Bram expresses a lack of interest in media currently, he did share some thoughts triggered by a film he watched:

> *I think in essence, climate change, at least for me, has been the same since the movie, what's the guy called again, with the movie? The undeniable truth, the Al Gore guy, that he pretty much explained what it was and in that sense my understanding has not changed [since then].*

Bram's experience with this movie has clearly made an impact on him, suggesting that when information is shared in the right way it might have a more meaningful impact on its audience. Different people will react positively or negatively to different sources of information. This also includes *social media* platforms, which were furthermore mentioned as a source of information by the participants. Lotte shared the following sentiment:

> *Lotte: I think I saw something on Instagram, it was a little girl who skipped school and she went to America and [they asked her] what is the craziest thing that you've heard about climate change, and then [she responded] that Americans don't believe that it's happening. That's something I saw. (...). [Often on Instagram] if something is happening really, like the Amazon on fire, then suddenly everything I see on my feed is about climate change.*

Just as with news broadcasting, social media platforms such as Instagram have a continuous flow of information about climate change in Lotte's experience. In this way social media can

be a powerful tool to reach out to its users, in how it mixes information about climate change and other important topics with the leisure commonly provided by such platforms. Arguably, however, as individuals often turn to social media platforms such as Instagram to engage with leisurely content, being subject to large quantities of news about global events may rather have a negative effect. Such a "storm of words" can also be overwhelming. Sam, for example, is annoyed at *how* climate change is commonly covered in the news:

> *I'm very glad people are talking about it, it's a very important topic to talk about. But I'm also annoyed by the fact that climate is used for a lot of sub-topics. Like, deforestation or pollution and all those kinds of topics. So a lot of people say that climate is not that important for them, but if I talk about deforestation, that is a huge topic for them. It's like a key word for all the problems we have with our environment. So that's my big frustration about the words climate change in our news.*

Sam argues that we need to discuss certain topics individually to gain a better understanding of them, rather than categorising all environmental issues under climate change as an umbrella term. Generally, the participants express negative emotion towards the media coverage of climate change. The consensus seems to be that there is too much, and too general information presented in a way that is overwhelming and unhelpful. That being said, the participants do seem to agree that it is a topic of importance, that is perhaps just presented to the public in a rather overpowering manner.

5.3 Action

Having illustrated how the participants understand and perceive climate change, this section shows their perceptions of climate action, the action they take themselves and the action they feel should be taken by others. Climate action here can be divided into two groups: climate action on a higher level, through politics, bigger companies and countries, and climate action on a more individual level, through consumer behaviour; both in reference to what the participants claim to do, but also what they think should be done.

5.3.1 Global action

Most of the participants share the opinion that climate change should be tackled by large corporations and contributors to pollution, through politics. They argue that this is a much more efficient way to tackle climate change than through individual action, both because more can be accomplished and because such corporations and companies are more to blame for environmental degradation to begin with.

In my interviews I asked the participants whether they understand climate change to be an important issue in *Dutch politics*. The Dutch government has set out to reduce their "greenhouse gas emissions by 49% by 2013, compared to 1990 levels" ("Climate Policy", 2019), a goal which is based on the recommendations of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Although this appears to be an important goal, the participants had different opinions on the extent to which climate change takes precedence in Dutch politics. Some of the participants believe climate change to be of great importance in their national politics:

> *Reuben: Like we have Groen Links, which is a political party, which is translated [as] Green Left, like young people are really voting for them, and we've got the kids who are also from high school, so going to the Hague and protesting for climate and environment.*

Groen Links was also mentioned by some of the other participants such as Felice, who agrees with Reuben that the political party is gaining popularity:

> *Me: Do you understand climate change to be an important issue in Dutch politics?*
>
> *Felice: Yeah, especially with the choosing of a new government lately, it came forward, Groen Links is a political party that's doing better and better and that's also what they stand for [climate change]. Yeah I think that now everyone is starting to notice and become aware of it, I mean there are still people who are saying it's a hoax, but in politics you have more people getting interested and also specifically voting for it.*

It appears from these two interviews that climate change is both important in Dutch politics, and that much is done in order to tackle the issue. Sam, on the other hand, does agree that climate change is important in national politics, but he argues that not enough is done to handle the matter: *It's an important issue but they are doing too [little] to tackle the problem*.

Others are of a completely different opinion and rather argue that political parties only pretend to care about climate change:

> *Me: Do you understand climate change to be an important issue in Dutch politics?*
>
> *Bram: I think they try to make it seem like they find it important, but once they start really implementing laws and that kind of stuff, it kind of gets put in the back burner. When they make decisions, as far as I know, they don't really take climate change into account.*

To put something on the back burner means to make it a low priority, which is what Bram thinks is the case in the Netherlands. He makes it clear that he believes that Dutch politicians do not really prioritise tackling climate change, but only pretend to do so. It is evident that most of the participants have contrasting views on what is prioritised in Dutch politics, possibly reflecting the sources of information which they are exposed to and how interested they are in the topic. It does not seem that their difference in opinion is shaped by their gender. Their opinions surrounding climate change in Dutch politics seem to be evenly distributed between the male and female participants. Neither the male nor the female participants demonstrate opinions on the topic which can be specifically linked to their gender, nor is there a pattern in which either gender largely contrasts the other. Although the participants had different opinions on climate change in politics, most of them do agree that real change must happen on a higher level for there for be any real change. Most of them referred to *large companies* and *factories* as the culprits of climate change and argue that any attempts to tackle the issue should start there.

> *Me: What do you consider the best way of tackling climate change on global level?*
>
> *Lotte: I think companies should do more. I think companies could do way more and I think governments should also give rules and regulations for companies and say you can do this, you can do that, and that should be implemented and that it should be controlled.*

Bram shared a similar opinion:

> *I'm of the opinion that it doesn't really have any use for consumers to change their behaviour, I mean, if you look at ... as far as I know, big companies are the biggest issue in regards to climate change.*

It appears from various interviews that some of the participants feel as though there is little point in changing their own behaviours if large companies do not change theirs. Bram elaborated on his previous point, making it clear that he believes climate change to be an important issue, albeit an issue he cannot contribute towards solving:

> *Me: What are your personal opinions in regard to climate change?*
>
> *Bram: Yeah, like I said, I think nowadays there is too much focus on consumer behaviour. I'm all down for everyone and everything changing, but I think nowadays they're just saying that people should use different bags, buy different cars etc., but when you look at the whole supply chain of the car being produced, it's produced in China and polluting left right and centre. I do have the opinion that it's one of the*

most important issues, especially for the next generation, because, well, it's do or die, basically. But I don't feel that as an individual I can make a substantial change to it. I think it would more be a hassle in my own life, taking things to account, than actually benefitting the world as a whole.

Here he uses yet another strong metaphor, in stating that climate change is an issue of "do or die". His choice of words highlights the importance of tackling climate change, particularly for the next generation. His argument is that as important climate change is, his contribution will not make enough of a difference. He argues that his efforts would cause more of a hassle on his own life than it would benefit the cause. It reflects a tension between what he thinks should be done and what he does himself. It is interesting that he believes his efforts would prove pointless on a larger scale, rather than viewing every bit of effort as valid and important in the fight against climate change, particularly when he refers to the issue as "do or die". The matter of action versus hassle is further explored later in this chapter.

Another aspect of global action relates to *geographical location.* As mentioned, geographical location can largely shape one's knowledge about climate change. Some of the participants argued that location can be an important factor in shaping both knowledge and climate action. Particularly the North-South divide emerged as relevant in this discussion:

Me: And how do you think the experiences of Dutch people might differ from countries in the global South?

Bram: I think there's less awareness there. Since they're probably still focusing on their first needs, like food, water, security, that kind of stuff, and therefore I think climate change in their countries is like a second rate issue, because why would you focus on climate change if you want to save the future, if you cannot even know if you're alive next week. Basically. So I don't think that's their main focus. And secondly, once they have business opportunities for example in Africa, I don't think they're worrying about polluting or anything, because they're finally making money for food. So they're not [going to] starve because they want to save the planet.

Gijs: Yeah I agree. But also, the extreme weather might be a little bit more difficult for them, because their crops and stuff may go bad because of it, and they can't really import as much as us I guess. So I think that's a concern of them.

Here Bram and Gijs argue that people living in countries of the global South may have different knowledge of climate change, which shapes their climate action. Additionally, the participants largely seem to agree that not all countries are equally equipped to tackle the

effects of climate change, and that poorer countries therefore experience the impact of climate change to a greater extent:

> *Me: Where do you understand climate change to have the most damaging effects?*
>
> *Reuben: I think in the most poor countries, who can't defend themselves. Like we, the Dutch, we're affected by climate change because the water levels rose, but we still live like we used to do, so this country actually needs to be under water, but we are protecting ourselves for hundreds of years, and this is pretty cool but it's because we're rich. And poor countries couldn't do this.*

Reuben brings a different perspective to the discussion and argues not that other countries lack the knowledge, but rather that they lack the financial resources to take action against climate change compared to countries such as the Netherlands. Furthermore, whilst Bram and Gijs discuss how individuals in countries of the global South may have different knowledge of climate change than individuals in the Netherlands do, Reuben discusses how a country might have different resources than another country. The two discussions therefore relate to different aspects of the problem, ultimately arriving at the same conclusion: That the Netherlands is better equipped to tackle climate change than some countries of the global South might be.

5.3.2 Consumer behaviour

This section explores consumer behaviour on an individual level and how the participants talk about action and the steps they take themselves to be more sustainable. The first point is similar to the discussion above, about how some countries may experience the effects of climate change differently. Most of the participants agreed that people of different social standing within the Netherlands have different experiences of climate change:

> *Lotte: I think so, because I know if people of a higher social [standing] have more money, and I know that they are more willing because like it's better to be better for the Earth, that's like a trend going on. And because I do an economic study, we see that we can charge more for people who earn more, because for them it's really a thing to be less wasteful and things like that. However, I think that someone who is like struggling to get by is like more like ok I don't care, I need it right now so I won't think about the consequences.*

She argues here that individuals with fewer financial resources are less concerned with climate change because they do not have the means to prioritise it. Rather, she argues, they have to prioritise more immediate needs. Similarly, Eva argued that:

> *I think that people with more money, they're more likely to buy things that are environmentally friendly because it's, well it's not expensive but it's not cheap either.*

Lotte and Eva seem to agree that individuals with more resources are more inclined to act sustainably. They argue that this is both because richer people have the financial means to do so, and because they have the freedom to prioritise sustainable products in a way which poorer individuals might not. This discussion mirrors the one above, and it seems the participants largely argue that richer individuals or countries both have the resources and the opportunity to prioritise climate change, whilst poorer individuals or countries do not. Additionally, they argue that access to economic resources can help shape knowledge and understanding.

Furthermore, some of the participants disagreed on whether consumer behaviour has any impact on the bigger picture. Bram and Gijs had contrasting opinions surrounding the importance of consumer behaviour in climate action. As I have demonstrated above, Bram believes there is no point in individuals acting sustainably if this poses a hassle to their lives. Gijs, on the other hand, argues for the importance of supply and demand in shaping the actions of larger corporations.

> *Gijs: If we would only buy Co2 neutral products then obviously that would cause a big change in the company's behaviour. But since we don't really give a shit as a population, then nothing changes.*

It is interesting that Bram and Gijs disagree on this since they have the same background, as demonstrated in chapter 4, page 24. Although Gijs believes that individuals can make a difference, he makes relatively little effort to act sustainably himself. In fact, he explained that aside from recycling, he really does not take climate change into account in his day-to-day actions. Some of the participants furthermore discussed how action can be largely shaped by context and peer influence. Amber, for example, discussed how people act differently in groups:

> *Yeah, I think there are a couple of groups who think very differently from each other, there's a group who is really active to change and willing to change and they [encourage others to do the same], there's a group who just go with the flow, do everything and some people, like me, they think about it but meh. And there's a group who isn't interested.*

Amber categorises different groups of people; some of which care greatly about climate change and act accordingly, and others who do rather little. She places herself in this landscape and argues that she is part of a group that thinks about climate change but do relatively little to be sustainable. “Meh” here indicates a lack of interest and action, where they are aware of climate change and its effects, but do not particularly engage with the topic. Amber’s argument was in response to how she thinks climate change affects Dutch people on a day-to-day basis. She indicates that the people one surrounds oneself with are likely to impact one’s action.

Recycling and waste management

Most of the participants did mention recycling as a form of climate action. Willem, Sam, Amber and Gijs all specifically stated that they consciously recycle as much as possible. Willem even mentioned how he picks up waste others have discarded as well:

> *One thing that I'm kind of doing is, maybe not really climate, well maybe it is, is like recycling, or putting stuff that people drop on the ground I'm like okay I'm going to pick that up and throw it in the garbage bin*.

Most of the participants seem to agree that recycling is an important, although rather easy way of contributing to the fight against climate change. Nina, on the other hand, stated a different opinion than the other participants in terms of recycling:

> *We have not really changed our plastic in stores or whatever, and I think that could really change a lot. So plastic, but also, because we recycle, but I know for a fact that all the recycled garbage is going into the same warehouse, what is it, burning factory, and they burn it all together. So what’s the point really. And that gives a lot of smoke and stuff and then you got the whole circle again, which, we recycle for nothing really.*

She makes it clear in this statement that she sees recycling as pointless in tackling climate change. This is a good example of a tension between what Nina knows and the action she takes. Earlier in our conversation, Nina discussed her own experiences in relation to education and climate change. Whilst she is currently studying at the HvA, she used to attend MBO, which is described as senior secondary vocational education on a lower level than her current university education (see Appendix A). She argues that people had different attitudes towards climate change there:

> *I used to go to MBO. I guess the crowd there was... they didn't care there as much as people at the university or here [HvA] would do, and they would just throw random things on the ground and stuff, and yeah we could get in a conflict about that, because I would say something about it and we'd go on and have a discussion, yeah.*

In this example, she argues that she would frequently have discussions about other people's littering. She is therefore clearly conscious about waste management, although she views recycling as a pointless action. As our conversation progressed, we continued to discuss educational backgrounds. I asked her whether social standing might influence how people experience climate change, to which she responded:

> *Yeah, for sure. I guess that... I don't like saying this because there would be a lot of people maybe with lower education that are still very aware, but I think there's a difference between people that are maybe not as, well, educated as people at the HvA or university, yeah don't really like saying that but I think that we get in contact more with topics that talk about climate change and stuff like that, yeah.*

This example illustrates the importance of sources of information, and how individuals can have different understandings based on where they gain their knowledge. It can also illustrate as was argued by Amber above, that different surroundings can shape behaviour. If your peers seem not to care about climate action, this might affect your own involvement. At the same time, however, it is clear that Nina discouraged unsustainable behaviour in this sense, and therefore did not conform, but rather rejected the behaviour of these peers. At a later point Nina mentioned how she normally has a reusable bottle, rather than buying plastic ones. Her thoughts and her actions thus seem to be somewhat conflicted.

Food habits

When discussing climate action, food habits emerged as another important aspect. The participants generally displayed a level of knowledge on how the meat industry might contribute to climate change, as well as the environmental benefits of a vegan diet. Nevertheless, Sam and Eva were the only participants who reported consuming less meat in a conscious effort to be more sustainable. Interestingly, Reuben discussed how easy it can be to transition to a plant-based lifestyle, particularly in a big city such as Amsterdam:

> *But if you become vegan, like being vegan in Amsterdam can be really easy, because you got a lot of vegan places and like there is a lot of information about it so I guess there's a movement going, of people who are really doing that together so I guess it is really easy.*

It is interesting therefore, if it is experienced as easy to be vegan, that only two of the participants try to eat less meat. Reuben himself, for example, goes on to talk about his continued consumption of animal products:

> *I eat a lot of chicken. Yeah, I eat a lot of protein, and I could also get this from beans and stuff, but that's really hard, I know guys who tried like vegan bodybuilding and stuff, but I'm just like...you could try that if you're like really into that you could try, but I'm not doing that, and I'm just, yeah, it's really horrible but I eat like a lot of chickens a day.*

His thoughts reflect what seems like feelings of guilt towards his food habits, but with no indication that he is about to change his actions. He mentions how substituting meat for beans in order to get protein is "really hard", mirroring what Bram stated previously about it being a hassle for him to change his behaviours. At the same time, however, it goes directly against what Reuben stated first, about veganism in Amsterdam being "easy". It seems therefore that he considers veganism a good option for others, but more of a struggle for himself. Sam, on the other hand, tries to eat less meat when he can:

> *Yeah, I'm trying to eat less meat, I am buying more often substitutes, and I am sorting my waste to recycle more. I'm travelling more with public transport. Yeah, it's like, if you try to put down the lights when you're not in your room, it's just a really small part of the pollution issue, but I'm turning off the lights every time I leave a room. I'm trying to be environmental friendly in every way I can be. It's very difficult for me to skip all the meats, to be vegan or vegetarian, it's a bit hypocritical, but sometimes I eat meat. But I'm trying to eat as little meat as I can eat.*

He is finding it hard to give up meat altogether, but unlike Reuben he is attempting to change his actions as much as possible. Eva takes it one step further and is a vegetarian who tries to eat vegan whenever she can:

> *Well I eat vegetarian, I don't eat meat ever, and I try to eat as vegan as possible, but not like difficultly vegan, just, I'm living my best life, my vegetarian life.*

Similarly to Sam being unable to give up all meat products, Eva seems currently unable or unwilling to give up animal products altogether. She is strict about never consuming meat, and whilst she tries to eat vegan whenever it is possible, she is more flexible in this regard. One aspect of this might be that Eva still lives with her parents, meaning that a decision to

become vegan would not only affect her but also her family and parents who might cook for her. The impression she is giving is that although she tries to be vegan, she will resort to vegetarianism in situations where being vegan is difficult, such as eating out and eating with others. Convenience, again, plays a large role in her decisions.

In a way these three examples show the same struggle although on different levels. All three participants are aware of the environmental effects of the consumption of animals. They all struggle to give up certain things, and they are changing varying degrees of their behaviour accordingly. They all recognise that their actions are not "perfect" in terms of consuming animal products, but that conforming to a plant-based diet would pose an inconvenience to their lives. Certain actions being a "struggle" or a "hassle" seems to be a recurring theme throughout the interviews, effectively preventing the participants from doing certain things even when they are aware of their environmental benefits. Although gender might be an underlying factor in the participants' food habits (this will be elaborated on later), there are no gendered disparities separating the participants who eat meat from those who do not. Two participants eat less meat, one female and one male. Although Eva is "more" vegetarian than Sam, this is not enough to make any statements about gender and food habits on a superficial level.

Transportation

Transportation was furthermore a topic that most of the participants mentioned in some way. The ways in which transportation can contribute to climate change appeared to be common knowledge amongst the participants. For instance, when asking Willem what he considered the best way of tackling climate change on a global level, he promptly said:

> *On a global level...well first to get rid of the most Co2 gases, what I like about this is like maybe getting cars into electricity or maybe some other types of energy. Yeah I think that's one of the main reasons or the main things I think it needs to be changed.*

Willem also mentioned the negative effects of cars when discussing climate change on a local level. Similarly, when asked the same question about climate change on a global level, Sam said the following:

> *The best way...yeah, it's really difficult to answer. But it's definitely our consumerism and how we do that, it's really, it's kind of a normal for a capitalistic world in which we live to consume a lot of products, and to buy a nice big car and to buy the biggest*

> *car if you are doing well. But it's not the right mental...how do you say it, the right thing to do if you're concerned about the environment. I think we have to work together to get more green options for the people for an affordable price.*

Again, there is reference to consumerism and the importance of consumer behaviour. Creating green options "for the people for an affordable price" highlights the discussion on social standing and finance which the participants argued to be important in shaping knowledge and action. If greener options are more expensive, people with fewer means might be less inclined to act sustainably. Gijs mentioned something similar:

> *There are some cars with high emissions, but those are mostly the older cars which [were] cheaper, but now the cheaper cars are more expensive because of the emissions. And the electric cars are already really expensive cars.*

Gijs argues that the options that used to be cheaper, and therefore more suitable for those with fewer funds, are no longer as cheap. What he means is that poorer individuals, who cannot afford sustainable cars such as electric ones, are being "punished" for this with steeper prices, again invoking the argument that being green is a privilege for those with more economic resources. Interestingly, none of the participants discuss that richer individuals who consume more also contribute more to climate change. When discussing the difference in resources the participants only argue that richer individuals can purchase more sustainable items. Poorer individuals, therefore, have arguably contributed less to climate change in terms of consumption, but can also do less to fight it because they cannot afford to.

In terms of their own behaviour, Sam is amongst the few participants who attempts to be more climate conscious when choosing transportation. He states that he is *travelling more with public transport*, which is commonly known to be a greener alternative to driving a private car. Bram, on the other hand, admitted that climate change has little impact over his choice of transportation:

> *But it's not like I'm taking the train for example, instead of the car. I still make that decision based on the best way to access something. So when I go to Amsterdam to the city centre I would take the train, because going there with a car is a hassle, but it's not a decision based on if I take the train it's more green or uses power whatsoever.*

Here Bram again uses the word "hassle", indicating that his actions are based on convenience rather than concern for the climate, just as demonstrated previously. Sustainability is more a

side effect of his choice, rather than the motivation behind his decision-making. Similarly, when discussing transportation with Eva, she stated that:

> *Well I'm kind of lazy so I don't bike everywhere, but I would like to bike more, but I'm too lazy for that so that's not going to happen. So, that's it.*

Eva demonstrates awareness of the sustainable effects of riding her bike, rather than driving a car or getting a bus. She has the knowledge and understanding about the way her actions contribute to climate change, but chooses to act differently based on convenience, just as Bram. A big difference between the two positions is that Eva claims that she would like to bike more, although she does not think it will happen. Bram makes no indication that he would like to be more sustainable in his transportation choices. Similar to the discussion around food habits, some of the participants indicate knowledge, but are ultimately led by convenience. Furthermore, it does not seem like gender influences the participants' action in relation to transportation. Only Sam opts for public transportation in an attempt to be more sustainable, but Eva also comments on wanting to do more in terms of sustainable transportation. Bram's choice to go by train is entirely based on convenience. Essentially, there are not large enough disparities between participants in terms of transportation that is indicative of gendered patterns of behaviours.

5.3.3 Climate inaction

Whilst there are some ways in which the participants of this study act against climate change, there are also many ways through which they do not. The various reasons for this inaction, and the ways in which the participants perceive them, will be elaborated on in this section.

Disinterest

Amber, Bram, Sam and Eva all mentioned being tired of hearing about climate change from the various sources of information. Also here there seems to be no gendered differences in the participants' perceptions. This disinterest relates back to section 5.2.2 Media, under sources of information. In that section the participants discussed how the constant media coverage in some cases worked against its purpose. When I asked Amber what first comes to mind when I say the words climate change, she responded as follows:

> *Double feelings, I think it's...sometimes I'm getting tired of it because there's so much (…) about it. But I agree, there is a problem, and it has to be...and we have to do something about it. But I don't know what.*

The statement indicates that Amber is losing interest in climate change because of how it is continuously presented to her in the media. Interestingly, she states that she does not know what can be done to tackle climate change. When discussing recycling previously, however, Amber was amongst the participants who stated that she consciously recycles. She also told me that she tries to be mindful when driving, and often gets irritated with her boyfriend for his driving too fast. It is evident that she does have the knowledge on various actions of sustainability, such as the ones mentioned here. The way in which she has phrased herself can therefore indicate that she feels overwhelmed by the constant coverage of climate change, and as a result feels paralysed. It can also indicate that she does not know how much she actually knows. By this I mean that this part of our conversation was fairly early in our interview, whereas her comment on recycling and driving emerged later. When asked about climate change in a general sense, therefore, she might be unaware of the small acts of sustainability she can do. When asked more specifically about climate action, on the other hand, she draws on her own experiences and shows that she is already doing quite a lot.

Pointlessness

Another reason why some of the participants may not act towards climate change is because they deem it pointless. One aspect of this is their failure to recognise any tangible change from their actions. Whilst the participants may be aware of the environmental impacts of their actions, they do not see tangible results when acting sustainably. It may therefore appear to be pointless actions. Bram shared his thoughts on this:

> *I don't think there are a lot of incentives, or reasons, for students to actually be part of the fight against climate change. But I think that's due to the fact that it's also intangible. If you're fighting for human rights you can get someone released from prison and you have tangible evidence, like 'I did something good, I did something well', and with climate change it's like 'oh we closed down this factory', but you do not have a tangible effect or something.*

As Bram argues, students may find it hard to act towards climate change because they do not see the reward of such action. Furthermore, when sustainable behaviour poses an inconvenience or is more expensive than less climate friendly alternatives, individuals may lose incentive to choose the environmentally friendly option. Bram argues that climate change is too vast and complex an issue for there to be an incentive to act against it. Previously in this chapter I also explored how Bram stated there was little point in him acting a certain way

because he does not believe he can make substantial difference as an individual. Felice was of a similar opinion:

> *Well I think it really does have to happen globally, like loads of people can say okay I want to produce less Co2 and it's always said that you can change the world yourself, but there is no point, you know, electrical cars and stuff is a fun idea but they make no difference.*

Here Felice explicitly states that she thinks there is no point, as an individual, to act green. She argues that change needs to happen on a higher level for there to be any real change. This relates back to the discussion on larger companies taking charge against climate change on page 38. If individuals feel that their contribution is pointless, it is understandable that they make little effort to change their behaviour.

Could do more

Whilst some of the participants argued that sustainable behaviour is pointless on an individual level, other participants discussed how they could do more to be sustainable. For example, when I asked how climate change affects Lotte's day-to-day life, she stated the following:

> *I think not, I think I could be thinking more about it, however these days I'm just on auto pilot, I get out of bed, get to school as fast as possible and then just go my day. So I think also just students in Amsterdam, I just think that we live life on like an automat pilot, and then we don't think about what we could have done to like prevent something.*

Her comment about being on auto pilot hints at the issue of convenience as mentioned previously. She is indicating that taking greater measures to be environmentally friendly would involve breaking out of her straight-forward routine and make changes to her reality, which to many can be considered an inconvenience. She does state that she believes she should be thinking more about climate change, but it seems that it is not currently her priority. When I asked Felice a similar question, she responded: *Yeah it's really bad, I'm really conscious of it but I don't really do anything even though I'm aware*. In this case, Felice does not state that she feels she should do more, which reflects her belief that individual action is pointless. Her statement does, however, demonstrate what has been discussed previously about participants having the knowledge to act but choosing not to. Although Felice does not say that she should do more, she does state that her lack of action is "bad", particularly

because she is aware of the issue. This is similar to a point which emerged in my conversation with Reuben, when we were discussing his food habits:

> *I'm going to be a geography teacher, you know I study with guys who became vegan and stuff, but I'm still, I'm ignorant. I actually just close my eyes. And it's also, I'm not really sure what change I can make, but I know deep inside that people who make the first step are the most important, but I'm not the guy who's making it. So, yeah, I'm ashamed of that, in a way, because I could do better.*

Here he elaborates on how his actions make him feel. He makes it clear that he is not entirely satisfied with his consumption habits because he is aware of the environmental effects of his actions. The way in which he discusses it is similar to Felice, as they both indicate that they know their behaviour is "bad". Reuben goes as far as to say he is "ashamed" of his lack of action. His comment also draws on what Bram mentioned above tangible effects. Reuben's words are giving the impression that if he could more easily see the effects of his actions, he might be more inclined to change his behaviour. As of right now, however, he is not in the process of changing his habits.

5.4 Chapter summary

The participants display various degrees of knowledge on the topic of climate change, as well as various levels of willingness to act. There are many reasons for the latter, including interest and a sense of rewards and purpose for their behaviour. Particularly the issue of convenience materialised throughout several interviews and seems to be a main obstacle to climate action for the participants. Most of the participants do recycle. This includes some of the participants who argued that individual climate action was pointless. There are clear tensions between what the participants choose to do in relation to their opinions and knowledge. This is particularly clear through the participants who reported feelings of guilt about their behaviour but who have no intent to readjust their actions.

Interestingly, there seem to be no gender differences in what the participants know about climate change and how they choose to act towards it. The climate action which the participants engage in does not seem to be dictated by their gender. One male and one female participant consciously eat more plant based. Both male and female participants discuss how convenience influences their travelling habits. Additionally, the participants' differences in opinion do not seem related to their gender. On a superficial level, therefore, there seems to be no gendered distributions in terms of neither perceptions nor actions.

Naturally, the first section of my interview guide by which the conversations were guided asked about climate change in a general sense in order to explore the participants' understandings unrelated to gender. As will be shown in the following chapters, the question of gender will become more relevant, firstly by discussing gender in a general sense in chapter 6, and then through applying that discourse to a discussion surrounding climate change in chapter 7.

CHAPTER 6: GENDERED PERCEPTIONS AND BEHAVIOURS

As presented in the introduction of this thesis, the Netherlands is globally considered to be a relatively gender equal country. It is therefore very intriguing how the participants, who are young residents of the Netherlands, actually understand and experience gender as a social phenomenon in their own lives. This chapter explores gender in a general sense. It presents how the participants understand the concept of gender, act according to gendered expectations and how they perceive gender roles. This will provide the basis for further analysis into the role gender plays in climate change and climate action, which will be discussed in the chapter to come. Interestingly, it became clear that all of the participants struggled to discuss gender. Many stated explicitly that they experienced the questions about gender as challenging to answer. Whilst climate change was clearly a topic which the participants had all heard about to some extent prior to this study, it was evident that many of the questions surrounding gender covered areas which the participants had not previously considered, something which made it difficult for them to respond. Particularly when asked more specific questions their answers reflected a male/female dichotomy which was less present in the broader conversations. Similar to their thoughts surrounding climate change, some of their ideas on gender contradict each other. This highlights the fact that there are tensions present in their own understanding of gender, just as there were tensions in their perceptions of climate change.

6.1 The concept of gender

6.1.1 Gender equality and complexity

The participants displayed various views and opinions on what gender is. Most of them agreed, however, that the understandings of gender in society has become less dichotomous over the last decade. Reuben, Sam, Bram, Nina, Lotte and Eva all argue that whilst there used to be a strong male/female dichotomy, this is no longer the case. Lotte, for example, argued that: *Society is changing and we are okay with like females having a career and being more into their job.* Lotte is of the opinion that the role of women has shifted from its traditional role as home-maker and is now accepted in a career environment. Similarly, both Reuben and Eva discuss things that they see as accepted in 2019, which were not as common when they were younger. Both use soccer as an example:

Reuben: I think, so well now it is a really big topic, because gender is like, we've got male/female from the past and now we're coming to the conclusion that girls can play soccer and guys can go get their nails done.

Eva: I played soccer when I was a kid, so yeah. The boys always seemed to have it easier than girls because girls can't play soccer and all that stuff. Nowadays they can, but back in the days it wasn't like that.

Reuben and Eva both refer to activities which were previously associated with males and the masculine or females and the feminine, and how such activities are no longer limited by such associations. Interestingly, Reuben speaks of soccer in a way which indicates that in his environment growing up, girls were less likely, or less welcome, to play soccer. Eva seems of a similar opinion in stating that girls could not play soccer when she was growing up. It seems from what Eva says that she has met certain resistance which she believes that boys have not. In claiming that boys always seemed to have it easier she suggests that the resistance she might have met growing up, in terms of playing soccer for example, was directly related to her gender. It is interesting to see these two recollections on soccer from two different perspectives: a male and a female. The way in which Reuben expresses himself in saying that "we're coming to the conclusion that girls can play soccer" indicates that he was also aware of the same gendered barriers which Eva hints at, but that he was not personally affected by them. When talking with Reuben, he mentioned that it would have been easier to have a conversation about gender 10 years ago, as the distinction between the male and female would have been clearer. Nina mirrored his thoughts when saying that:

Gender, well, for me it has become more difficult to understand recently because there is like, gender is not only boy or girl, I see it more as it's everyone and everything and whatever you want to be, really. That's how I think about it.

Nina reflects on the openness currently emerging around gender, which in her opinion makes it challenging to discuss. Although she might find it challenging, she is expressing an acceptance of non-normativity in stating that gender is "everyone and everything you want it to be". The participants seem to agree that their society is developing a more accepting attitude towards gender non-normativity. Such a development has emerged from the realisation that gender is shaped by one's surroundings and individuality, rather than exclusively biological foundations. As Nina argues, however, gender has become more of a complex concept when it is no longer limited to the binary male and female. Amber made another interesting point regarding gender:

There are two ways, the outside – how you look, how you dress, and the inside – how do you feel. There's a difference, how do you act and how do you feel.

Amber argues that gender is beyond just man and woman, and also includes non-normativity. There seems to be a general agreement among the participants that whilst biology does matter, it no longer has to define your actions or how you identify. This is one of the areas which the participants struggled with. Although the participants argued that they do connect gender to biological sex (see below), which is in part shaped by what they have been taught growing up, they also stated that they had no problem with individuals who identify in a non-normative manner. Willem, for example, stated as follows:

Like, of course it's male or female because there is some kind of difference but please feel free how you feel, that is not really a problem for me.

His sentiment was shared by other participants. Whilst some of the participants struggled to define gender, they all spoke of it in a way which indicates that they are, or are trying to be, largely open-minded about how others might choose to act and identify. The participants also largely agreed that expectations to one's gender can shape one's gender identity, which will be elaborated on in section 6.9. Furthermore, some of the participants recognised that society is working to diminish traditional gender roles, which was demonstrated in the example relating to soccer previously. The growing acceptance of non-normativity relates to decreasing pressure to conform to traditional gender roles.

6.1.2 Biological foundations

Although the participants argued that there is a degree of fluidity surrounding gender in their contemporary society, most of them do still argue that there is an inherent biological difference between men and women which causes the genders to be different. By this the participants are not referring to the obvious difference in reproductive organs and such, but rather the differences such as women being more caring and nurturing and men being stronger and stricter. When I asked Gijs and Bram how they understand the concept of gender, we had the following exchange:

Me: How do you understand the concept of gender?

Gijs: The concept of gender to me is like, you're either male or female. I think that's the main concept of it. I guess.

Bram: Yeah I have a binary understanding of gender as well. Like, male or female. And there are other genders as well, nothing against them whatsoever, but I think we should look at it from a biological standpoint. You're either male or female and not the other genders, which are, well, might sound offensive, but made up in this case. Like there's no science behind it so it's all a mental thing. And I think in the end we should really take a scientific look at it from a biological standpoint. You're male or female and not anything else. But that's not really identity wise, I can understand that when a transgender identifies as a female, fine by me, but from a biological standpoint you are still a male and it should be registered as well in case of if you need to go to the hospital.

Bram seems to differentiate between biology and identity. The language he uses is interesting with words such as "binary" which refers to a concept consisting of two parts: male and female in this case. Both Gijs and Bram continue to discuss how they see little difference between men and women. That the two of them argue for a binary understanding of gender here highlights the tensions at play when the participants talk about gender. They are not alone in arguing that there remains some dualism in how gender is perceived:

Felice: Well for me it's a matter of biology, how you're born, it's really hard because when people change their genders, biologically they're still a man or a woman, it's just that they feel different than what they're biologically born as.

Although Felice seems to acknowledge that one's gender identity might break the boundaries of one's biological sex, she seems less inclined to accept it than Willem. Bram and Felice seem to agree that regardless of how one might identify (e.g. as transgender), biology still matters. Reuben's thoughts on the topic reveals less certainty than the examples stated above, as he tries to find an answer to what might cause the genders to act differently:

Yeah maybe it's like evolutionary that men are the hunters, and that we need to provide everything and we want to get as much stuff as we could get for our tribe, maybe... And then women are more the protectors of the tribe. Maybe something, (...) like that? That could be an explanation for me... You know the only thing I can say about gender these days is how you act like really back in the days.

His answer is presented more as a question and indicates that he is trying to make sense of a concept which has somewhat lost its meaning. He makes this clear through his reference to "back in the days", when gender was more dualistic, and thus perhaps easier to define. Here is one of the instances in which you can clearly see how the participants struggled with defining gender because they had not previously considered such questions. Even so, Reuben does his

best to navigate the conversation, drawing on what he knew from the past and what he believes about the present.

6.2 Expectations

When asking the participants about gender, a large part of the discussion circled around expectations: whether they experience certain expectations to them as a man or a woman, from society, family or friends, and in turn if such expectations have any influence on the way they act. The participants had various insights to offer on this topic, but most of them seemed to agree that societal expectations help shape how the genders act. Nina said it simply:

> *I guess there are certain things that are expected of women or men, and other than that, really, I think we should be the same and are kind of the same.*

Nina seems to argue that one of the main differences between the genders are the societal expectations placed upon them. If such expectations ceased to exist, perhaps the genders would become more similar. She does not make it clear whether such expectations cause the genders to act differently, or if the expectations themselves are what is different between the genders. Nina argues that the genders should be equal, and in certain ways already are. When discussing gender expectations, Willem had some interesting insights. He has moved from his hometown to Amsterdam, and when I asked whether his experience of gendered expectations was different when he was still at home, he responded:

> *Oh yeah definitely. Like, in [my hometown], even though it's like an hour away from [Amsterdam], it's like...I don't know, you don't really see a lot of different things, it's mostly like the stereotypical how to be a cool guy, normal guy, whatever, and when you're in Amsterdam you just see like everything, like the whole aspect of the rainbow you kind of see here and it's really cool and it kind of opened my mind that there are so many more possibilities I never really thought of when I was in [my home town] as well, so I'm just here experiencing everything.*

Willem makes it clear that he experiences Amsterdam to be much freer in terms of gendered expectations and gendered behaviour. Moving to Amsterdam has introduced Willem to gender as a spectrum rather than a dichotomy, with much more gender diversity and non-normativity. The way in which he discusses his experience is shaped by a positive narrative and he is expressing a sense of relief around this change. His insights reflect that while societal expectations may still play a role in influencing gender behaviour, such expectation can depend on the location and culture. Amsterdam is a major city that hosts different peoples

and cultures to a larger extent that Willem's hometown and therefore allows a gender diversity which Willem had not previously experienced.

6.2.1 Traditional gender roles

In discussing different expectations to their gender, it became evident that the expectations felt by the female participants are different to those felt by the male participants. For example, several of the female participants talked about societal expectations for them to grow up and have children and get married. I asked Lotte whether she experienced certain pressures from her surroundings due to her being female. She had the following response:

> *I do think like for a female it is get a job, get a baby, get a dog, get a husband, you know stuff like that.*

Lotte's perception is that a traditional view of women as mothers is what is expected of the female gender. Nina has a similar view: *I think having babies is such a sort of expectation for women to do.* Interestingly, neither Lotte nor Nina seem to believe that this is what *they* should do with *their* lives. Rather, they are reflecting on what expectations they are experiencing from their surroundings to the female gender. This can indicate a tension between the traditional views of women, and a more progressive view of women such as the perspectives discussed in section 6.1. Traditional perceptions seem to be lingering, even if the younger generation does not feel a need to meet such expectations. Lotte continues to state that whilst there is a general expectation for women to bear children, she does not let this affect her. In fact, whilst talking with her friends they reflected on this:

> *Lotte: We were also talking yesterday about that with friends, about getting a house, getting a baby, and I was like I'm not thinking about that at the moment, at all. So I think it's... I'm not really shaped by that, because I think it will get somewhere. I know my aunt got, like ten years after she was supposed to be done she got one, a child. So I don't think that because I'm a female that I'm thinking like 'oh I should get a baby', and I know that it's my decision if I do that and so I don't think I'm really shaped by that.*

Lotte is not disregarding potentially having children in the future, but she is clear that she is not letting the expectation to become a mother shape her actions in the present. She talks about how her aunt got a child years after it was expected of her, and she seems certain that the motherhood aspect of her life will come if and when she is ready for it.

The male participants did not discuss experiencing pressure to settle down and start a family. This indicates that whilst most of the participants argue that the genders are fairly equal in

contemporary Netherlands, the more stereotypical perceptions of the genders seem to remain. This also proves true when talking to the male participants, who experience gendered expectations in an entirely different way. Sam, for example, shared the following thoughts surrounding what he feels is expected of him as a male:

> *Yeah, you have to be strong and masculine, and you have to be manly. Like, I like to grow my beard but it's also a bit more masculine, so I do it as well for that issue.*

He argues here that his actions, in part, are shaped by what he feels society expects of him. He further argues that such pressures on his behaviour helped shape his gender identity, particularly in his shift from childhood to adolescence:

> *Sam: I think a part of me is shaped by expectations of others, yeah. Because when I was a little child I was acting really gender neutral, and since some people told me 'no that's girly, that's not masculine, you have to act like this', I was shaping into a more masculine type of person, yeah.*

Sam reflects on the pressures he feels to be a "masculine" male. Growing up he was unaware of gendered expectations, but was eventually told to keep from acting "girly" which, in his own experience, has effectively shaped his current gender identity. His reflections are mirrored by the experiences of Reuben, who also explains how he enjoyed playing with traditionally feminine toys (such as barbies) as a child, until he was told it was not appropriate for his gender. Just like Sam, Reuben also talks about how expectations to be masculine at his current age shapes his behaviour, such as continuing to consume a lot of chicken due to his desire to maintain large muscles:

> *I for example do a lot of sports and my gender identity asks that I'm like a muscular man, that's what I like to be, maybe that's society…That's probably society's way of thinking of what I think women would like, if they look at me find attractive, so that's why I eat a lot of chicken, for example.*

It is clear from our conversation that it is very important to Reuben to maintain his sense of masculinity through doing sports and eating enough protein. It is also clear that this behaviour, at least in part, is shaped by his desire to be liked by women. This is indicative of internalised heteronormativity, where heterosexuality, established on the gender binary, is believed to be default. When I asked Reuben how he might act differently if he were a woman, he said:

A woman doesn't need to grow muscular. My sister for example, we are a lot alike, but she doesn't want to get big and muscular. She just wants to be lean and thin, and she doesn't need to grow.

In arguing that women do not need to "grow", he indicates that men do. Reuben argues that him and his sister are "a lot alike", but that one significant difference is that she does not need to grow muscles, whereas he does. Interestingly, he argues both that his sister does not *want* to grow, but also that she does not *need* to grow. This can reflect some tensions with his own experience of societal pressures, where he struggles to differentiate between what is expected of him and what he wants himself. Throughout this study it seems that the expectations that the female and male participants voice are linked to traditional gender roles, where the women are seen as homemakers and mothers, and the men are expected to be strong and masculine.

6.2.2 Behaviour

As demonstrated above, the participants have various opinions about gender, gender identity and about expectations and pressures that may shape behaviour. This section, therefore, looks at such gendered behaviours, how they correlate with what the participants have previously stated and to what extent they conform to traditional gender roles. For example, during my conversation with Gijs we spoke of identity, and how identity may be shaped by gender.

Gijs: I think it's definitely related to gender. I mean, how we behave I guess when we go out to the bar, we behave [very] different than girls who go out to the bar. I mean, our conversations are a lot different. Yeah, guys they treat each other really different than girls do. That has definitely shaped my identity at least. I think that's fairly logical and natural, I mean you could...obviously it's part of your identity.

Curious about his use of the words 'logical' and 'natural', I asked him whether he believed that such differences were due to biology or whether they are a result of societal expectations.

Gijs: Nature or nurture, is it... I guess it's not biological so I think it's from the expectations, yeah, I guess. I mean it wouldn't... there's no logical sense that we have these different conversations, these different behaviours. I think it must be from expectations, I guess. I think so.

It seems in this instance that difference in behaviour is incorporated as 'natural' until it is questioned and given second thought, upon which the participants may realise they are results of societal conditioning. There are many tensions at play, and the participants seem to struggle in navigating their own thoughts and ideas surrounding gender. It may be that they struggle because they have not yet been disposed to a critical view of heteronormativity. This does not mean, however, that all of the participants accept certain pressures they feel are placed upon them by society. Particularly the female participants seem inclined to identify expectations they do not agree with. In some instances, they reject such expectations, such as with Lotte and motherhood as discussed above. In other cases, however, it is not as easy. Nina, for example, reflected on how she alters her behaviour to better conform to expectations to her gender, particularly in the workplace:

> *Well again, from my family there are no expectations really, but when I think about at my work, for instance, when I teach, yeah there are [expectations]. I shouldn't dress too sexy or whatever and those kinds of things are a bit hard for me to accept sometimes. It's not like I would [dress too sexy] but if I want to wear tight jeans, I'm held back a little because it's frowned upon. With guys it really doesn't matter because they're guys, you know. Girls would not normally look at guys like 'oh my god he's wearing tight jeans'. Yeah, so kind of like that.*

She continues to say that she feels a little held back by such restrictions. Here she makes the assumption that she, as a female, experiences something a male would not. Although Nina is unhappy with this expectation to her gender, she does not reject it. She alters her behaviour because she feels it is expected of her. She clearly makes the point that she does not do what she wants to do, such as wear tight jeans, because of the pressures she experiences from society. Nina's experiences are similar to those of Eva, who discussed gendered restrictions in her life through a negative narrative. Just like Nina, Eva also argued that her male counterparts are less limited by their gender, and therefore face fewer difficulties. The issue of clothing raised by Nina is not mentioned by any of the male participants, which coincides with her opinion that this is an issue exclusive to females.

6.3 Chapter summary

From these findings it is evident that whilst the participants believe that there are limited differences between the genders in their Dutch context, there still are many tensions at play, particularly in reference to expectations and behaviour. Some of the participants argue that the genders are equal, but then proceed to argue how the genders are expected to act in contrast to

each other. The ways in which the participants relate to societal expectations is particularly noteworthy; whereas the female participants largely reject the expectations to become mothers right away, the male participants to a large extent strive to meet the expectations to be masculine. The participants' reflections are complex and quite often contradictory. They often make claims about what they believe to be true, but when they are asked to provide more details, they double back and question what they stated in the first place. For example, it is clear that most of the participants struggle with the emerging openness around non-normativity; not because they do not accept it but because it makes the concept of gender more complex and harder to define. It is also clear that whilst the participants generally display acceptance in regard to non-normativity, some of them still struggle not to view gender as mainly biological. Some of the participants also continue to conform to traditional views of their gender. These findings demonstrate that both the female and male participants felt certain pressures growing up, as well as expectations to remain within the boundaries of their gender at their current age. The participants are, however, displaying awareness of the limits of such boundaries and how such boundaries are starting to fade. Gender as a concept is becoming more flexible and fluid, and this shift is highly present in environments such as Amsterdam.

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CHAPTER 7: GENDER AND CLIMATE CHANGE

After having introduced climate change and gender separately, it is time to discuss the two domains in relation to each other, to see if there are any ways in which they are linked in the eyes of the study participants. Drawing on the findings in chapter 5, it is evident that the participants generally make little effort to be more sustainable and they express awareness around their own inactivity. Recycling was, for example, the most commonly mentioned climate action, and most of the participants reported recycling to be the only conscious effort they make in terms of climate action. In chapter 6 it became clear that the participants struggled with the complexity of gender. They commonly mentioned that there is little difference between the genders. It became evident, however, that most of the participants had never before critically examined the role gender has played in shaping their lives through societal expectations. Therefore, when discussing gender as socially constructed and the ways in which this has affected the participants, tensions emerged. So far, there seem to be no link between the participants' gender and their climate action. In chapter 5, where climate change was discussed in a general sense, it became clear that the participants had not considered gender to be an aspect of the climate change debate. Furthermore, when assessing how the participants act in relation to climate change no obvious gendered disparities emerged. This chapter therefore looks further into whether there is a gender aspect to how the students understand, perceive and act towards climate change and to which degree the participants may be aware of such an influence. This chapter is largely drawing on the parts of our conversations in which gender and climate change were discussed in relation to each other.

7.1 Climate change and gender are unrelated

Some of the participants argued that there is no difference in how the genders experience and understand climate change. Bram, for example, stated this explicitly:

> *No. I don't think there's any relation between gender and climate change because climate change in itself is a non-gender issue, it's an issue for everyone and all.*

His argument is that whatever gender differences might, or might not exist, they are not related to climate change because climate change is an entirely gender-neutral issue. His statement therefore does not reflect his personal opinions surrounding gender itself, just about gender in regard to climate change. Felice shares his view that the two domains are unrelated. During our conversation, she argued that climate change is not an issue shaped by gender:

Felice: I think that it isn't connected to gender, but to personality, how you were raised and what you picked up as a child, and what you think is important.

Bram and Felice leave no doubt that they believe gender is unrelated to climate change, although in slightly different ways. Bram argues that climate change affects everyone equally, and that it therefore cannot be linked to gender. His view reflects a more global perspective, rather than from the perspective of an individual. Felice, whilst agreeing that climate change is unrelated to gender, argues this from the perspective of how individuality and personal backgrounds impacts how an individual understands and acts towards climate change.

7.1.1 Age

Some of the participants argued that age could shape understandings and knowledge of climate change. Gender was not mentioned in relation to age. It is commonly believed that young people are in charge of climate action as they are the ones having to live through the consequences of climate change. Lotte reflects on this burden:

Lotte: With climate change I am quite struggling with the subject, however my school sees [us as] the generation of the future, and we do a lot of sustainability, so with my study we also have like subjects to [reduce] climate change, and [be] less wasteful, but I don't know the exact effects.

Even though Lotte struggles to grasp the complexity of climate change, she recognises that climate change is a problem and that she is expected to act towards it through being less wasteful and more sustainable. It is clear that Lotte is experiencing pressures from her university to act towards climate change, which is interesting as she is studying International Business, a degree not commonly depicted as concerned with the environment.

Felice and Eva have opposing views on how age might influence people's experiences. Eva argues that elderly people concern themselves very little with climate change, an opinion which mirrors the belief that climate change is the burden of young people.

Eva: I live in a village, it's like an old-ish Dutch village with like older people in it, and they're not that busy with climate change, like I'm dying in a few years so it's not my thing to do, I guess. So in my current environment I don't think about climate change.

From what she here states, it seems that her inactive surroundings influence her to think and do less about climate change. Interestingly, later in our conversation Eva expressed many

opinions surrounding climate change, as well as specific actions she takes to be more sustainable. It can therefore seem that this lack of action and consideration she is referring to here is mostly when she is at home or surrounded by people from her village. Felice, unlike Eva, argues that it is, in fact, elderly people who truly suffer the consequences of climate change:

> *Felice: I think that people are thinking about it, I think especially old people are thinking about it because last summer we had a few weeks that were really hot that they thought, shit, you know, whereas if you're young and you don't struggle with the heat and you spend all day lying in a swimming pool, then you're not going to think about it either, you're not going to think shit this is something I need to worry about.*

She argues that those who feel the effects of climate change to a greater extent are more likely to worry about it, and in this example, she refers to older people who struggle with the heat. This can reflect that she has not experienced the effects of climate change herself and therefore theorises that those who have must be more concerned with it. It also demonstrates that Felice does not seem to feel any pressures to act against climate change because of her age, or she might have explained this example differently.

7.1.2 Trend

Some of the participants argued that trends, rather than gender, influence sustainable behaviour, particularly amongst students:

> *Me: How do you think that climate change influences the day-to-day life of students in Amsterdam?*
>
> *Eva: Well, students in Amsterdam are actually pretty concerned about the environment, I guess, because like the hipster thing is coming up, and vegan is sort of a hipster thing nowadays. So I guess they're eating more environmental friendly, and maybe instead of just bringing their lunch in a bag they're bringing it in like a lunchbox or something because that's something that's also currently hip. And, I guess hydro flasks are a thing now, so I guess that influences a sort of style, and that style is specifically environmentally friendly. But I don't know if it's because it's in style or just because they want to do something for the environment.*

Eva finds it difficult to distinguish between whether individuals are acting more sustainable for the environment, or because it is the latest trend. From this perspective it is also impossible to determine whether gender plays a role. It can mean that the main goal of such trends is to act towards climate change. It can also, on the other hand, be a result of

convenience, such as discussed before, or simply to cater for style. Sam offered an opinion on trends which drew more on the concept of gender:

> *Me: Do you think that people's gender identity influences how they act towards climate change?*
>
> *Sam: Sometimes...I think it's more a trend right now to be environmentally friendly, but before men ate T-bone steaks and that was stereotypical and you were less of a man if you were vegan. I'm glad it's changing right now.*

In Sam's experience, there has been a shift in attitudes surrounding meat consumption. Sam is also the only male out of the participants who reported consuming less meat in an attempt to be more sustainable. Previously, Sam argued that he maintains a beard partly because he feels it is expected of him to be masculine. That he feels comfortable to consume less meat and to disclose this fact to me, someone he had not previously met, indicates that there is less pressure to consume meat in order to be masculine in his experience. Arguably, if Sam still felt pressures to eat meat, he might be less willing to disclose that he was eating more plant-based or he would simply keep eating meat.

7.2 Climate change and gender are related

Although some of the participants argued that gender and climate change are separate issues entirely, many of the participants reflected on certain ways in which the two domains actually are related to varying degrees.

7.2.1 Fear

Fear, or worry, emerged as an important factor in relation to how the students of this study think about climate change. It appeared in various ways, which were not always explicit. I was particularly interested in fear as I had learned from the study by Dr. Bosschaart (2019) on how students in Amsterdam feel about climate change, that there might be a gender aspect to the ways in which the students vocalise their worry surrounding climate change. As the study by Bosschaart (2019) was conducted in the same geographical location as my own, albeit with younger participants, it was intriguing to see whether my findings bore similarities to his.

Incentive

In chapter 6 I briefly discussed how the lack of tangible effects may keep individuals from acting sustainably. I think fear, or the lack thereof, can similarly contribute to shaping

individuals' action. Some of the participants mentioned that media spreads fear around the topic of climate change. Others argued that the threat of climate change is not yet tangible enough to cause fear. Willem put this into words nicely by saying that:

> *Well I don't really see the fear in people yet, because I kind of believe there's only fear when a disaster's about to happen or just happened. And it's been quite a while since it happened. So at this moment I don't really see it. I think that it only is going to be seen if something really happens [like a climate disaster], but yeah I'm really thinking about like someday it can go really bad...*

His thoughts indicate that Dutch people are less worried about the potential threat of climate change, arguably also because they are not amongst those who will be the most affected by it. As demonstrated in chapter 6, the participants largely understood the most damaging effects of climate change to take place in poorer nations. Whilst Willem does argue that there is not yet incentive enough to be worried, he also says that he can already visualise how bad it might become in the future. Although it might not yet be strong enough of a feeling to be labelled as fear, it is clear that he can see the potential cause of future concern.
Interestingly, Felice who mentioned above that there are no differences between how the genders understand and act towards climate change, did state that:

> *I think women generally can get more panicked, but I think that it in this case hasn't gotten so far that we can worry about it.*

Although she stated clearly that how individuals act towards climate change is shaped by upbringing and personality, she still does seem to consider ways in which the genders may act differently based on general ideas about women's behaviour. It also does reflect what Willem stated, about there not yet being cause enough to worry. It seems that she thinks that if and when climate change accelerates to an extent that will directly impact the lives of Dutch people, that's when you might see the differences in how the genders react, especially in terms of fear. Providing a stark contrast to the opinions of both Felice and Willem is the reasoning of Sam, who spoke openly about his concerns surrounding climate change:

> *Sam: But every day I'm more concerned about climate change, and for the last couple of years it's worrying me very much.*
>
> *Me: Why has it started to worry you in the last couple of years?*
>
> *Sam: Because it's...if I listen to the news correctly, climate change is progressing at a lot faster pace, and that's concerning me the most.*

This is particularly interesting because aside from Sam, the male participants speak little about their own fear of climate change. This could indicate that women, generally speaking, are more afraid of climate change. It can also mean however, that women are more willing to admit their fear. Willem had an interesting observation in this regard:

> *When you say male, I think mostly they will hold back the first time, and when you get into the conversations like okay, now I can talk about it. I think like, females are more open with it, I think they will express a little bit more.*

What Willem is referring to here is men's and women's willingness to openly discuss the fear they feel surrounding the threat of climate change. He argues that men are less inclined to start a conversation by admitting that they are worried, and that this is rather something which may emerge only when a level of rapport is built. Women, on the other hand, are more likely to volunteer such information. Such a dichotomy may stem from traditional perceptions of the genders, which views males as the stronger sex leaving men feeling vulnerable if they were to admit to being afraid.

Motherhood

Many of the participants discussed fear when referring to motherhood. The topic of motherhood was also touched upon in chapter 6. In this chapter, however, motherhood was discussed more in the context of traditional gender roles and gendered expectations, demonstrating the extent to which motherhood was largely identified as a woman's concern by the participants of this study. Interestingly, when the male participants attempted to reflect on how women might experience the threat of climate change, motherhood was commonly mentioned. This reinforces the perception that societal expectations towards women commonly surround motherhood, incorporating the idea that women are more caring than men.

> *Reuben: Well in generally speaking, I would say like women are more protective for the group, maybe that's like an evolutionary thing, and like they're more caring for the family, for the pack. So thinking that, I could say, yeah women are more thinking about the future, their grandchildren and stuff. I guess if you ask my mum, for like climate change for future generations she would be more upset about thinking 'oh maybe there's something going to happen with my grand-grand-grand-grandchildren'.*

Here again Reuben speaks about gendered behaviour as a result of evolution, just as he did with men and hunting in the previous chapter. Some of the female participants mirrored what Reuben discussed, and spoke of their own concern around the state of the planet they are leaving for their future children:

> *Nina: Well sometimes I get worried about [climate change], yeah, because you know I think about having kids maybe later, you're wondering what kind of Earth am I putting them on. So yeah, that's kind of what I think about. Yeah, a bit worried.*

Just as Reuben mentioned, Nina here discusses her sense of worry in regard to climate change because of children she may have in the future. Similarly, Bram presented an interesting perspective where he discussed how being a mother may change a woman's opinions surrounding climate change:

> *Maybe women would be more inclined, like [Gijs] said to, I don't think that, but let's say that they're more inclined to think about climate change due to, well they want to have the future to their babies. I still think that it is individual, it wouldn't matter a lot. Because like I said before, I think that the main culprits are the big companies, and even if I were a woman and would be feeling that way, I don't think it would make a difference, I won't be able to create a better future for my children if I started recycling or reusing everything because yeah it's like a drop on a hot plate.*

There are several layers to his statement. Firstly, it related back to what was discussed in chapter 5, about the need for large industrial actors to take the lead against climate change. Saying that recycling or reusing is "like a drop on a hot plate" is an interesting way of arguing that it is pointless in the larger schemeS of things. Bram makes it clear that he believes that such efforts would merely evaporate when put up against the pollution and production of big companies. As this is his main view, he makes it clear that he does not believe the gender makes any difference in how one acts. Efforts from either gender would be equally useless on an individual level. His hypothetical narrative is still telling, however. He speaks here as an imaginary female, leaving no thought to consider fatherhood in his own future. His statement is particularly interesting in this context because it reinforces the notion that the participants of this study view future parenthood as mainly a female concern. Whether or not one desires and decides to become a parent is highly personal and individual, and not always directly related to one's gender. Nevertheless, these findings point to a pattern in which the participants associate parenthood and fear with females and femininity.

7.3 Gender and climate action

In chapter 5 I argued that on a superficial level, there appeared to be no gendered disparities in the participants' climate action. In chapter 6 the participants' perceptions of gender was more thoroughly explored and it became evident that the participants could identify more gendered differences than they first thought. Eventually, when I asked the participants about gender in relation to climate change and climate action, a few examples of gendered differences surfaced.

7.3.1 Authority

Eva identified the biggest gendered difference in her experience as not having a voice on the same level as her male counterparts. This was a theme running through our conversation. She mentioned, as demonstrated previously, that when she was growing up, she faced some resistance when wanting to play football, which she argued boys did not. In relation to having a voice she argued that:

> *I'm expected to shut my mouth a lot more than boys I guess. I don't need to be tough and that kind of stuff, but like I am, so fuck off. I guess boys are freer than girls, something like that. I'm expected to stay in school and do whatever your mother tells you.*

Eva furthermore made it clear that if she were a man, the one thing she might do different in terms of climate change was attend protests and marches, as she currently feels like she would not be taken seriously at such events:

> *I think I would go to demonstrations. Because I don't do that now because I'm like, yeah, are they going to take me seriously, I don't think so. But if there's like a big male standing there that's kind of a different image you're looking at, so I guess I would be doing that.*

Here it is made very clear that she believes there are important differences between the genders in terms of the effect they have on their surroundings. Eva clearly feels that she has less power to make a change than her male counterparts do. She is speaking of a physical manifestation of power experienced by males. Her attributes, such as being short and feminine, pose a barrier to her which a "big male" does not encounter. Her experience relates back to my conversation with Bram in a very interesting way:

I don't think I would be up on the barricades, if I were a woman, shouting about climate change, no.

Bram, who has the 'privilege' which Eva wants, makes no use of it. His argument is that as there is no difference between the genders, especially in terms of climate change, he would not act differently had he been born female. He does not go to demonstrations as a male, and therefore he would not do so if he were female either. Their individual perspectives are naturally shaped by the extent to which they already engage with climate change. Bram, who has previously referred to himself as a "big guy" inhabits the masculine traits which pose such a contrast to Eva. Stepping away from the specific example of demonstrations, Sam also had some thoughts which supports Eva's argument:

I think my gender identity is useful to talk with people […], it's also a bit my teacher role, but it's also my gender role. Because I have a deep voice and people like to hear my voice sometimes and I've heard that having a beard make your…gives you authority, people are more likely to accept the facts you're telling, so yeah it has a role in that, yeah.

Sam confirms Eva's fears, that he holds more authority due to his deep voice and beard, masculine characteristics typically attributed to the male gender. Traits such as being bigger or having a beard are inherently physical and can with difficulty be adapted by cisgender women. In this sense, what gives these males "authority" is simply the fact that they are biologically male and work to maintain their masculinity (such as by growing a beard). It can appear from these examples that there is some validity to Eva's claim. This can also be supported by an example from Nina, who discussed how certain expectations shape her behaviour. Just like Sam, Nina is studying to become a teacher. Unlike Sam, however, she does not have the authority provided by a beard or a deep voice. This example draws on the quote used in section 6.2.2 Behaviour on page 60, where Nina discusses how she does not always wear her preferred clothing as she fears she would not be taken seriously:

I shouldn't dress too sexy or whatever and those kind of things are a bit hard for me sometimes to accept, it's not like I would [dress too sexy] but if I want to wear tight jeans I'm held back a little because it's frowned upon.

When comparing the examples of Nina and Sam, it is clear that what Sam believes provides him with authority are his masculine attributes. Nina, on the other hand, consciously wears clothes that downplay her femininity in an attempt to gain authority. She also argues that this

is not the case for men, who she argues do not have to worry about their clothes in relation to their authoritative power. This example mirrors the example of Eva and Bram. In both comparisons it seems that the male has more automatic authority than the females, who have to work for it. From the perspectives of the participants of this study it seems that men do hold more authority, simply by conforming to heteronormative masculinity. It speaks of how the genders are perceived in the context of the participants; a supposedly gender equal society in which females still encounter barriers that men do not.

7.3.2 Lingering images of gender

The role traditional views of gender may play in shaping behaviour was discussed in the previous chapter. It is also mentioned here, however, because of the ways in which gender might shape climate action. The first example builds on what Sam mentioned previously about veganism and masculinity. Sam stated that it used to be considered less manly to be vegan, an attitude which Sam believes is changing. One possible explanation for the link between meat and masculinity could be that women are seen as more caring and nurturing, and would therefore assumingly be more concerned with animal welfare and the positive effects of a plant-based diet. Another part of my conversation with Sam relates back to this point. We discussed differences in men and women in regards to climate change and had the following exchange:

> *Me: Do you think there are differences in how the genders understand and act towards climate change?*
>
> *Sam: Hmmm, yeah... there is a little difference I think. Because I've had a girlfriend who was very busy climate change and the environment and who was becoming vegan, and she changed me to get a more vegetarian lifestyle, to eat less meat and eat more environmentally friendly, yeah. So it started with me by a female, so maybe there's a little difference between male and female.*

As mentioned, Sam and Eva are the only two participants of this study who reported consuming less meat due to climate change. It is therefore interesting to see that it was in fact a female who introduced Sam to a more plant-based lifestyle. Nevertheless, Sam continues to consume less meat as the only one of the male participants of this study. Reuben, for example consumes a substantial amount of meat and makes no indication that he intends to transition to a more plant-based diet. Furthermore, Reuben had some interesting thoughts surrounding masculinity and means of transportation:

> *I think that eventually, and this is not because of what I think, but I guess that's how society looks, but for a man, because he needs to be manly and tough, it would be longer appropriate to drive a Range Rover than [for a] woman. And that's not what I think, but I think society works like that.*

His argument is not his own opinion but rather a reflection of how he believes society to work. He argues that due to traditional perceptions expecting men to be manly and tough, climate inaction will be excused longer for men than for women. The following quote provides a different perspective on the same situation:

> *Reuben: I guess also like, driving a big car is like a manly thing to do, like some women do as well but I like to think that they just drive their husband's car, and they have a Mini-Cooper for themselves, you know what I mean? So that like the ego thing, the status thing, is more like a manly thing. Consuming a lot, eating a lot. So I think gender roles do inflict that, yeah.*

In this instance he is arguing his own opinion, rather than what he believes society thinks. This is made clear through his use of phrases such as "I like to think that…". He thus reinforces the stereotypes discussed above, by expecting men and women to drive different cars. His insights are interesting in that he indicates that men are less sustainable by default when they try to conform to heteronormativity. This is also an example of the tensions mentioned before, where the different statements of the participants do not always make sense in relation to each other. Reuben argues that it is merely society's view that it will "be longer appropriate to drive a Range Rover" for a man than for a woman. However, he goes on to present the same argument in a way that makes it clear he shares society's norms. It might reflect dominant norms in society surrounding gender which Reuben has internalised to a greater extent than he himself believes. It is furthermore interesting to see that the examples he uses for "manly" are "consuming a lot, eating a lot" and "the ego thing", all of which in this context have negative connotations. They all also provide a contrast to how the participants of this study have portrayed women to be more gentle and caring. Although he does not specifically mention meat, he argues that men consume more and eat more, which might indicate that he disagrees with Sam in that attitudes surrounding meat and masculinity have shifted. Although Sam argues that such attitudes are changing, there seems to still remain a connection between masculine expectations and the consumption of meat, even if Sam himself opts for a more plant-based diet.

7.4 Chapter summary

My participants had various things to say about the link between gender and climate change. When discussing climate change in a general sense it was clear that the participants did not believe there to be any connection between gender and climate change. For example, the participants argued that factors such as age or trends shape climate action to a greater extent than gender does. Furthermore, it was argued by some of the participants that climate change is a non-gender issue. Throughout our conversations, however, certain disparities emerged both through the participants' perceptions and their actions. For example, some of the participants argued that women are more scared or show more panic in relation to climate change. When assessing how the participants spoke about fear, it seems that this argument might be true. The females largely spoke about the fear they experience themselves. The males, on the other hand, spoke about fear in a more general sense, with reference to the population as a whole, or speaking about the fear they believe women to experience. The gendered disparities which the participants identify are explicitly mentioned, whereas the gendered disparities which emerged from how they spoke about fear is indicative of gender as an underlying factor. The example of fear might indicate that women in fact are more afraid of climate change, as was also the findings of the study by Bosschaart (2019). It can also mean, as discussed above, that women are simply more inclined to admit to being afraid due to internalised gender norms. Furthermore, there are certain examples in which some of the participants have contrasting views, such as regarding authority. Authority was not only relevant in relation to climate action, but also to demonstrate an area in which there remains gendered differences that shape behaviour.

CHAPTER 8: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Having analysed the findings of this study it is time to tie it all together with the theoretical framework and literature previously presented in this thesis. In a general sense, the thesis speaks to two domains. The first is climate change. The ways in which climate change is discussed, and similarly how the concept is understood by the participants of this study, is a central part of this thesis and has shaped the direction of it. The second domain, gender, is less obvious in the ways through which it shapes the participants' knowledge and behaviour. Gender is less explicit than climate change, not because of its importance but rather because of the way in which gender exists in our world today, and in the life of the participants. As stated by Healey (2014), "[g]ender is all around us. Like water surrounding creatures in the sea, we are often unaware of its ever-present nature" (p. 1). In this thesis, gender has been addressed in two different ways. Explicitly, through direct questions and reflecting the way the participants themselves experience the presence of gender as well as how their behaviours can, or cannot, be tied to gender. I have also tried to capture gender as an underlying social dimension shaping individuals' thoughts and behaviours in indirect ways.

In a way, both dimensions – gender and climate change – share certain aspects. For example, they are both topics of great controversy, with critics questioning whether climate change is real, and others arguing for the importance of separate gender roles. Scepticism surrounds climate change, with some of the world's foremost leaders claiming it does not exist (e.g. President Trump). Whether this scepticism comes from fear or general incompetence and lack of knowledge is not always clear. In the same way, gender is often constricted to the heteronormative dichotomy of male/female. This excludes the rest of the gender spectrum, effectively undermining the lives of the individuals who do not conform to the binary. Similarly, climate change and gender are both relatively abstract concepts with very real consequences. The results of climate change are clearly shown in the suffering of poorer nations, increased flooding and food insecurity, increasing temperatures and loss of biodiversity. Gender, on the other hand, shows its impact on the lives of individuals, their identity and their actions.

Considering the many similarities of the two domains, and the ways that they shape our everyday lives, there is no wonder that they are researched in relation to each other. However, as argued in chapter 3, there is a lack of studies on gender and climate change in the global North with particular focus on the perceptions and actions of young people. The overall aim

of this thesis is to explore how male and female Dutch students perceive the threat of climate change and to what extent their perceptions are related to gender. In the following sections I will return to the three sub-objectives of my study and explore them one by one, in an encounter between my research findings, other relevant research and the conceptual framework for my study.

8.1 Climate change and climate action – knowledge and gender

A large part of this study has been to explore how the participants perceive climate change and climate action. What knowledge they have, and how they have gained such knowledge were core questions addressed in chapter 5. Interestingly, the first subjective is the one under which gender emerged as the least important to the findings. Gender is therefore touched upon here, and the following sections will engage with the theoretical framework to a greater extent.

8.1.1 Knowledge

As demonstrated in chapter 3, the Netherlands have been discussing the effects of climate change for years, although much work remains to tackle the issue. Due to its geographical location, and being largely below sea-level, the Netherlands is particularly exposed to floods (Kabat et al., 2005; VanKoningsveld et al., 2008). This is a threat which is believed to drastically increase as climate change progresses (van Eerd et al., 2015). As rising sea levels and various forms of flooding appears to be the most prominent environmental threat to the Netherlands, it is unsurprising that those were also mentioned by most of the participants when discussing climate change effects. In addition to rising sea levels, changes in ice was also commonly mentioned. As demonstrated, ice skating is a large part of Dutch culture (Niesner, 2019), and it therefore makes sense that changes in ice quantity was of importance to the study.

Another aspect of the participants' knowledge which emerged as important was their discussion of differences in access to *resources*, discussed both as class differences within the Netherlands, and as economic differences between countries on a global level. As demonstrated in chapter 3, it is commonly believed that the effects of climate change will be the most detrimental to poorer nations in the global South (Connell & Pearse, 2015). One of the reasons for this is because such nations do not have the means to tackle climate change to the same extent as wealthier nations. Additionally, many such nations are also to a greater extent dependent on agricultural practices and export, which are put at great risk by climate change. These issues were all mentioned by the participants. As demonstrated, the participants

could easily identify environmental threats to their own surroundings. Some of the them argued, however, that the Netherlands is well equipped to handle such threats in a way which other countries might not be. Furthermore, it was argued that countries like the Netherlands can prioritise climate change as an issue, whereas nations in which food security and water are a main concern do not have the capacity to prioritise environmental degradation. Commonly, therefore, the participants argued that those who would be most affected by climate change would be the poorer nations in the world.

Similarly, the participants argued that individuals and households within the Netherlands with more financial resources are more likely to purchase more sustainable items. In their study on consumer perceptions of carbon footprint and organic attributes in France, Scotland and the Netherlands respectively, Akaichi et al., (2016), demonstrated that whilst the consumers seem willing to purchase ethical produce, it needs to be prices below their WTP. Essentially, therefore, wealthier individuals are more likely to afford sustainable products because their WTP ultimately will be higher. Furthermore, it is commonly argued that consumer knowledge is vital in their buying decisions. Such an argument is for example made by Canavari and Coderoni (2020), who conducted a study on sustainable labels on packaging as consumer preference implications. It is argued that when the consumers are unaware of the ethical implications of a product, they are unable to form an opinion on the environmental impact of said products (Peters, 2005). The participants of this study display a fair amount of knowledge on sustainable practices, and sometimes choose actions they know to be less sustainable than the alternatives. Even so, there are cases in which some of the participants seem unaware of certain implications of their choices and might benefit from more information. The participants of this study argued that individuals of a higher social standing within the Netherlands have the means to shop sustainably to a greater extent than those with fewer financial means. Furthermore, the participants argued that wealthier people have the capacity to prioritise environmental impact when buying products, also because it is arguably trendy to be environmentally friendly. Households with fewer means, on the other hand, prioritise urgent necessities over the environment, which is a reflection of the same argument as discussed above, when comparing the financial means of countries.

The participants demonstrated a fair level of knowledge on the topic of climate change, as well as the structural differences which can influence climate action. In literature, gender is often discussed as part of such structural differences, often because women make up the

largest part of the poor populations and are commonly reliant on agricultural practices (Agostino & Lizarde, 2012; Terry, 2009a). Interestingly, gender did not emerge when the participants were discussing climate change in a more general sense. Only when asked more specifically about climate change in relation to gender did the participants think to address any potential links between the two domains. There were also no gendered distributions of opinion in relation to climate change between the participants. The participants' differences in knowledge were not consistent to whether they were male or female, meaning that such differences are related to the individuality of the participants rather than their gender. It is evident that the participants' knowledge on climate change to a great extent is shaped by their surroundings and geographical location, for example through which effects of climate change they could easily identify. Additionally, they recognise the difference between their own country's resources and that of other countries, and the effect this may have on climate action.

8.1.2 Youth and climate change

As demonstrated in chapter 3, there is a large pool of research on young people and climate change. Such research largely concerns the pressures put on young people to take action against climate change, as it is youth who will grow up to experience the full effects of environmental degradation taking place today. For example, as argued by El Zoghbi and El Ansari (2014), young people are amongst those who will be continuously threatened by climate change throughout their lives. Additionally, Collins (2015), argues that young people have the ability to influence their households and how they consume as a whole. The importance of young people is furthermore recognised by the United Nations, with their specific youth-led programs in relation to climate change. On a global scale, therefore, it is evident that youth are expected to tackle climate change as they are the generation of the future. One participant mentioned this explicitly, explaining how her school views the students as "the generation of the future", and therefore tries to educate them on sustainable behaviour. The extent to which youth are willing and able to take charge, however, is unclear. The participants had different opinions on the role of age in understanding and acting against climate change. Particularly, there was disagreement on whether old people are preoccupied with climate change or not. On the one hand, it was argued that old people do not care about climate change as they believe it is not their problem to handle. This point of view indicates what is shown in the referenced studies above, that it is young people who are expected to care about climate change. On the other hand, it was argued that older people experience the

effects of climate change to a larger extent than young people, for example in terms of warmer weather, and thus care more.

It is clear that the participants' age influences how they perceive climate change and climate action. Although few of the participants mentioned explicitly that they experience pressures to act more climate friendly, several mentioned how they "could do more" to fight climate change. This certainly reflects that the participants recognise the severity of the issue. Regardless of their awareness, however, the participants seem unwilling to adjust too much of their behaviour. This unwillingness can be caused by various reasons, which will be covered below.

8.1.3 Incentives – fear and a lack thereof

The question of incentive to act against climate change was one posed throughout the study, and several participants mentioned it in various contexts. Drawing on the findings of this study, I argue that fear is one such incentive, which is why it is presented here. El Zoghbi and El Ansari (2014), discuss how young people can experience fear and worry in relation to climate change and the ways in which it can shape their future. The studies by Bosschaart (2019), and Bosschaart et al., (2016), share some interesting insights on young people and worry in the Netherlands. Bosschaart et al., (2016), argue that the participants of their study on 15-year-old students' flood risk perception in the Netherlands "hardly perceive fear" (p. 275), when considering flood risks. The point is reiterated by Bosschaart (2019), who looks at how students in Amsterdam perceive climate change. In his study, Bosschaart (2019), argues that his participants, although they can acknowledge the severity of the issue of climate change, struggle to apply the threat to their own situation which effectively leaves them reluctant to make changes. Similarly, Perara and Hewege (2018), found that the participants in their study on young Australians engaged in green practices struggle to act towards climate change because they have no personal experience with the issue, and therefore remain reluctant to change their behaviour. These studies all agree that the young people in question lack incentive to act against climate change because they do not experience fear surrounding the issue, and struggle to relate it to a personal level.

This is also largely the case made by the participants of this study. The participants mentioned various reasons for lack of incentive for climate action, ranging from a lack of tangible effects, to a lack of fear. Whilst the participants generally recognise the threat of climate

change, they distance themselves from the effects because they do not have to experience them. Most of the participants mentioned that aside from warmer weather and lack of ice in winter, they do not experience any of the effects of climate change. Because of this, they are also not afraid. Some of the participants made the point that climate change simply is too broad an issue to tackle, and to attempt to do so on a personal level would pose more of an inconvenience to their lives than it would help the greater cause. Furthermore, the lack of tangible effects leaves the participants feeling unmotivated to adjust their behaviours. Interestingly, some of the participants argued that they were not afraid of climate change *yet*, indicating fear. They recognise the threat climate change may pose to their own lives in the future.

Fear is furthermore an area in which gender emerged as relevant. The ways in which gender and fear emerged resonates with traditional gender roles, and gendered expectations, including those related to parenthood. The findings in Bosschaart (2019), demonstrate that the female participants show more fear in relation to climate change. This point was reiterated by some of my participants, when they argued that women show more fear and can more easily get panicked. Additionally, more female participants than male ones spoke of fear with reference to their own emotion, whereas the male participants largely spoke of fear in a general sense. This reiterates the notion that women show more fear than men, although it is unclear whether this is because they are more afraid or simply because they feel comfortable sharing that fear to an extent which the male participants do not. Women are commonly referred to as caregivers (Alston, 2013; Connell & Pearse; Wang, 2016), and, interestingly, when discussing women and fear both the male and female participants mentioned motherhood. Essentially it was argued that because women will become mothers, they are more scared about what planet they are leaving behind for their children than men are.

8.1.4 Blame and convenience

It is argued that most of the historical responsibility for climate change should be put on the countries of the global North, as they have contributed most to the environmental degradation (Sethi & Puppim de Oliveira, 2015). In a similar way, most of the participants argued that the blame for climate change should be put on big companies and corporations, which continue to pollute the Earth through unsustainable manufacturing, exporting and imports. Many participants argued that it is pointless for them as individuals to act against climate change, unless the larger corporations take charge as well. Although there has been more focus on

individual behaviour in relation to climate action in recent years, Barr and Gilg (2006), argue that individuals are more likely to participate in sustainable behaviour in smaller, convenient ways, such as turning lights off when exiting a room. Some of the participants of this study furthermore stated that sustainable behaviour would prove more of an inconvenience to their own lives than it would help to mitigate climate change.

Some participants stated explicitly that their actions are led by convenience rather than sustainability. This point emerged in various ways, for example in relation to transportation and food habits. In a discussion surrounding transportation, for example, it was made clear that one of the participants chose the train not because it was more environmentally friendly than going by car, but because it was the easiest option. Furthermore, it was made clear that if going by car had been the more convenient option, then that is what the participant would have done. This relates to a point made by Polk (2009), on how there is increasing use of private cars due to its convenience, in spite of the high carbon dioxide emissions. Similarly, one participant argued that she wanted to use her bike more, but that she was too lazy to do so. In terms of food consumption, some of the participants argued that transitioning to a more plant-based diet would prove inconvenient to their current lifestyle. Additionally, some participants discussed eating habits in terms of convenience when eating out at restaurants, for example, where one is not in control over what food is available. Food habits and transportation are two aspects which will be further discussed in relation to gender identity below.

Arguably, the participants of this study can afford to act on convenience, rather than out of concern for climate change, because climate change has yet to become an immediate threat to their surroundings. Because they lack the incentive, as discussed above, they also do less than they might do if they were more afraid. This relates to the points made by Bosschaart (2019), Bosschaart et al., (2016), and Perera and Hewege (2018), all of which argue that young people are reluctant to act against climate change because they struggle to perceive the effects of climate change as a threat to their own reality. It is evident that they do not fail to act out of a lack of knowledge. Rather, they demonstrate that they are aware of the effects of climate change and which measures might aid in tackling such effects. Many participants argued that they should do more, but clearly do not have the incentive to do so. In contrast, some participants argued that any effort they might make would not matter in the big picture regardless, and they will therefore make no changes to their behaviour. However, almost all of

the participants mentioned that they recycle. Some of the participants do more to be environmentally friendly, but no participants do less than recycle. It seems that even the participants who argued that it is pointless to act as an individual do contribute to climate action through little efforts such as recycling.

In terms of gender, no differences emerged in how the participants discussed knowledge and understanding of climate change in a general sense. Their differences in opinion were not linked to their gender, nor did the participants identify gender as a decisive factor in shaping their climate action. Arguably, however, there might be underlying ways through which the participants' gender identity influence their climate behaviour. This will be discussed below.

8.2 Gender and climate change – expectations and behaviour

As explained in chapter 2, this project is underpinned by a perspective of gender as socially constructed. It therefore builds on the assumption that the ways in which the participants discuss, understand and perceive gender is largely shaped by their surroundings. As argued by Stimpson and Herdt (2014), it is evident that gender is usually at work and is linked to social structures. In this section, gender and climate change will be largely discussed in relation to how the participants *perceive* the two domains. Their *actions* will be discussed in section 8.3, with reference to gender identity. Even so, it is important to introduce gender as performance here, to provide a holistic lens through which the following sections will be discussed.

According to West and Zimmerman (1987), gender is something that one *does*, rather than simply an aspect of what an individual is (p. 140). Individuals therefore *do* gender, and it is through doing gender that they construct themselves as masculine or feminine. Masculinity and femininity are shaped by the context in which they are performed, because it is through everyday practices that they are constructed (Elmhirst, 2015). Because masculinity and femininity are practiced within a system of gender relations, they are only present in contrast to each other, as one does not exist without the other (Connell, 1995). The participants therefore do gender, either through conforming to gender normativity, or by rejecting it, and in this way construct their own gender identity within the structures of their sociocultural context.

8.2.1 Tensions

When looking at the findings in chapter 6, in which gender was explored on its own, it is clear that there are many tensions at play when the participants discuss gender. As demonstrated above, when the participants discussed climate change in a general sense, none of them

thought about relating it to the issue to gender. Only when asked more specific questions did gendered aspects emerge as relevant. Similarly, it is clear that generally speaking, the participants of this study believe that the genders are equal in the Dutch society. Many argued that they had not experienced any different treatment to someone of the opposite sex, be it siblings, friends, or others. Most of the participants explained that there were few differences between the genders, particularly with reference to climate change. At least, this is what the participants argued when they first touched upon the concept of gender in our conversations. What emerged, however, is that the participants shared examples of how gender differences in fact exist. These were opinions which surfaced once we progressed in our conversation, and I asked questions which dealt with gendered differences more specifically.

8.2.2 Expectations

Arguably, the tensions which surfaced concerned *internalised norms* which favour traditional gender roles and the ways that the participants were dealing with the expectations related to these norms. Such gender roles would conjure the male as the big, strong breadwinner, whereas the female would be seen as the maternal and virtuous caregiver. In this view, men would need to pursue masculinity and women femininity, effectively shaping their behaviour and actions. Elmhirst (2015), argues that gender performance is a repeated act, which leads to gender being perceived to be natural and fixed. Similarly, Risman and Davis (2013), argue that men and women internalise norms which constructs them as gendered individuals. An example of this process is how both the female and the male participants experienced gendered pressures growing up. For example, two of the males discussed how they would play with traditionally feminine toys, such as dolls and barbies. Only when they were told such toys were "for girls" did they choose other, more masculine toys. This example demonstrates the argument made by Connell and Pearse (2015), when they contend that individuals are constantly held accountable to their presumed "sex category" as a female or male (p. 73). When the boys deviated from what was expected to their gender they were corrected and adjusted their behaviour accordingly.

Another example which demonstrates traditional gender norms in operation is *motherhood*. I mentioned above that the female participants were perceived to show more fear in relation to climate change because they would worry for their future potential children. Similarly, most of the female participants argued that it is expected of women to settle down and have children. As demonstrated in chapter 3, much is written about women as caregivers. Alston (2013), and Connell and Pearse (2015), argue that women are often limited by their

responsibilities as caregivers. Wang (2016), in her study on green practices in Taiwan, argues that motherhood is understood to be the epitome of femininity. It is therefore understandable that the female participants have registered such expectations to their gender. Interestingly, the female participants do not seem to be under such pressures themselves. Rather, they appear to reflect what they believe to be the societal perception of women. Whereas the female participants do not reject the notion that they might one day be mothers, they do make it clear that they are not letting such expectations shape their actions at this point in time. However, most of the female participants argued that they worried about the future of the planet because of children they might have one day. The participants therefore do not reject the expectations to be mothers someday, and they are influenced by this perception in terms of fear for the future. Interestingly, some of the male participants argued that women would be more scared of climate change for exactly that reason, but did not consider the effect of any potential children on their own lives. It is evident that in the eyes of the participants, parenthood is more strongly associated with women than with men. This could furthermore indicate that the participants might perceive women to have more responsibility in terms of climate action, because they see it as a woman's job to raise children on this planet in the future. In a similar vein, the study by Thoyre (2020), on green practices as gendered labour in the US found that women are more likely to engage with sustainable practices in the household. Andersen et al., (2016), argue a similar point based on the findings of their study on household vulnerability in Latin America, where they furthermore contend that women are more vulnerable to the effects of climate change due to the responsibilities they hold in terms of caregiving.

8.2.3 Power

Scholars such as Sapra (2017), and Elmhirst (2015), argue that one of the reasons why women may be more affected by climate change is caused by inequalities in relation to material and structural systems. This is largely the view which feminist political ecology (FPE) works to convey. As argued by Elmhirst (2015), FPE looks at the ways in which social differences help constitute gender in different contexts. Race and sexuality are examples of subjectivities which together form such social differences. FPE perceives gender as socially constructed and rather than exploring how gender affects environmental change, FPE emphasises the ways in which climate change brings "into existence categories of social difference including gender" (Elmhirst, 2015, p. 62). The social differences discussed here mirror what was argued about relations of power between the genders in chapter 2. Essentially, Rasmussen (2009), argues that whilst hegemonic masculinity is considered the most powerful, *any* masculinity holds

power over any femininity, even hegemonic femininity. Just as FPE argues that climate change actualises categories of social difference, so does gender normativity in the sense that both constitute an order of power, leaving some groups disadvantaged. On a global scale, such power structures in relation to gender are less prominent in the Netherlands than they might be elsewhere. The Netherlands is a relatively gender-equal society, and this is reflected in the ways in which the participants perceive gendered differences. Nevertheless, power dimensions of gender did emerge among some of the participants. The issue of authority was mentioned by a few of the participants in a way which highlighted the contrast between the experiences of men and women in this study. A female participant, Eva, claimed that she would want to attend public demonstrations and protests for climate change but fears she will not be taken seriously. A male participant, Bram, does not attend such protests because they are of no interest to him, and further argues that he would not attend such protests if he were female either. I am drawing on specific examples here because I believe it clearly demonstrates the ways in which a male embodies more power than a female, generally speaking. Power also manifested itself in the ways through which the female participants felt restricted in their lives. For example, some of the female participants argued they were not able to play the same sports as males growing up, such as soccer, or that they have to alter their behaviour to be taken more seriously. Another example of authority is how Sam equated his own beard and deep voice to instant authority, whereas Nina is mindful to wear "appropriate" clothing to be taken seriously as a teacher. Nina downplays her femininity to be taken seriously, whereas Sam's masculine attributes is arguably what gives him his authority. Both participants are studying to become teachers, in geography and English respectively, and the worry of not being taken seriously was solely mentioned by the female participant.

8.3 Gender identity and climate action

It has been argued that gender identity is at the very core of our beings (Moore, 1994). Gender performance, the internalisation of norms and how one does gender are all aspects which relate back to a person's gender identity. As argued by Rasmussen (2009), however, gender identity is related to how we are perceived by others, and not solely how one perceives oneself. In fact, Paechter (2006), argues that the dichotomous view of gender is limiting to how one can think and be (p. 262). Drawing back on gender as socially constructed, it is evident that one is only free to construct oneself within a set of boundaries, and furthermore that maintaining normativity often pays off. For example, Schippers (2007), argues that intelligible bodies hold more power than unintelligible bodies regardless of gender.

Interestingly, Ridgeway and Correll (2004), argue that gender works as a background identity, and therefore is an ever-present bias in how one behaves. In terms of climate action, Brough et al., (2016) argue that women are more likely to embrace sustainable behaviour because there is a link between femininity and green behaviour which "threatens the gender identity of men" (p. 579). Some of the participants indicated that they had less experience with the concept of gender identity than terms such as masculinity and femininity. This is also clear from how the participants utilised the terms. They were more comfortable using words such as masculinity to discuss their own experiences, whereas they struggled to understand the full meaning of gender identity. Only a couple of participants therefore used the term gender identity when discussing their own behaviour, both of which will be discussed below.

The link between gender identity and climate change was only made explicit by the participants a couple of times. In my analysis, however, I work to identify gender identity and how it influences the participants' behaviour in ways which the participants themselves struggled to articulate.

8.3.1 Food habits

As argued, we construct ourselves as masculine or feminine through our behaviour (Connell & Pearse, 2015; Elmhirst, 2015). Drawing on the literature presented in chapter 3, it is evident that there is a strong link between masculinity and the consumption of meat.
The study by Rothgerber (2013), on undergraduate students in Kentucky found that the female participants were inclined to eat less meat than the male participants. Additionally, Rothgerber (2013), argues that reducing meat intake "violates the spirit of Western hegemonic masculinity" (p. 371). Similarly, Sumpter (2015), argues that men are more inclined to choose meat over fruit and vegetables. The link between meat and masculinity is commonly believed to derive from the hunter-gatherer age, during which the men would hunt for meat and provide for their family (Schösler et al., 2015; Sumpter, 2015). Sumpter (2015), further argues that when the dualistic perception of gender associates meat with masculinity, "lighter meats and produce are considered healthier and feminine" (p. 107). Generally speaking, there was not a big difference in the male and female participants in terms of who actively tried eating less meat. Particularly three students spoke extensively about their eating habits, of which two were male and one was female. Only two reported being entirely vegetarian or trying to eat more vegetarian, however.

Reuben is an interesting example here because of how he discussed his consumption of meat in relation to climate change, masculinity and his own gender identity. He stated that his

consumption of chicken is “bad”, because he knows the negative effects it poses on the environment. He furthermore discussed how easy it is to be vegan in Amsterdam, and how he knows individuals who do bodybuilding yet are vegan. He is therefore seemingly aware that if he truly wanted to change his behaviour to be more sustainable, there would be a way of doing so. Reuben argued that his continued high consumption of chicken is because of his gender identity. He is athletic, and wants to maintain his muscular physique, and the easiest way of consuming the necessary amount of protein is through chicken. It is a good example of how an individual constructs his own masculinity through his actions. As argued by Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), the consumption of meat became synonymous with masculine identities. Reuben strives for masculinity and contends that he wants to appear appealing to women. This also draws on what was argued by Connell (1995), that masculinity only exists in contrast to femininity. Reuben’s construction of masculinity is, in part, a response to what he believes women want. Furthermore, he does argue that his continuous consumption of chicken is bad. Drawing on the work of Moore (1994), when she contends that gender identity is at the core of who we are, it seems Reuben is more concerned with his masculinity than he is what he considers to be morally “right” in terms of climate change.

Food culture has also proven important in meat consumption patterns. The study by Schösler et al., (2015), found that the native Dutch had less gender disparities in their meat consumption than did the Turkish Dutch and Chinese Dutch of the study. As argued by Schösler et al., (2015), this disparity in meat consumption between the different ethnic groups is largely caused by their different food cultures. For example, they made a point about how meals in western countries such as the Netherlands often have a meat component which might be more easily swapped for a vegetarian substitute. In traditional Turkish cuisine, on the other hand, there are more meals where meat is incorporated in a way which makes it difficult to replace, such as a stew (Schösler et al., 2015).

One of the reasons why not more of the participants are not consciously consuming less meat could be a lack of knowledge. As found both in the study conducted by de Boer, de Witt and Aiking (2016), and by Bosschaart (2019), many of the participants are simply unaware of the effects caused by switching to a plant-based diet. Whereas there is a consensus about the effects on climate change in terms of energy (de Boer, de Witt & Aiking, 2016), and transportation such as flying (Bosschaart, 2019), uncertainty still remains among people about the direct link between meat consumption and climate change. This might also be the case

with the participants of my study. Although some participants, such as Reuben, demonstrated that they knew about the link between meat consumption and climate change, most of the participants did not voice such a concern. Whether these participants have that knowledge, therefore, is uncertain. This relates back to consumer knowledge, as presented in the study by Canavari and Coderoni (2020). The findings of this study might indicate that the participants need more education on the ways in which their consumerism can have real impact in terms of climate change, particularly through shopping sustainably and consuming less meat. A recent surge in vegan products due to consumer demand demonstrates the importance of consumer knowledge and how they influence what is supplied and brought into the market. Furthermore, some of the participants of this study may simply view it as an inconvenience, as mentioned above, to alter their behaviour and consumption patterns. As the participants seem to not have enough incentive, or fear, to act now, cutting down on meat might therefore not be a priority.

8.3.2 Transportation

Transportation is an area of climate action in which gendered differences are commonly mentioned. Firstly, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), argue that taking risks on the road became related to masculine identities in a similar way to eating meat. Various literature supports this statement, such as the study by Wang (2016), in which she argues that men drive more frequently and for longer distances than women do. Similarly, building on the earlier works of Connell, Polk (2009), argues that the transportation sector constructs different types of masculinity, and furthermore that the street is masculinised through gendered practices. Another point made by Wang (2016), is that men and women have different mobility patterns. Again, this goes back to women as caretakers, as it is, at least in the Taiwanese context of Wang's study (2016), commonly the women's responsibility to run errands and drive children to and from school. Polk (2009), mirrors this perspective and adds that women on average cause less accidents and pollution.

Unlike the consumption of meat, it seems that the ways through which various forms of transportation contribute to environmental degradation are widely accepted and known. The participants' transportation choices have already been touched upon under 8.1.4 Blame and convenience. From what was described in that section there seems to be no relation between transportation choices and gender. However, Reuben offered some interesting insights surrounding transportation and masculinity, which were presented in chapter 7, page 72.

There he discussed how he expected women and men to have different cars which were appropriate to their genders; small and feminine for the wives such as a Mini-Cooper, and larger and more masculine for the men, such as a Range Rover. This is another example of tensions in understandings of gender as presented above. When Reuben was discussing this gendering of cars, he first presented them as the societal view, making it clear that he was not presenting his own opinion. He stated clearly that he believed this was how society worked and that it did not reflect his own opinion. Later, however, he continued to say that he expected men and women to drive different cars according to their gender. This indicates that he has internalised some of the norms surrounding traditional perceptions of gender, and although he generally does not believe in such differences they emerge in specific instances.

8.4 Conclusion

Overall, it is evident that the participants are knowledgeable about climate change and climate action. They display contrasting perspectives on the best ways through which the world can help climate mitigation efforts. Although the participants demonstrate contrasting perspectives, these do not seem related to their own gender. Whilst gendered disparities emerged in relation to topics such as fear and parenthood, they are not present in how the participants understand and perceive climate change as an issue. In fact, some of the participants argued that climate change is a gender-neutral problem. Whilst the participants display a fair amount of knowledge on climate change and climate action, most of them seem to be unsure about the impact their individual climate action can have on the big picture. In fact, some of the participants argued that it is pointless for them to engage in climate action on an individual level. It is true that larger corporations have the opportunity to cut emissions and production to a much larger extent than any individual could easily do. This does not mean, however, that individual actions do not contribute to the fight against climate change. Although part of the participants' inaction comes from a lack of knowledge, or belief, in their own role as a consumer, much of it also stems from a lack of incentive to act differently. This has proved a recurring theme throughout the interviews, and certainly has shaped the ways in which the participants behave in terms of climate change. Had the threat been more immediate to their own surroundings and livelihoods the participants might do more. Similarly, if the reward for individual action had been greater, for example through seeing the effects of one's actions, this might also contribute to greater climate action. Additionally, because the participants lack incentive, they will also not adjust their behaviour in a way which poses an inconvenience to their daily lives. It is evident that most of the participants see

the threat of climate change as too complex and distant for them to be able to tackle, at least in the near future. This is not to say that some of the participants do not try to act more sustainably. All of the participants recycle, at least frequently. Some have chosen diets which are more environmentally friendly, use reusable water bottles or try to use more public transportation.

At first glance, gender disparities do not seem to emerge related to gender and climate action. However, upon further analysis there were certain aspects where gendered differences stood out. Specifically, in terms of fear, motherhood and arguably food habits did these emerge. It is clear that the female participants of this study showed more fear for their own future than the male participants, who spoke about fear in a more general way. As argued, it is uncertain whether this is because the women are more afraid, or if this is simply the result of internalised notions of masculinity. When looking at the findings of this study overall, it is evident that ideals of masculinity in particular has emerged as highly relevant in shaping behaviours towards the environment, more so than femininity. Such a perspective materialised in masculine ideals being connected with meat consumption, or continued utilisation of less sustainable vehicles. Whilst some of the male participants discussed ways through which they work to embrace their masculinity, the female participants made no mention of behaving in ways specifically to bring out their femininity. Rather, they discussed how their femininity has been limiting to them throughout their lives, through issues such as sports or authority. Some participants even argued for ways in which they downplay their femininity in hoping to achieve the same authority which is granted their male counterparts. It can be argued that while men are allowed to continue to act unsustainably in order to retain their masculinity, more pressure is effectively put on women to act towards climate change. This is because in this context, women are expected to care more about the future of the planet as they might have children one day. Because women are considered to be more afraid and to care more about the future because of their maternal instincts, women arguably "should do more". Interestingly, the female participants of this study do not do more climate action than the male participants. Whilst the participants might have the perception that women are likely to do more, this has no real consequences for the reality of the female participants. The view that women are inclined to do more therefore reflects how they perceive others and society, but they fail to apply this view to their own situations. Another reason why women "should do more" could be the case that it is not jeopardising a woman's femininity to drive a smaller, more sustainable car, or to switch to a plant based diet as opposed to how that might affect a

man’s masculinity. Notably, however, more research would be needed to prove this to be the case, as this study is limited in both its time and size. Nevertheless, I believe this study has added to the already existing literature on the topic and has highlighted some of the ways through which young people in a country in the global North experience climate change, climate action, and the ways in which gendered disparities can still influence their thoughts and behaviour.

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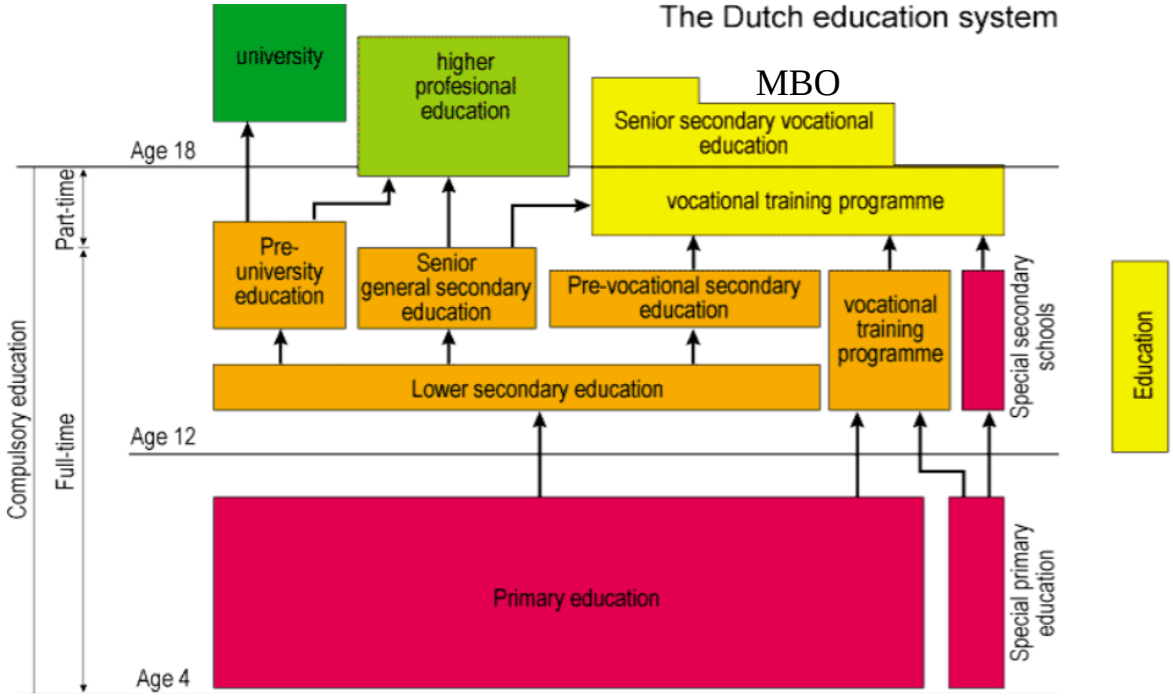
APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: THE DUTCH SCHOOL SYSTEM

The Dutch school system, illustration by Béguin, Kremers and Alberts, 2008:



"The Dutch secondary education system is highly selective; it is a tracked system. After finishing primary school around age 12, pupils can choose between the following three school types:

- pre-vocational secondary education (VMBO): 4 year course;
- senior general secondary education (HAVO): 5 year course;
- pre-university education (VWO): 6-year course" (Béguin et al., 2008, p. 3-4.

The secondary education a pupil attends directly impacts which level of higher education they can pursue. The HvA and UvA are at the University level, whereas MBO is Senior secondary vocational education. The MBO, therefore, whilst being higher education is below University level. A student can work their way to University if they start at the pre-vocational secondary education, but it will take longer than if they attended pre-university education. Their secondary education is largely determined by test scores, which then guide them to the appropriate higher education.

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Climate change and climate action: gendered perceptions amongst students in Amsterdam

Background information:

- How old are you?
- Where did you grow up?
- Do you have any siblings?
- What do your parents do for a living?
- Where do you currently live (at home/student accommodation)?
- Where do you study?
- What do you study?
- How do you like to spend your spare time?
    - Are you part of any clubs/organisations/societies?

Climate change and climate action:

- What do you think about when you hear the words 'climate change'?
- What do you think has caused climate change?
- What kinds of climate change effects do you know about?
- Where do you understand climate change to have the most damaging effects?
- Do you frequently hear about climate change, from your surroundings or the media?
    - If yes, what content is discussed?
- How do you think the Netherlands is affected by climate change?
- Do you understand climate change to be an important issue in Dutch politics?
- Have you experienced the topic of climate change and climate action to be a source of conflict amongst friends, family or peers?
- How do you think the experiences of Dutch people might differ from countries in the global South?
- Do you have any personal experiences with the effects of climate change?
    - E.g. times you have noticed increased temperatures.
- How do you feel that climate change affects your day-to-day life (either through how you act or how you feel)?
- What are your personal opinions regarding climate change?

- What do you consider the best way of tackling the threat of climate change on a global level?
- What do you consider the best way of tackling the threat of climate change on a local level?
- How do you think action to mitigate climate change influences the day-to-day life of students in Amsterdam?
- If you think about your own daily life, how does the problem of climate change and sustainability influence your actions? Consider a typical day, from morning to evening.

Gender:

- How do you understand the concept of gender?
- How do you view the differences between the genders?
- Do you feel that there are specific expectations from society, family and friends to you as a man/woman?
    - If yes, which?
    - How old were you when you first experienced that there were specific expectations for you to act a certain way because of your gender?
    - Growing up, did you feel that you were treated differently than siblings/friends of the opposite sex due to your genders?
- In which ways do you feel that your identity is shaped by expectations towards your gender?
- How do you feel that such expectations shape the way you act?

Gender and Climate Change:

- Who do you think cares more about climate change, men or women?
- How do you think the genders act towards climate change? Are there differences?
- Do you feel that there is a connection between your own gender identity and the way you understand climate change and act towards it?
- How do you think your gender identity can shape the way you act towards climate change?

APPENDIX C: CONSENT LETTER

Are you interested in taking part in the research project Climate change and climate action: gendered perceptions amongst students in Amsterdam?

This is an inquiry about participation in a research project where the main purpose is to explore the ways in a research project where the main purpose is to explore the ways in which gender shapes the understanding of, and action towards, the threat of climate change In this letter we will give you information about the purpose of the project and what your participation will involve.

Purpose

This research is undertaken for partial fulfilment of my masters' degree in Global Development Theory and Practice and will be based mainly on interviews with tertiary level students. The data collected from these interviews will be used to answer my research objectives. The main objective of the research is to explore how male and female Dutch students perceive the threat of climate change and to what extent their perceptions are related to gender.

Sub-objectives aim to explore how students understand climate change and climate action, to explore how students view their gender identity, and the link between these two areas.

The purpose of this study is therefore to explore how the threat of climate change is perceived in a country in the global North (the Netherlands), and to assess whether gender shapes the ways through which people experience this threat and how they act towards it.

Who is responsible for the project?

This is a study conducted as part of a master's degree in Global Development Theory and Practice at the University of Bergen, Norway.

Why are you being asked to participate?

This research plans to recruit approximately 12 study participants with whom qualitative, semi-structured interviews will be conducted. In order to assess adequately the gender dimension, an equal number of men and women will be engaged

We ask specifically for Dutch youth between the ages of 20 and 25 who are attending higher education in Amsterdam at the University of Amsterdam and the University of Applied Sciences in Amsterdam respectively.

You are asked to participate because you fit the abovementioned criteria.

What does participation involve for you?

This project will have individual interviews as its main method of data collection. The questions asked during these interviews will be on climate change and climate action; how the participant understands the threat of climate change and how they act towards it. Furthermore, we will ask questions about the participants' understanding of gender and gender identity, with particular reference to climate change.

- If you choose to participate in this project, this means consenting to being interviewed about the topics that are outlined above.

- The interview will be recorded if the consent to this is given. If not, rapid note-taking will be used during the interview.
- The interview will take approximately one hour.

Participation is voluntary

Participation in the project is voluntary. If you chose to participate, you can withdraw your consent at any time without giving a reason. All information about you will then be made anonymous. There will be no negative consequences for you if you chose not to participate or later decide to withdraw.

Your privacy – how we store and use your information

We will only use your personal data for the purpose(s) specified in this information letter. We will process your personal data confidentially and in accordance with data protection legislation (the General Data Protection Regulation and Personal Data Act).

- The only people who will have access to your information in its raw condition is myself and my supervisor (referenced below).
- All recordings will start after you have introduced yourself so there will be no recording of your identity.
- Recordings will only be kept on the device which was used to record.
- Your identity will not be disclosed in the final project.
- In potential publications, the participants will not be recognizable.

What happens to your information when we finish the project?

This project is scheduled to end on June 20th, 2020. After its completion all recordings will be deleted. The transcripts of the recordings will be archived, but will be anonymised. This is for the purpose of potential continued PhD research on a similar topic at a later time. I and my supervisor? will be the only person who will have access to these transcripts, and they will be stored on a password-protected computer. I will be the only person who has access to these transcripts, and they will be stored on a password-protected computer.

Your rights

So long as you can be identified in the collected data, you have the right to:

- access the personal data that is being processed about you
- request that your personal data is deleted
- request that incorrect personal data about you is corrected/rectified
- receive a copy of your personal data (data portability), and
- send a complaint to the Data Protection Officer or The Norwegian Data Protection Authority regarding the processing of your personal data

What gives us right to process your personal data?

We will process your personal data based on your consent.

Based on an agreement with The University of Bergen, NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project is in accordance with data protection legislation

Where can I find out more?

If you have questions about the project, or want to exercise your rights, contact:

- Marte Hoogerhuis Alsaker at martehalsaker@gmail.com,
  Haldis Haukanes at the University of Bergen (Supervisor) at: haldis.haukanes@uib.no
- NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS, by email (personverntjenester@nsd.no) or by telephone: +47 55 58 21 17

Yours sincerely,

Project Leader
(Researcher/supervisor)

Student (if applicable)

Consent form

I have received and understood the information about the project "Climate change and climate action: gendered perspectives amongst students in Amsterdam", and I have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give consent:

- ☐ To participate in qualitative interviews
- ☐ For my interview to be recorded
- ☐ For my personal data to be stored after the end of the project for follow up studies.

I give consent for my personal data to be processed until the end of the project, ca. June 20th, 2020.

(Signed by participant, date)

APPENDIX D: NSD LETTER OF APPROVAL

NSD NORSK SENTER FOR FORSKNINGSDATA

NSD sin vurdering

Prosjekttittel

Climate change and climate action: gendered perceptions amongst students in Amsterdam

Referansenummer

418665

Registrert

27.06.2019 av Marte Hoogerhuis Alsaker - Marte.Alsaker@student.uib.no

Behandlingsansvarlig institusjon

Universitetet i Bergen / Det psykologiske fakultet / Hemil-senteret

Prosjektansvarlig (vitenskapelig ansatt/veileder eller stipendiat)

Haldis Haukanes, Haldis.Haukanes@uib.no

Type prosjekt

Studentprosjekt, masterstudium

Kontaktinformasjon, student

Marte Hoogerhuis Alsaker, Marte.Alsaker@student.uib.no

Prosjektperiode

01.08.2019 - 20.06.2020

Status

15.07.2019 - Vurdert

Vurdering (1)

15.07.2019 - Vurdert

Our assessment is that the processing of personal data in this project will comply with data protection legislation, presupposing that it is carried out in accordance with the information

given in the Notification Form and attachments dated 15.07.2019, as well as dialogue with NSD. Everything is in place for the processing to begin.

NOTIFY CHANGES

If you intend to make changes to the processing of personal data in this project it may be necessary to notify NSD. This is done by updating the Notification Form. On our website we explain which changes must be notified. Wait until you receive an answer from us before you carry out the changes.

TYPE OF DATA AND DURATION

The project will be processing special categories of personal data about ethnic origin, and general categories of personal data, until 20.06.2020.

LEGAL BASIS

The project will gain consent from data subjects to process their personal data. We find that consent will meet the necessary requirements under art. 4 (11) and 7, in that it will be a freely given, specific, informed and unambiguous statement or action, which will be documented and can be withdrawn.

The legal basis for processing special categories of personal data is therefore explicit consent given by the data subject, cf. the General Data Protection Regulation art. 6.1 a), cf. art. 9.2 a), cf. the Personal Data Act § 10, cf. § 9 (2).

PRINCIPLES RELATING TO PROCESSING PERSONAL DATA

NSD finds that the planned processing of personal data will be in accordance with the principles under the General Data Protection Regulation regarding:

- lawfulness, fairness and transparency (art. 5.1 a), in that data subjects will receive sufficient information about the processing and will give their consent
- purpose limitation (art. 5.1 b), in that personal data will be collected for specified, explicit and legitimate purposes, and will not be processed for new, incompatible purposes
- data minimisation (art. 5.1 c), in that only personal data which are adequate, relevant and necessary for the purpose of the project will be processed
- storage limitation (art. 5.1 e), in that personal data will not be stored for longer than is necessary to fulfil the project's purpose

THE RIGHTS OF DATA SUBJECTS

Data subjects will have the following rights in this project: transparency (art. 12), information (art. 13), access (art. 15), rectification (art. 16), erasure (art. 17), restriction of processing (art. 18), notification (art. 19), data portability (art. 20). These rights apply so long as the data subject can be identified in the collected data.

NSD finds that the information that will be given to data subjects about the processing of their personal data will meet the legal requirements for form and content, cf. art. 12.1 and art. 13.

We remind you that if a data subject contacts you about their rights, the data controller has a duty to reply within a month.

FOLLOW YOUR INSTITUTION'S GUIDELINES

NSD presupposes that the project will meet the requirements of accuracy (art. 5.1 d), integrity and confidentiality (art. 5.1 f) and security (art. 32) when processing personal data.

To ensure that these requirements are met you must follow your institution's internal guidelines and/or consult with your institution (i.e. the institution responsible for the project).

FOLLOW-UP OF THE PROJECT

NSD will follow up the progress of the project at the planned end date in order to determine whether the processing of personal data has been concluded.

Good luck with the project!

Contact person at NSD: Karin Lillevold

Data Protection Services for Research: +47 55 58 21 17 (press 1)