Leisure through Gendered Lenses:

Comparative Analysis of the Leisure Time of Bulgarian and Dutch Women

Radostina S. Zasheva

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Wageningen University

Wageningen, the Netherlands

Department of Environmental Sciences

Socio-Spatial Analysis, SAL 80433

R.S. Zasheva, 831216984130

Examiners: Drs. Ir. Karin Peters

Dr. Meghann Ormond

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SUMMARY

Leisure is significant for people's physical and psychological development (Roberts, 2006). However, certain obstacles and issues may appear as ones that limit the leisure experience. These problems are different for women and men- the former experience more severe constraints in terms of their leisure than the latter (Henderson et al., 1995; Jackson, 2005). This thesis explored the gendered aspect of leisure and the possible constraints that may follow from it. The restrictive and influential character of issues such as safety, mass media, expectations of the body and men in relation to women's leisure was investigated. In depth interviews were conducted with Bulgarian and Dutch women in order to indulge deeper into the possible gender influences that may constraint the leisure time for the women. In addition, comparative analysis between the results from the responses of the two groups of women were made, which provided additional knowledge about the different perceptions, beliefs and restrictions of the Bulgarian and the Dutch women, participating in this study. The results shown that safety, mass media, expectations of the body and men can indeed influence and restrict the leisure experience of some of the women. There were dissimilarities between the Bulgarian and the Dutch respondents in terms of impacts, constraints, perceptions and beliefs related to leisure. Seen through gender lenses leisure and its constraints were explored in this thesis.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

1.1 Introduction

Leisure is an important and indivisible part of people's lives (Roberts, 2006; Little et al., 2005). The leisure phenomenon stretches its tentacles amongst almost every aspect of the human existence and creates diverse connections with them. However, the experience that people receive from leisure may vary and may be in constant flux. This diversity and fluctuation might be caused by a number of other phenomena, as well as various factors, influences, constraints and reasons. Gender may appear as an indicator of the leisure experience. Women and men experience leisure differently and they ascribe different meanings to their leisure experiences (Roberts, 2006). In addition, gender might act as a factor playing a constraining role by restricting in one way or another leisure itself. Studies concerning the gender aspect of leisure showed that women experience more severe constraints in terms of their leisure than men (Henderson et al., 1995; Jackson, 2005). The leisure environment might appear as an arena for healthy and pleasurable experience for women but at the same time it exists within certain cultural and social norms, beliefs and values, expectations and rules that might restrict significantly the leisure itself.

Moreover, although the existence of phenomena such as cultural hybridization, emancipation and diverse feminist movements might have brought to the whole world significant changes, the equality of their impact in the different geographical regions might be far from present and achieved. Western and Eastern Europe may experience these changes differently and this might be viewed in terms of leisure as well. Consequently, the women from the West may experience different leisure constraints comparing to the women from the East, which questions the equality, mentioned above, and holds the view that some women might feel more restricted in relation to their leisure than others, which is another possible difference that should be taken into account when approaching and investigating women's leisure. Through this perspective Henderson (1996) argues that there is an *"inability and inadequacy of determining that one leisure size fits all"* (Henderson, 1996:139). In connection to the gender aspect of leisure these distinctions should be taken into account while coming to issues concerning the constraining character of leisure.

1.2 Leisure and Significance

Leisure is a contributor to the physical and mental health of people and it is an essential and attached part of the human's life (Haworth et al., 2004). The time and the evolution have provided the ground for transformation, advance and broadening of the leisure activities. Prior to

investigating leisure it is essential to elaborate on its concept and definition. Godbey (1999) classified leisure in the following four central contexts: leisure in terms of time, leisure as an activity, leisure as state of existence and leisure as a state of mind. Leisure is defined in terms of time, which is the free time during which a person does not engage in activity for the sake of economic gain. Leisure can be viewed as an activity, one that is free from obligation and duties and brings pleasure and joy. Leisure described as a state of existence implies the relaxing, carefree condition with the absence of concern of time. Defined as a state of mind leisure entails the intra-personal belief of freedom and ability to be in command of the happening, rather than being dependant on the happening (Godbey, 1999). There is no definite definition of leisure amongst the literature. However, despite the various definitions of the concept of leisure in the broad literature sources and no matter what personal meaning is ascribed to it, the significance and contribution of leisure to people's life is recognized (Godbey, 1999; Boll et al., 2003; Little et al., 2005; Roberts, 2006). Leisure contributes to people's acknowledgement in terms of their own individualities within a certain social and cultural context and thus gives a personal understanding of one's own position in the society (Boll et al., 2003). Leisure time may be the area where identities and characters are created, where self-confidence and self-development may be obtained, where friendships and contacts may be built and maintained and where the body and the mind may find the 'shelter' under which to recharge their energy. The benefits of people's leisure might be too many to be neglected. Therefore, they all deserve deeper understanding and elaboration, but at the same time a stage where voices and theories can be heard and presented.

1.3 Problem Statement

Leisure may touch upon all spheres of people's life –economical, political, social, etc. (Roberts, 2006). Besides the broadly stretched tentacles of leisure another characteristic that it may imply is a context-dependant character. Different groups of people might experience and practice leisure in diverse ways. This multiplicity may be related to aspects and factors that impact and draw the character of leisure such as age, race, physical and psychological disabilities, gender, etc. Consequently, leisure should be examined more precisely through the lenses of all of them separately and in relation to each other. This thesis will draw a specific attention on the gender aspect of leisure and will aim at digging into constraints that may arise from it. Namely, it will focus on the gender aspects of leisure in the contemporary society and will investigate women as consumers of it.

The globalization processes brought to the society significant transformations. Roles, identities, lifestyles, values and beliefs may have became blurred and undefined. Still the equal access to leisure might be under question. Despite the flux nature of leisure, disparities between the

2

leisure of the two sexes have always existed (Henderson et al., 1995; Jackson, 2005). What might appear to constrain the leisure experience, besides the economic and political situations, may be the embedded values and beliefs, the social norms impregnated with the prevalence of the masculinity in many South-eastern European countries. Thus the gender division might be expressed through leisure in relation to time, accessibility, cultural and social influences and norms (Roberts, 2006). Living in the 21th century issues such as female empowerment and feminist movements might seem not needed anymore. The society, politics and scientists, may reckon that enough is achieved in this sphere and that these topics are staled and unnecessary. Before such conclusions to be drawn it is essential to indulge into the women's leisure itself and to consider the fact that feminist approaches and research have significantly complemented to and expanded the knowledge and awareness about the women's leisure (Henderson, 1996). This line would present the constraining character of the women's leisure patterns and the possible relation they have with the prevailing ideologies.

Although the world nowadays is might be more globalized and mixed, certain inequalities may still have a stable position and to remain constant. These inequalities might not omit the leisure phenomenon as well. Touching upon leisure and gender it is important not to underestimate the possible differences between the leisure of the women from Western and those from Eastern Europe that may exist. Young women in some South-eastern European countries may consciously or subconsciously devote their leisure time to the men around them in one way or another. The men presence in women's leisure might be an issue that still needs a better explanation. Men involved in women's leisure might be viewed as a variable or catalyst that structures constrains and influences certain women's leisure activities. Irena Ateljevic (2007:152) clearly depicted how the performance of femininity of women in Croatia is under the control of men and how those women accept these men's playground and willingly engage in it. Similar might be the case with the women in Bulgaria. Women may adapt particular behavior, manners and dress codes that might be dictated by men wishes. A certain compliance with men may be expressed by women during their leisure time. This compliance may take different forms and might be examined in various leisure activities. One may presume that some of the women practicing any kind of sport are aiming at achieving a desirable weight and body shape that actually might be in accordance to men's ideals and wishes. Moreover, some women spend a lot of their leisure time in spa salons, hair-dressers and beauty centers where actually they may consciously try to reach an ideal physical appearance and to deny the men role in this case might be wrong. Another example could be the concise leisure time that women in relationships with men might have for themselves and their female friends. Women may accompany their boyfriends to meetings that might be of no interest to them, boring and even irritating such as soccer male meetings, meetings with husband's bosses, etc. Moreover, some

women might often be told by their boyfriends, husbands or brothers which places they must visit and which they must not, who they should meet with and who they should not, how they have to behave in front of their male friends while at the same time they might have to listen to and comply with the often offensive jokes that men make about their sexual conquests (other women). All this might be a nice way of enhancing males' ego and confidence. This men's pressure might not be always verbally expressed. Young women may create a particular image (mainly the 'Barbie'-type image of the tall, slim girl (Council of Europe, 2004) in their minds) of how they should look like and behave, which might be a consequence of the desire to meet certain expectations and passionately to copy and follow this image without considering the possible negative aspects and consequences. Women who cannot fit into these standards may feel cruelly depressed. Some of them may devote all of their youth years to exhausting and severe diets, for example, leading to serious health problems. Fashion magazines, that some women read during their leisure time may overflew of articles 'teaching' women how to please their men and what women should change in themselves, both physically and behaviorally, in order to receive men's attention. Some women may even undergo plastic surgeries at young age in order to 'adjust' their physical appearance to men's desires. Media, television, Internet, cinema may have the same influence that powerfully dictates styles, behavior and appearances. Besides, it might not be argued that young women considered as physically attractive are leading a happy life. They may also encounter social prejudice and negativism in their everyday life and during their leisure time as well, that might be mainly expressed through envy and hate or social prejudice by other women and men. The safe leisure environment for women might be another issue that should be taken into account. Some leisure places like bars, discos and clubs might be dangerous for women and for that reason consciously avoided by them. Fear of rape, sexual harassment and any aspect of brutal behavior may restrict women for visiting certain leisure places. Safety, therefore, may appear as a constraining factor of the women's leisure experience and may be the cause of denial of particular leisure practices. This possible gender pressure will be the main focus of this thesis. More precisely, the influence of men on women's leisure in Bulgaria will be examined. Arguments about the needless feminist approach in the contemporary society will be questioned and a new concept will probably emerge: men-oriented leisure. The possible presence of the imposed power by men on women's leisure might not be that obvious nowadays and even though it might be hidden sometimes the consequences of it may not be less destructive, rather they might be transformed into new forms in accordance to the post-modern world people live in. Attention should be kept on the intrapersonal constraints that women experience during their leisure (Crawford et al., 1987).

4

1.4 Research Objectives and Research Questions

Several research objectives are intermingled in this thesis. The main goal of the study is to enlighten, understand and explore the leisure time of the women in Bulgaria and the women in the Netherlands, its gendered aspect and the related to it constraints and influences. From a scientific point of view, the thesis aims at verifying and indulging into new insights in the field of leisure of the young women in the contemporary society. In addition, this comparative research intends to explore what the possible differences between the leisure time of the women from Bulgaria and the women from the Netherlands are.

Three main research questions are interwoven in this thesis that aim at finding their answers.

- What constrains women's leisure?

- What are the power relations entailed in women's leisure?

- What are the main differences in leisure patterns of women from Bulgaria and women in the Netherlands?

In addition, in order to give more precise and focused answers to the main research questions, taking into account the mentioned above problematic aspects of women's leisure, four sub-research questions are included as follows:

- What kind of influence do the safety issues have on women's leisure?

- What kind of influence does mass media have on women's leisure?

- Is women's leisure influenced by expectations of the body and how?

- How are men involved in women's leisure?

1.5 Relevance of the Study

This study will bring significant insights into young women's leisure in two European countries, the constraints they are experiencing, the influences and additionally, the differences between the women in the two countries in terms of leisure experience. Therefore, it would provide the leisure industry with significant information and consequently new approaches and ways for its further development might be implemented. Moreover, the comparison character of the study will give the opportunity to the reader to examine the influences and prominence of the leisure time of women from Eastern Europe and the ones from Western Europe.Thus a better understanding of the potential worldwide inequalities in terms of leisure experience will become prominent and at the same time the reasons for them will be revealed. Additionally,

a specific focus will be given on the traces of men presence and control of women's leisure, an approach that is still not enough elaborated in the literature. This research may also be viewed not only as aiming at enlightening women themselves in terms of their leisure, but the men as well, due to the fact that men will have the opportunity to place themselves within women's leisure in one or another context.

Furthermore, by drawing attention on the flux character of the leisure activities, preferences and trends that constantly change according to the contemporary social movements and phenomena, this study will provide the leisure industry with significant information about the right leadership and the appropriate directions that should be chosen:

> *"…changing social trends will require more effective and efficient management. The population is getting progressively older, couples are having children later, society is becoming more litigious, there is a trend towards sport spectating, home-based leisure is becoming increasingly important and society is becoming globalised. This will have implications for programming, marketing, image and competitive edge. These changes will all require 'better' management"*(Sport and Leisure Management, 2005:2)

1.6 Thesis Structure

The following chapter presents the theoretical framework that serves as a guidance for this thesis by focusing on literature concerning the leisure time of women. More precisely, the possible constraints that women may experience during leisure are elaborated and detailed. Furthermore, the chapter gives insights into the nature of these constraints by drawing attention on gender aspects and it positions spatiality and women's bodies as significant factors that may determine the leisure experience.

Chapter Three contains some historical preview of the cultural and social life within the Bulgarian and the Dutch society and further elaborates on the contemporary trends in the two countries. This information is provided with the purpose of presenting a clearer picture of the lives of the two groups of the respondents.

Chapter Four explains the methods used for the research. The methods used for data collection are presented and the reasons for the choice of them are clarified. Arguments for implying qualitative methods of the data gathering are discussed. In addition, the limitations of the study are recognized and explained.

Chapter Five presents the results of the data analysis from the interviews with the Bulgarian respondents. The chapter begins with general overview of the Bulgarian women's leisure, where preferences of places and people during leisure and common leisure practices examined.

Further in this chapter the answers of the research questions are approached by presenting the responses of the Bulgarian participants of the study. Every of the research questions are examined and discussed.

Chapter Six contains the results of the data analysis from the interviews with the Dutch respondents. Initially, an overview of the Dutch women's leisure is presented in order to provide a general idea about the usual leisure practices, preferred places and people during leisure. The chapter continues with giving answers to the research questions by presenting and elaborating on the responses of the Dutch participants of the study.

In Chapter Seven the comparative analysis between the two groups of the respondents will be made and conferred and thus the answers to the research questions and objectives will be given. This chapter makes clear the complex nature of the respondents' leisure constraints and their gender aspect through the comparative analysis of the data. Moreover, in this chapter the significance of understanding the women's leisure constraints and their gendered aspect will be discussed and attention to the relation between the restricted women's leisure and its importance to the quality of women's lives will be drawn.

In Chapter Eight precise answers of the research questions will be given and final conclusions will be drawn. The chapter will conclude with recommedations for further references and research.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to indulge into the constraints that young women experience during their leisure time, the nature and the reasons for the obstacles that impede the leisure experience in the contemporary post-modern world. Two theories will provide a framework for the better understanding of the restrictive character of women's leisure. The multiplicity of the possible constraints will be narrowed down by focusing on the gender aspect, its relation to space and place and the women's body as an active actor of this process. Therefore attention will be kept on the spatiality of several areas of leisure, its meaning and influences and a better and deeper understanding of the gendered nature of spaces and places, the role of their fluid and meaningful character will be elaborated (Aitchison, 1999).For that reason, the new cultural geography will serve as a frame within which gender, place and leisure will interweave and thus influence and determine the possible constraints of the leisure experience for women. The grave of the traditional patriarchic norms, beliefs and influences applied in spaces and places will be questioned by looking from a different perspective, namely one that reveals the constant remain of them though their presence nowadays exists in different from the past forms and practices.

In order to grasp and dig deeper into the gendered nature of the constraints that women experience during their leisure the woman's body will be positioned and investigated in the specific leisure places and spaces that wear their own power, pressure and authority and consequently affect the women's leisure experience. Thus the women's body will be presented as a spotlight, a prism through which leisure is experienced and leisure activities are practiced. Therefore, women's leisure will be seen through the lenses of the embodiment theory which will serve as a basis on which the body will be positioned, namely as an instrument for performance, maintenance and compliance with the established cultural and social norms exercised in spaces and places that implement their impact onto the leisure experience. The degree of the importance and influence of the stigma and the body acting as a projector of them in a subordinate and complying role will be presented and questioned. For this purpose several areas of leisure will be investigated and their constraining nature will be inquired. Thus issues concerning safety during leisure, influence of media, reason for engaging in sport activities and cultural and social expectations in relation to women's behavior and look will be included and investigated. The above will be approached from a perspective placing and inquiring them as shaping, defining and therefore restraining the leisure experience of women.

2.2 The New Cultural Geography

2.2.1 Leisure Spaces and Women

From the perspective of the new cultural geography landscapes are modulated by social rules, values and norms (Duncan, 1995). Culture shapes and determines the meaning of spaces and places. The experience obtained from the surrounding environment is culturally and socially dependant and constructed (Drexler, 2004). Culture penetrates all spheres of human's life and consequently, its pervasive nature makes the cultural influence evident in leisure time as well. The importance of the culture can be recognized in terms of structuring and deciding on particular leisure practices thus people's experiences are influenced and adjusted to the cultural norms and beliefs (Rosaldo, 1993). The social rules, forces and expectations may exercise a significant pressure when it comes to issues concerning women's leisure. Certain roles, behavior and appearances may be regarded as customary and typical for women, according to the cultural norms of a specific leisure place, and the opposite:some women's actions, looks and manners might be deemed as unsuitable and may often be judged by the society. Hence, leisure might exist within defined borders drawn by culture and society and thus its constraining character is marked.

The umbrella under which the leisure phenomenon will be examined is the new cultural geography that provides better understanding of the diverse character of places and spaces and their constant flux. Within this fluctuation power and domination are exercised for the sake of achieving a particular goal (Aitchison, 1999). Places and spaces wear their borders, centers and outside edges, entrances and exits. Bell (1995) explains how in reality spatiality and sexuality mutually interfere and add up to each other drawing borders and defining spaces while at the same time create identities (Bell et al., 1995). The same would relate to spatiality and gender. Therefore, attention should be kept on the nature of the space which women unavoidably encounter with during their leisure. Taking a perspective that portrays spaces as carrying the potential to restrict or liberate a certain leisure activity with their fluid and relative character, within a gender context, this complexity holds several problematic aspects in terms of access for example. Certain places and spaces are considered as typical for men. Women may not have admittance to some of those places, neither female presence might be welcome there. Many bars and sport clubs may not be 'places for women' or certain limitations may be constructed to them. Beliefs, social and cultural norms may play an important role here that should be explored and elaborated further.

Spaces may exercise their cultural and social influences in terms of physicality and thus again to remain a restrictive character of the leisure. First, the connection between physicality and appearance in places and spaces must be investigated. Some leisure places require certain dress

codes and style. Mass media as a provider of fashion may apply its role here as a dictator of the contemporary trends, which are consequently implied into leisure places like bars, discos, etc. Thus besides the material and objective nature clothes and accessories may have, they may 'speak' for person's identity and function as a creator of certain image (McLaren, 2007). Moreover, they may appear as an instrument for performing femininity on places and spaces where they are visible. Consequently, it might be the case that the leisure experience is controlled and in this way constraint by fashion. However, this restriction needs a further and deeper explanation taking into account the cultural and social beliefs of the society that may persistently draw rules and norms and frame the appropriateness and rightness of the leisure experience. Second, referring again to the physicality, the woman's body and its performance applied and maintained within spaces and places should be considered. Since childhood some women are taught to behave as ladies, which implies for example that they are expected to perform in a certain way: to keep legs together when they sit, to drink in small nips, to move in tiny steps, etc. (Borisoff et al., 1998). This can relate to women's leisure where the image and performance of the body is defined according to the specific place where this body is situated (Borisoff et al., 1998). Consider, for example, the limitations for women on the street in relation to the cultural beliefs expressed in the past by the rejection of a woman to ride a horse or drive a car. This behavior would place and describe her immediately as unfeminine and rude and would evoke negative gossiping (Daley, 1999). Nowadays women drive cars and use public transport. Biking is usual transportation for a lot of women as well. However, for many women in some countries it is not enough feminine enough to bike. It might be that biking is seen as depriving a woman of certain womanly qualities in terms of tenderness, sexual attractiveness and style which are culturally and socially deemed and thus might have the strength to erode, influence and dictate the leisure experience that some leisure activities (like biking) can bring. The spatiality, therefore, might appear as a creator of women's identities with its complex interwoven influences and meaningful character. A young woman performance might be dependable on the nature of the space she is present in and her behavior and manners might ordered by the social norms and rules entangled in this spatiality. Thus the identity of the young women might be formed by the general beliefs ascribed to the appropriateness of certain behavior (McLaren, 2007). McLaren (2007) captures this argument in the following quote:

> *"Young women learn from various sources that in order to be viewed as respectable young women, they should be a 'good girl'. They learn this through their family, school, church and popular music, such as gospel music."* (McLaren, 2007:31)

It is essential when touching upon women's leisure and its relation to spaces and places to avoid generalization that may lead to misleading, namely, it should be pointed out that some women

may be more repressed in their leisure than others (Henderson et al., 1995). Many and different factors may be the causality for this diversity-religion, education, race, personal attitudes, age etc. However in this thesis the restriction and oppression will be researched by capturing the culture as a possible provider and creator of them. Second, referring to leisure it might be wrong to presume that every leisure practice is always connected with bringing positive experience without to consider the personal meaning women ascribe to it (Henderson et al., 1995). Some leisure practices might be preferable to some women and avoided or neglected by others.

2.2.2 Combinative Character of Leisure

Spaces and places in the postmodern world inevitably become classified according to their consummative character, which, at the same time, embraces different aspects of leisure. Spaces and places offer a great amount of leisure activities both for women and men. Cafes, bars, discos, cinemas, shopping centers, etc. provide a ground for leisure experiences for the both sexes. However, mostly for women some leisure practices might be combined with the housework, which often is their reposibility. Women's leisure merges with their everyday tasks and the separation of leisure from work may become blurred and vague. Daley (1999) grasps the mixed character of women's leisure in the following quote:

> *"A woman who joined her sister on the freshly scrubbed front verandah, mending clothes, was both at work and at play. While her husband could map his leisure in time and space, hers was very different. Women's work did not finish at 5 or 6 o'clock and there were no half-day holidays."* (Daley et al., 1999)

Another appropriate example here may be derived from the local supermarkets and malls. Besides the purchasing character that these places possess another purpose for visiting those places might be the pursuing of leisure experience. This duality may be combined and thus practiced by women. A woman would schedule a meeting with her girlfriends in the local mall, for example, where she can have a cup of coffee and chat with them and at the same time do her groceries for the dinner that she would cook in the evening. Further, many young women-who are already mothers-relate some leisure places to the opportunity of maintaining their household chores and thus these particular leisure places have the potential to reaffirm women's identities as ones of mothers, for example (Scraton et al., 1998). Hence, one can wonder where exactly the boundary between women's leisure and women's work is and how unstable such a boundary might be. Women's home tasks may interfere and create a bound with the women's leisure, thus the leisure experience may become impacted, dependent and constraint by the existence of this relation.

2.2.3 Leisure and Mass Media

The contemporary globalized world is overwhelmed with an enormous bulk of information delivered to the people in different forms and through various channels. Internet, television and magazines are one of them and the time devoted to them is often considered as leisure for many women. Nowadays women are exposed to TV shows devoting a whole rubric from their scenario to the women's beauty, behavior and manners. Similarly, articles in magazines teach women how to get off a car when going to a dinner, club or disco, how to perform in order to seduce men in different leisure places, what and how much is appropriate to drink, how they should be dressed and perform. In addition, mass media influences the beliefs and ideas about spaces and places, because it is a source of information in which certain meanings and values of spaces, places and environments are encrypted (Burgess, 1990). Besides their entertaining character movies and TV programmes imply viewer's involvement with the storyline and the context. One of the consequences of this involvement may entail a wishful identification with the actors on the screen. A desire for looking like an actor may have a persuasive affect on people's behavior and look (Moyer-Guse´, 2008). Cinemas are preferred leisure places by many women. Cinema itself strengthens the desire to look likable and admired in a visual aspect and enhances the desire for identification with characters on the screen (Evans et al., 1999). Thus, looking plays a significant role in creating feminine identities and it might be the cause for following and maintaining a certain appearance and behavior because:

> *"Life does not mean, Life is; and the degree to which the image, aspiring to a realm of pure Being, is mixed with meaning, with narrative with discourse, is the degree to which it has been adulterated, sophisticated, as one 'sophisticates' wine."* (Evans et al., 1999:25)

One can blame the mass media in the contemporary postmodern world for exposing, imposing and influencing people's choices, ideas and beliefs, but it might be misleading to restrict the views within this framework. It is questionable that mostly the movie stars and fashion images make women to take these steps leading to alternations of their look. It should be investigated better if this is the whole picture and if it is, it should be questioned why. Namely, what the reasons for these alternations might be and how the main gender discourses may be linked to them.

2.2.4 Leisure and Safety

Spaces and places in the city may have another restricting aspect in terms of leisure. Some streets and neighborhoods are not safe for women. Mostly these are places with high crime

rate, exercised in terms of vandalism, robbery, rape, violation, etc. where many bars, discos and clubs are situated. When spending their leisure time in these areas women often use various precautions, for example choosing different (better lit routes), different type of transportation, etc., especially during the evenings when the possibility for commitance of a crime is bigger (Green, 2006; Chasteen, 1994). However, whether those practices are effective enough is under question and remains complicity and subjectivity. Risky activities in clubs, bars and discos may lead to dangerous behavior and thus provoke fear. Alcohol consummation, for example, being a practice in those places, may result in risky deeds and may have bad consequences. First, some drunk men in a club may appear as a danger for the women in terms of sexual harassment, rude behavior and even violence and rape. Excluding women from the group of alcohol consummators would be wrong. Some women actively and consciously drink alcohol, often with the intention to get drunk, and at the same time are aware of the consequences of it (McLaren, 2007). Second, a dangerous aspect may occur in a situation in which a woman accepts a drink from a man, namely, the fact that the beverage may contain some drugs (McLaren, 2007). Therefore, amongst women a fear of being drugged may appear. Thus the choice for engaging in leisure activities may be dependent on the degree of danger in the leisure environment and some women may intentionally restrict themselves from engaging in leisure activities situated in the above mentioned areas. Others would call their husbands and boyfriends to take them from a certain place where they have been which may imply a certain dependency on spouses, on their time, availability and willingness. As a result, this dependency may occur as another constraint of leisure experience for women, who will comply with their partners. However this dependency might be mostly provoked by the need for safety. How the safety may occur as a restriction for the leisure experience will be examined.

2.3 Embodiment and Expectations of the Body

The engendered body interferes with a place, a place that involves certain meaning and exercises power relations, where rules and norms are drawn and therefore the same body may be restricted, constraint by them. For that reason, attention should be kept on the particular spatial relations where the main actor is the body. The mutual interference of spatiality and body, which provides a ground for investigating the influences leading to constraints and restrictions of the leisure experience, is the main point here. Interlinking the embodiment theory in this thesis will help for better understanding of the connection between the body and the cultural beliefs that might be marked on it. The human body intervenes the formation of the reality and the mind and the body are in constant mutual relation that affects the experience (Evan and Green, 2006). This relation arises questions about the embedded cultural beliefs and their possible performance through the body. Embodiment is the *"existential ground of culture and*

13

self" (Csordas, 1990 as cited in Csordas, 1995). The body is constructed and adjusted to perform through the general social discourses. Thus embodiment appears as a frame positioning the body as a provider of the cultural and social ideologies (Ateljevic et al., 2007).

When and in what way women's leisure is constrained and how the body might be an active agent in this process is a point to be investigated. The actions produced by the body in order to perform femininity should be examined from a perspective underlining their constraining character. The gender character of the performance of the body holds the implementation of precise movements, manners and gestures in a specific spatial context. Therefore gendered skills are produced and marked through these actions. Moreover, this constrained performance has a restricted nature explaining the inconvenience and inability of the woman's body to engage in activities ascribed to the traditional masculinity, for example leisure activities acquiring physical power and/or space-occupying ones (Shogan, 2002). The body is dependent on the environment and interplays with it. Therefore there is a certain compliance and obedience that the body experiences permanently. Per Cornell (2004) makes a clear point concerning the bodily submission:

> *"Bodies are also manipulated in different ways. In most cases, the manipulation is relatively gentle, but it means that the body seldom corresponds directly to a "pure" natural state. People transform their bodies in many different, small ways, and may even expose themselves to body surgery, in order to correspond a little more to some ideal body image, a practice much "à la mode" in certain social groups in our time."*
> (Per Cornell in Fahlander et al., 2004:65)

Embodiment and spaces may come together to determine the leisure experience. Nightlife offers many leisure activities for the young women. Places like clubs and discos often provide a leisure experience associated with obtaining freedom and joyful atmosphere in a connection with drinking, chatting and flirting. At the same time it may appear as a ground for women to exercise resistance against the prevailing discourses of womanhood that portrays such places as prohibited, where a respectful women would not go. The reputation of the good girl and the desire for such a leisure experience therefore might be positioned against each other. However, many women find ways to keep their good name and at the same time engage in the leisure offered by the nightlife. Bars, discos and clubs might be forbidden for many young women by their parents, boyfriends or husbands. This might not be the case with the young women's relatives and thus staying at their houses might appear as an opportunity for more freedom and escapism from restrictions. In this way the young women *"are able to perform the expected and accepted femininity, while simultaneously experiencing the 'forbidden'"* (McLaren, 2007:32). Hence, this comes to show the dependant nature of perceptions of femininity on spaces and places and at

the same time marks the performing character of the feminine identities.

It might be wrong to neglect the fact that women's body performance may involve conformity and additionally to have a rewarding character (Shogan, 2002). The relation between leisure and its constraints, therefore, is a more complex one. Importantly, the constraints *"make possible activities and the experiences within them, they enable skill acquisition and they produce bodily comportment and expectations that may enable or restrict experiences of leisure"* (Shogan, 2002:36). However, the alternation or the maintenance of a specific bodily appearance, manners and behavior during leisure due to some constructed social and cultural beliefs, norms and models, which spaces and places wear within themselves, may produce a ground mainly for restrictions and constraints of the leisure time of women, rather than to enable it, where the body is the instrument through which they are expressed. This complex, interwoven intermediary should be questioned and researched for a deeper understanding of the restraint nature of the leisure experience.

2.3.1 Youth and Beauty Myths

> *"Becoming the new feminine ideal requires just the right combination of*
> *insecurity, exercise, bulimia and surgery."*
> -G. Trudeau[1]

The desire for beauty enforces practices and activities oriented towards its achieving. This process, however, may require permanent efforts, severe practices and might result in physical, as well as psychological struggles for many women. It is a phenomenon aiming at demolishing all the positive deeds and achievements that feminism brought to women, therefore, an additional feminist approach to women's lives is needed, in this case concerning leisure and beauty (Wolf, 1997). Leisure is age dependant and through the years it might transform its character and purpose (Roberts, 2006). Focusing on the young women and their leisure it should be noted that the young woman's body is able to put more energy in daily activities, work and in leisure. A young woman is more capable of staying until late in a club or a disco, dance and enjoy herself than an older one. This may widen the areas offering leisure experiences for the young women and thus probably enhancing the satisfaction obtained from them. At the same time it may raise questions concerning the expectations from the young women in relation to their leisure. A focal point is the connection between the beauty and youth that might be made. Beauty and attractiveness might not only be associated with the young women's bodies, but expected, anticipated to be found and admired. It seems that youth has not only been connected to positive connotation but also it has been viewed as a desirable ideal (Hipfl et al., 2003). In addition,

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[1]Garretson Beekman "Garry" Trudeau (born July 21, 1948) is an American cartoonist.

beauty might be desired as constant and visible characteristic always and everywhere. Youth embodies the beauty as well and *"the gaunt, youthful model supplanted the happy housewife as the arbiter of successful womanhood"* (Wolf, 1997:430).The young body and face are attractive and admirable. This belief might be socially constructed and imposed and so deeply rooted that it can be depicted as a social burden that the young woman carries. To what extend the beauty is imposing pressure on the young women and how this pressure is practiced should be approached and questioned.

Some of the women would practice some sport, others would reserve regularly hours in spa salons, some might start diets carefully counting the calories of every of their meal, if there is a meal at all. Another way to achieving beauty may be the plastic surgeries modulating and transforming the bodily and facial appearance. The world nowadays offers uncountable opportunities for creating a desirable body image. The evolution of the medicine, phenomena such as commodification, hedonism and capitalism itself leave a noticeable mark on the body, which nowadays *"is fully customizable and adaptable, whether through tattoos, piercings, branding, liposuction, or cosmetic surgery"* (Van Wolputte, 2004:264).

Seen from this point of view, it should be questioned if and to what extend the experience obtained in the beauty salons and sport centers is a real leisure one and whether the desire for beauty is not prevailing over it, making it focused and determined. Whether and how the leisure may embrace the beauty, due to the impact of the cultural and social expectations and in a result the leisure experience to become dependent and constraint, is a perspective that needs further research and investigation.

2.3.2 Beauty and Beauty Salons

Spa and cosmetic salons are places where many women spend their leisure time. A day spent there might be a day devoted to relaxation that implies escapism from the work environment and the stress of the everyday life circle. However, these places are places dedicated to the beauty and besides their leisure nature in the core of their purpose and function is the beauty, either sustained or produced. Beauty requires maintenance, persistence and inescapably a considerable amount of time. Cosmetic and spa procedures are offered to the women in various forms and are applied to all parts of the body. Some of them last several minutes, others prolong hours. The frequency of the cosmetic and spa procedures, invented to preserve (or in some cases to alter) the woman's body, is subjective and dependant on individual's needs, perceptions, availability and time. The personal beliefs and awareness of one's own body influence the regularity of the procedures. For example a woman may reckon that she needs to visit a cosmetic for cleaning and peeling of her face two times per week, because she has greasy skin, another woman would apply the same procedure ones per mount due to the fact that she pos-

sesses dry skin. Women do invest a lot of time into achieving and maintaining their beauty. Often they take a full day off and devote it to the maintenance or improvement of their attractiveness. In some cases this time may even takes weeks or months. There are, for example, various commodified packages offering spa, cosmetic and dieting procedure and programmes usually in some quite remote places. Even though some women may consider the time devoted to the beauty as part of their free time, it would be wrong to deny that the time invested in the bodily appearance has a specific purpose-the beauty.

Beauty and perfection may stretch upon many aspects of women's life and take diverse forms with a varying degree. Naomi Wolf (1991) captures this in the following quote:

> *"The beauty myth tells a story: The quality called "beauty" objectively and universally exists. Women must want to embody it and men must want to possess women who embody it."* (Wolf, 1991:12)

2.3.3 Leisure Sport and Bodies

Leisure is often associated with acquiring and developing a certain skill (Roberts, 2006). For example, swimming as a leisure activity builds up proficiency and certain knowledge about swimming as a sport in terms of techniques, practices etc. However, it is questionable that the motivation for practicing a leisure activity is a consequence of the willingness to develop a certain skill ascribed to this activity (Kivel et al., 2000). There is a need for a better understanding of the situations in which leisure plays a role as a ground for developing and reaffirming individual and social identity and the positive aspects that may arise of it. Moreover, it should be taken into account the impact of different ideologies that frame and contribute to the construction of the identities (Kivel et al., 2000). The role of the social stigmatization exercises an influence and defines certain norms and rules. Therefore the public spaces and places constraint the individual to fully express his or her identity which brings doubt about the complete enjoyment that the leisure is supposed to bring:

> *"If being oneself in leisure is mitigated by having to conceal some aspect of identity, full enjoyment of activity is likely to be limited as well"* (Kivel et al.,2000)

Whether and to what degree sport and exercising as leisure activities for women are connected to their physical appearance, that might be culturally and socially imposed, is an investigating point in this thesis. As Featherstone (1991) argues-a person does exercise in order to have a good appearance, but also wants to have a good appearance while exercise (Featherstone, 1991:187, 192, as cited in Csordas, 1995). It might be the realization of a desired look what often makes women to pay too high price for it. The need for maintaining and achieving bodily

perfection may drag women into sport centers where they fanatically hope to make another step to the perfection drawn in their minds, where culture and society might be the painters. This desire and willingness for a body ideal has a very subtle boundary where on the other side are situated eating disorders like anorexia and bulimia. Therefore, this women's personal mania contains resistance of their own bodies (Maguire et al., 1998). Consequently, sport might be transferred from leisure activity to a permanent struggle, where women are mentally constrained rather than feeling free, by the influence of perfection.

2.4 Conclusion

Women's leisure is gendered and space dependent (Henderson, 1995; Jackson, 2005; Aitchison, 1999). This dependency may imply limitations and constraints of the women's leisure experience. The gendered spatiality arouses questions about the influences on women's leisure and more specifically, their restrictive character. Culture and society penetrate all spheres of women's lives and thus leisure spaces and places become also culturally determined and influenced (Rosaldo, 1993; Drexler, 2004; Duncan, 1995).Therefore, leisure is not neglected by beliefs, norms or rules exercised in the society. Ideologies and discourses maintain their existence and shape the leisure experience. Nowadays, this can be seen by the choices women make, the places they visit, the behavior they perform and the appearance they have. Additionally, issues like mass media, safety and expectations of the body may appear as important impacts on leisure and at the same time ones that constrain the leisure experience. The theoretical framework elaborated in this chapter is graphically presented by a proposed model in Figure 2.1.
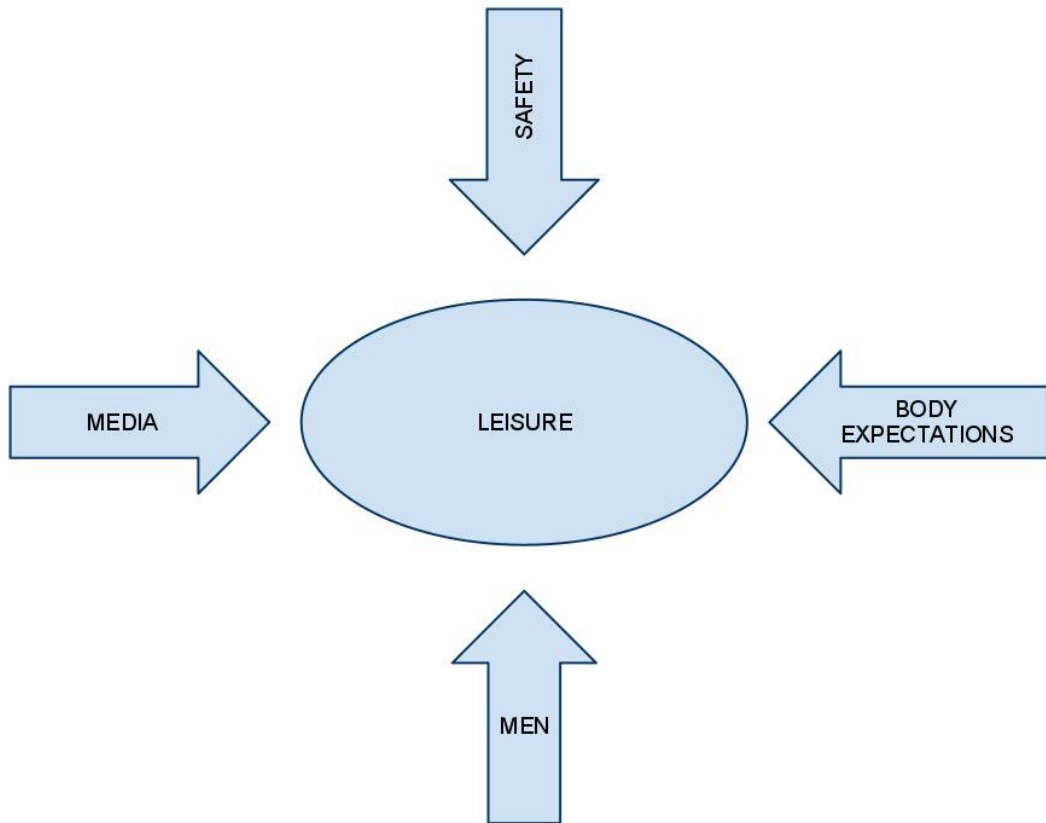
Figure 1: Proposed model of possible influences on women's leisure, leading to constraints in the leisure experiences.

3 RESEARCH SETTINGS

3.1 Introduction

Bulgaria is situated in in South-Eastern Europe. It borders with Romania, Serbia, the Republic of Macedonia, Greece, Turkey and the Black Sea. The Netherlands is located in north-west Europe and it borders the North Sea, Belgium and Germany. In the past domination of the traditional patriarchal model was prominent in the both countries, which formed ideas and beliefs amongst the societies in relation to roles of the women and the men, masculinity and femininity, power relations, norms and values. The patriarchy stretched upon all spheres of people's lives, it influenced and controlled not only the political spheres, but also spaces and places (Detchev, 2009; Parel and van der Wouw, 1988 in Wekker et al., 2001) .

Certain leisure places and events were restricted to the Bulgarian women and thus they were excluded from a big part of the social life (Detchev, 2009). Traditional discourses affected and defined the employment of the Dutch women, namely, these discourses contributed to the lack of the women's presence at the universities and the academic fields, where often sexist attitudes were articulated (Parel and van der Wouw, 1988 in Wekker et al., 2001). Sexual harassments, offensive connotations and attitudes were expressed towards women, who were seen and treated as a subordinate part of the society.

Significant changes appeared within the Bulgarian and the Dutch society during the last years. These transformations affected mainly the young generations. The shift from totalitarian to democratic system, that happened in Bulgaria, contributed to alternation of beliefs, values and lifestyles of the people. The public, political and academic life became more accessible to the women and it broadened in relation to choices and activities in the two countries (The social state of the Netherlands, 2009; National Strategy for Youth, 2010-2020). New occupations, new ways of communication, habits, trends, social movements and new leisure practices appeared in the Bulgarian and the Dutch society. The capitalist model of living reshaped and created new roles and identities of both, the women and the men in Bulgaria and in the Netherlands(The social state of the Netherlands, 2009; National Strategy for Youth, 2010-2020).

3.2 History and Current Trends of the Bulgarian Society

Bulgaria is a country with diverse traditions and customs. Referring to the gender relations within the Bulgarian society it should be noted that the patriarchal model and the male domination were powerfully present and culturally and historically formed (Detchev, 2009). The political vicissitudes and the maintaining of the patriarchal structures in the country portrayed the man as a dominant figure in the political and the social life. Even the modern masculinity in

19th century was associated with gender relations of authority and control, implying beliefs and concepts about *"the power of the man to discipline his wife"* which were representing sturdy and essential part of the new model (Detchev, 2009:32).

Women were not present and active in the political and social spheres as men were. They were the ones who were responsible for the home chores and the care of the children. Even the women's organizations formed during 19th century did not have any political character and were focused on activities that were portraying and maintaining the image of the women as good spouses and mothers (Popova in Detchev, 2009). According to Detchev (2009) in the core of the expressed masculinity in the Bulgarian community lied the willingness and effort to preserve the family honor. However, Detchev(2009) explains that the honor that actually was significant to be protected was not the family honor, but the male honor:

> *"In fact, the whole rhetoric about "family honor" concerned male honor because it was imagined as its extension."* (Detchev, 2009:14)

Within the Bulgarian society a particular notion of masculinity was circulating. Namely, it referred to the *"modern elite masculinity"* (Detchev, 2009:9) which occurred as a consequence of the Bulgarian form of mannish bourgeois sociability related to and expressed through specific behavior, language, good manners and certain communicational techniques. Crudeness, offensive language and impoliteness had to be avoided. In addition, a man had to have respectable societal status and decency and to treat his wife with sensitivity and concern.

However this ideal of masculinity was seen by many people as *"a tissue of lies"* (Detchev, 2009:6). Detchev captures this in the following quote:

> *"Former revolutionaries and members of the Bulgarian rebel detachments from the past, who had fought against Ottoman authority, bore a brave and idealistic "rebel" ("хъш") masculinity. However, it was an inflexible, rigid, and awkward masculinity of ill-bred rebels and commoners lacking in European polish and social skills. They had lived a wandering and life of poverty. They were short-tempered, heady, unruly, and accustomed to raw violence, lacking in the manners and knowledge of an honor code respected in high societies in other countries. They should acquire "new mundane culture and elegance", adopt a correct dress style and manners, allege devotion to the Prince and the "crown".* (Detchev, 2009:6)

It should be noted that it might be more appropriate to elaborate on masculinities, rather than masculinity, hence, different models, roles and ideals were mingling and their boundaries were unbalanced and switching from one type of masculinity to another, which was a common phenomenon (Detchev, 2009). Nevertheless, masculinity or masculinities were hegemonic ones

and had influence and appeal within the Bulgarian society (Detchev, 2009). This authority was not exercised only in the political and governmental spheres. The leisure time was also determined and influenced by the prevailing machismo ideal and at the same time contributed to building of the masculinity of the Bulgarian man. Women's and men's leisure was strongly separated and defined. Detchev (2009) argues the following:

> "In fact, men's clubs and pubs formed a significant aspect of the construction of masculinity since they provided alternatives to and substitutes for domestic life. They also reinforced the spatial boundaries separating men and women. Thus, many married men spent a large part of their lives as if they were bachelors. This was also the model of masculinity followed by young boys from the secondary schools and the urban male public. It was not that different among military officers." (Detchev, 2009:13)

The public life was an arena for men where they could express their masculinity and it endowed them with space and possibilities for *"public demonstrations of machismo"* (Detchev, 2009:13). Besides the fixed separation of the leisure spaces and places, there were certain discourses and beliefs ascribed to the ideal Bulgarian woman, drawn by and in accordance to the prevailing patriarchical model in the country. In addition, certain behavior, manners and attitudes were maintained and followed by the women in Bulgaria and, as a consequence, women identities and a model of femininity were constructed. Women's performances were expressed in terms of specific body actions, consumption and appearances. Detchev (2009) describes the prevailing women model in the following quote:

> ``In Bulgaria there was a preoccupation with the "coquette " and her "contortions" ("кълчението"). The same preoccupation was also directed against urban female consumption – "luxury", "elegant clothes", "dresses", "corset", "facepowder and make-up", "hats", "fashions", "fashionable journals" as well as a strong female preference for "balls", "dancing-parties", "entertainment in society." (Detchev, 2009:10)

By the period of modernity there was fear and anxiety amongst the society about the ruination of the patriarchal domination and the social and family roles in Bulgaria. The dilemma about the male honor, craving for and the male authority remained important and received strong attention within all spheres of life and *"an unusual emphasis was put upon the connections between normal sexuality, family life and national ideals"* (Detchev, 2009). Although there were waves of feminism expressed by some Bulgarian women through independence and restructuring of the conventional feminine beliefs, these movements were feeble and not supported by the whole society and *"Bulgarian men tightly controlled politics and the public sphere"* (Detchev, 2009:22).

According to the patriarchy model that was triumphing women in Bulgaria had particular positions and it was inappropriate for them to enter in certain spheres. Detchev (2009) makes this point clearer by quoting part of the speech of the Prime Minister Stoilov before the National Assembly in 1886:

> *"In March 1886 Stoilov wrote: "I would prefer them to deal with pulitika and not with politics. Once during the crisis of 1886-87, according to Sultana R. Petrova, even her father said: "What do you know about responsibilities and duty to the fatherland? Take care of your skirts and hats; do not speak about things you do not understand."* (Detchev, 2009:17)

The question of women's honor did not have that big significance as the men's one. For women the sentiment, emotions and feelings were prioritized and prevailed over the traditional morality (Detchev, 2009). Giving kindness and care to their husbands and children, fulfilling the demanded expectations of mothers, educators and lovable spouses was the essence of the Bulgarian women's roles. Entertainment of their husbands expressed by women's behaviors and the elegance and style of their clothes were vital part of women's lives. There was clear separation of the women from the public and the political spheres, which were not endowed with meaning and consideration by them.

The patriarchy grasped strongly the public and leisure time of the Bulgarian women. Access to some places was denied to them and in addition the emancipation that some of them were expressing deemed them as losers. The spouses of the Bulgarian ministers were denied attendance to and participation in specific public events, such as ones at which single men were present. Besides the restrictions of the women's presence and participation, stigmatization and animosity were expressed towards the women, who supported the emancipation ideas and movement, they were amongst the *"the most wretched"* in the society. (Detchev, 2009:17).

The constructed stigma about the female and male roles was so strongly held that women performances were expressed in a way as those models and ideals were really pertained to them (Reddy, 1997 in Detchev, 2009). On the other hand, there was a certain disparage addressed towards women and their behavior, manners and dress codes. Characteristics such as "false etiquette", "completely harmful fantasies", "clothes" and "dances" were used to describe women's roles. This dualism is made explicit in the following quote:

> *"On the one hand, we recognize that women are governed by men, but on the other, we complain about them... No, no, it is not women's fault, women are governed and managed by men..."* (Свобода, 1893 in Detchev, 2009)

Dynamic changes happened during the last twenty years in Bulgaria. These processes affected mainly the young generation. The young people formed their identities, values and beliefs dur-

ing the transition from totalitarian to democratic system (National Strategy for Youth, 2010-2020). As a main trade amongst the young males and females is outlined the striving for freedom, individuality and self-realization with a highlighted eager for leading an individual style of life and making personal decisions. Studies and research done in this field show that while the psychological independence of the young people increase, their social and economical dependence on their family, namely parents, is much more stronger than it was twenty years ago.

Public support services for young people still are not necessary qualified and do not reach all the people in need, who mostly are young Roma and young people in small settlements. Although the advanced development of the network of Youth Information and Consultation Centers (МИКЦ), essential is its expansion and the supply of mobile youth services in the small rural places. The access to computers and Internet is limited in those places. The proportion of young Bulgarians using computer daily is still low (the daily Internet services consume is less than half (49%) from the young Bulgarians aged 16-24 - the average for EU-66% and a little more than a third (36%) of young people (25-34) - with the EU average - 57%.2.) (National Strategy for Youth, 2010-2020).

Of greatest interest amongst the young people in Bulgaria are the sports and fan clubs of the professional teams. In addition, recently very attractive to the youth generation are the dance clubs where the young Bulgarian people go, on the one hand for the purpose of sport and on the other hand - to have fun and discover the environment for social interaction. Young people prefer to express themselves in an informal environment - meetings with friends, sports, internet cafes, internet forums and chats.

In the last few years alarming trends have been seen. Although many young people are leading a healthy lifestyle including proper nutrition, sports, etc., there is an increasing need of developing in-depth knowledge in areas such as sexual and reproductive health, prevention of sexually transmitted diseases, prevention of harmful behavioral risk factors, etc. Young people in Bulgaria represent the highest proportion of smokers in Europe, 31% of young people aged 15 to 24 years smoked daily. The percentage of the young people who drink, especially the ones aged between 15 and 24 years increases. The use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances by young people did not reduce. There is an increasing spread of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases.

Public support for the provision of quality services supporting development of young people, especially services for the organization of free time is limited to the growing needs of young people. Over the past twenty years, research on youth in Bulgaria is sporadic.

3.3 History and Current Trends of the Dutch Society

In the past the roles of the women and the men in the Dutch society were marked by the traditional model, where men prevalence and domination were evident in all spheres of life. Negativism, stigmatization and sexual harassment were expressed towards the women, which was evident from a report on sexual harassment from 1993, stating that ``*more than half of the women interviewed were bothered by sexist jokes made by colleagues and by negative and stereotypical remarks about their private lives.*" (Wekker et al., 2001:7)

The emancipation processes and the undertaken policies related to them have significantly changed the situation in the country. Nowadays, within the whole society there seems to be a stage of harmony and mutual agreement that the emancipation has realized its goal. The denotations of masculinity and femininity lost their fixed character and became more blurred and flux. Men were not seen as oppressors anymore and women were not presented and perceived as a minority group. Moreover, many young people consider the emancipation as an outdated issue, that do not deserve attention in the contemporary society. These young students and people believe that it was done enough in the past for this cause and they think that the emancipation has to be seen as possessing a subjective character, rather than being a mutual societal movement, namely, they prefer to deal individually with it within their own families and according to their personal situations and choices (Wekker et al., 2001). However, within the Dutch society there are groups of people who do not share the same views. Feminist students, teachers and scientists from different disciplines are expressing their frustration from the lack of women presence at the universities and the sexist approach implied in some academic fields (Parel and van der Wouw, 1988 in Wekker et al., 2001).

The Dutch people highly value the fact that nowadays they can lead a calm and quite life. However, stronger is the desire amongst the Dutch society *"to live their lives 'to the full'"* (The social state of the Netherlands 2009, 2010:106). On the other hand, this fulfillment may form a chaotic and hectic character of the life of the people:

> *"It may be that busier lives are a result of the desire to lead richer lives: the desire by women to reach their full potential on the labour market, the desire by men to be more involved in the upbringing of their children, the desire by many to fill their leisure time with experiences and to maintain a busy social life – all this is inspired by the desire for a 'full = rich' life. When added together, those desires and their realisation can however result in a 'full = busy' life."* (The social state of the Netherlands 2009, 2010:90)

Therefore, constraints related to time and coordination may result in a stressful and hurried life. Various activities, chores and obligations would come together and consequently would create

a task-combining profile of the Dutch population, the so called "task-combiners" model, which occurred as a result of the vanishing of the customary wage earner model (Breedveld and van den Broek 2004 in Facts and Figures of the Netherlands, 2008:19).

The differences between sexes can be seen in relation to the nature of tasks. Women more often combined home-oriented tasks with their work and this situation did not change between 1995 and 2005. Women's work in the past was mostly the one done at home, connected to the household tasks and the children. Considerable changes happened in this area and currently women represent a significant part of the labor. Nowadays the home chores are more equally shared between the two sexes, however women spent *"more than twice as many hours per week to these tasks as men"* (Facts and Figures of the Netherlands, 2008:20). Moreover, for the Dutch women is more problematic to keep the balance between work and care responsibilities. Transformations occurred in relation to the age at which women start the formation of family. At present times women create their families at a later age than the one before. Twenty nine years is the average age at which the Dutch women have their first children.

Various dimensions can be ascribed to the leisure time of the women and men. Sport and exercising as leisure activities are practiced by both sexes, however women do not exercise so often and intensively as men do. This is not the case for the leisure time devoted to cultural events and media. The printed media such as newspapers, magazines and books are preferred by the females, while men are more attracted to the Internet, commercial radio, television and commercial channels such as RTL and SBS. Cultural activities and events have a bigger preference amongst women.

Transformations of values, morals, lifestyles and consummation appeared in the Dutch society. A significant phenomenon is the individualization, which mainly means that people felt stronger need to define their own relationships, memberships and social contacts. Dutch people devote less time to their social contacts than ten/fifteen years ago, due to the rarer visits they initiate with each other. However, a social isolation may be mostly seen amongst the elderly and disabled people (Facts and Figures of the Netherlands, 2008).

Communication, information and media are leisure areas with a highly changing character in the Dutch society. *"The main trend in leisure time use is the rapid rise of the Internet and e-mail"* (Facts and Figures of the Netherlands, 2008:74). Almost the whole Dutch population has acquired mobile phones and had Internet access since the middle of 1990s. This made the communication between the people easier and more convenient in terms of time and place. A shift from printed and audiovisual media to the Internet is one of the main trends that appeared amongst the Dutch society. Almost in every Dutch home there is PC and Internet connection. The time spent on watching television, listening to radio, reading and visiting relatives and friends is more concise due to the fact that Internet takes a big part of the leisure time of

the Dutch population. The number of the books borrowed from the public libraries decreases. The use of Internet is highest amongst the young people (Facts and Figures of the Netherlands, 2008:73).

The interest in cultural events and activities amongst the Dutch society is steady. In comparison with other European countries, the cultural and artistic events and practices in Netherlands are more visited by the people and the level of cultural interest in Netherlands is higher than the one in Southern and Eastern Europe. Popular music and cabaret event attract more and more people nowadays. Many people perform some kind of art during their free time, such as singing, painting, photography, etc. Cinemas attract a big proportion of the Dutch people. The number of museums in the country increases. Various forms of social participation can be seen amongst the youth in Netherlands. A lot of young people devote their free time to voluntary work, membership in organizations or fan clubs (The social state of the Netherlands, 2009). Though the informal social interactions between the people have not changed significantly, since the mid-1970s the time devoted to those interactions has been decreasing gradually. There is a decline in the memberships of the religious and ideological organizations.

Sport and exercising are activities occupying a bigger part of the people's time during the last ten years. The young Dutch people devote more time to sport activities than the older ones. More individually practiced sports are preferred by the youth such as cycling, running, swimming, walking etc. The organized leisure activities are less popular amongst the youth and this is related to the sport as well. The decline of the membership of sport clubs fell from 58% in 1995 to 56% in 2003, however three-quarters of the young people aged between 6-19 years have a membership of at least one sport club. One of the reasons for participating in sport activities is the maintaining of healthy lifestyle and fit body.

3.4 Position of the Researcher

As a Bulgarian woman, who travelled to the Netherlands for following a two-year master programme in Wageningen University, I was acquainted with the leisure time of the women in Bulgaria and I was able to explore the leisure time of the women in Netherlands. I lived and studied in Bulgaria twenty five years. During this time I was actively involved in the social and leisure environment in Bulgaria in the province and in the capital. My personal interest in psychology, philosophy and cultural issues has created a certain outlook and vision of the world around me, including leisure. I have often questioned and have discussed with friends the impacts, the constraints and the contributions in our lives, implying leisure as well.

During the period of my study in the Netherlands I have created many personal contacts and friendships and I got acquainted with the social life of the Dutch women. I often visited leisure places, such as cafes, bars, parties and gatherings. Besides the fact that I was able to observe

the leisure environment in the Netherlands, I also had conversations with my Dutch friends and acquaintances concerning their leisure in terms of preferences, beliefs and behaviors. All this helped me to create certain knowledge about the leisure time of the Dutch women.

The master programme Leisure, Tourism and Environment, which I followed in Wageningen University, has deepened my knowledge about leisure as a phenomenon, its manifestation and significance from a psychological and philosophical perspective. Therefore, I decided to indulge into the leisure field deeper and to explore the possible leisure influences and constraints that may exist. The knowledge that I had obtained about two different cultures-the Bulgarian and the Dutch ones, gave birth to the idea of analyzing and comparing the leisure time of the Bulgarian and the Dutch women as a research for my thesis.

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will provide information about the profile of the respondents and the exact methods used for gathering and analyzing of the data. In order to indulge into the constraints that women experience during their leisure, deeper understanding of the women's own realities was an approach chosen for this study. Therefore, qualitative methods were used. Interviews were conducted with two groups of women: Dutch and Bulgarian. The interviews were conducted in two languages: Bulgarian with the Bulgarian respondents and English with the Dutch respondents. The length of the interviews differed.There were certain limitations of the study in terms of destructions and interruptions during the conduction of the interviews.The chapter will conclude with presenting and elaborating on these limitations.

4.2 Data Collection

Qualitative methods were used to answer the addressed research questions of this thesis. This choice was made due to the fact that qualitative approach reveals better understanding of the participants and their world, their own realities, values and beliefs (Fossey et al., 2002). Moreover, this method was preferred because of the particular goal and focus of the interviews and the data obtained from them. In addition, it is a method that leaves space for some additional questions, important for the research that may be brought up depending on interviewees' responses. This allows deeper understanding and better interpretation of the data (Fossey et al. 2002).

The data for the research was obtained by semi-structured interviews with the participants. Semi-structured interviews are used to facilitate more focused exploration of a specific topic, using an interview guide (Fossey et al., 2002:727). Moreover, according to Fossey et al. (2002) Semi-structured interviews are useful for further developing and building on specific ideas or problems, initially arisen from unstructured interviews (Fossey et al., 2002). Therefore an interviewing guide was created. The questions for the interview were written and constructed in English. However, due to the fact that most of the Bulgarian interviewees did not speak fluently English and felt more confident in expressing themselves in Bulgarian, the questions were translated and asked in Bulgarian. Afterwards the data from the interviews with the Bulgarian women was translated into English and the coding was done. The case was not the same with the Dutch respondents, who stated that they would not have difficulties in understanding and answering the questions in English. However, some of them asked for a possibility to see the questions in Dutch, therefore I translated the questions from English to Dutch and brought them

with me for the each interviews with the Dutch women. The interviews were conducted in two languages: Bulgarian with the Bulgarian women and English with the Dutch women.

4.3 Research Sample Profile

Probability sampling was used for the research, because it allows the researcher *"to collect relatively few surveys and still generalize to the population"* (Vaske, 2008:12). The research sample was derived from the population residing in different cities in the Netherlands and Bulgaria. In total twenty women participated in my research out of twenty five, who were initially contacted. Ten women from Bulgaria and ten women from Netherlands were approached and interviewed. The age of the women varied between 18 and 35 years old (see Appendix 1). The average age of the sample was twenty seven years old. My personal contacts and relationships established during the period of my first year of education in Netherlands affected and defined my choice for the exact sample of Dutch women. Some of my female classmates were approached and asked for participation in my research. Moreover, random females were requested for the same co-operation as well. Some of them were my neighbors, others were acquaintances of my personal contacts and women met during social events like outgoing dinners, birthdays celebrations, etc. They all were living in various cities and all of them categorized themselves as representatives of the middle class. The respondents from Bulgaria were residents of different cities, too. Four women were residents of Sandanski, two of Blagoevgrad and four of Sofia. Some of them were my personal contacts, others were acquaintances or friends of my relatives. Two of the women, residents of Sandanski, classified themselves as representatives of the lower middle class, the rest of the women considered that they belonged to the middle class citizens (see Appendix 1).

4.4 Interviewing Settings

The data collection took place between 13 January and 15 March 2010. The respondents were reached by sending e-mails, making telephone calls and some of them were asked personally if they were willing to participate in the research. Meetings were scheduled with the ones who agreed to take part of the research. The women were interviewed in different places. Most of them preferred meetings in local cafes and the interviews were recorded while having a cup of tea or coffee. The rest chose their homes for the meetings with me and some I personally invited to my house.

Before the interviews to take place all of the women were provided with information about the research study. The topic and aim of it were introduced and explicated to all of the participants. This was done during the initial contact with them. However, deeper and more detailed explanations, concerning the study, were made by me to every of the women prior the start of

the interviews. In addition, I ensure all of the respondents that they will receive a copy of my thesis if they would like so. All of the women were asked for permission to record their responses and to use their first names within the thesis while quoting or referring to their statements. Most of them agreed, though, two of the Bulgarian respondents expressed their personal concerns and worries about using their first names. Therefore, I proposed for these two women the option to use fictional names for my research, instead of their real ones, and I gave them the opportunity to choose ones they like and want.

In general, all of the women showed enthusiasm and willingness to express their views, beliefs and feelings, though in the beginning of the interviews some of them stated that they were not sure if they could give answers to all of the questions. However, when the interviews started and I began asking one of the first questions they start to respond with eagerness. Their voices were clear and they were using many sentences in order to express themselves better. Most of them shared various stories and gave several examples related to the questions that were asked. There were many moments when humor and laugh were integrated and uttered. Moreover, some of the women shared with me that they have never talked about some of the stories with anyone before and that they were feeling good by having this opportunity.

The length of the interviews varied. Some of them ranged from an hour and a half up to five hours. Longer interviews were caused by some additional tasks that suddenly emerged. For example, some of the respondent had to feed or put to bed their babies/children, to take them from school, etc.

Besides the tape-recording that was done during each of the interviews, I was making additional notes, which contain supplementary information about more striking comments and concerns made by the interviewees. Moreover, I made notes from memory after the interviews, highlighted certain points and patterns which helped me for the following step-the data analysis.

4.5 Data Analysis

The analyzing of the research data began with compiling the information from my notes and from the interviews by writing a report for each of the interviews. I listened to each of the interviews several times and I was taking notes and extracting significant quotations from them. Coding was used for the qualitative analysis of the data. The process of qualitative data analysis consists of three steps: noticing, collecting, and thinking about remarkable things in relation to the aim of the research. Defining and extracting the fragments which are essential for the research questions represents the actual coding (Seidel, 1998).

When the reports of all of the interviews were done I implied the traditional coding method of circling, scratching and drawing other figures on the report papers. After noticing, marking,

circling and naming things I started to look for patterns. I made an excel file where I inserted words and quotations in various categories. After this I started to look for patterns. The patterns are elaborated further in Chapter Five and Chapter Six.

The above mentioned methods of data analysis seemed most appropriate for me. It appeared to be useful for the organizing of the compiled data and for the process of drawing conclusions, due to the fact that the results were comprehensible and structured.

4.6 Limitations of the study

Some limitations to the methodological techniques should be mentioned and acknowledged. First, although I did my best to translate most accurately the responses and the quotes of the Bulgarian respondents, there might have been some curbs and some information might have been missed or altered within the translating process. Second, there might have been some limitations in relation to the constructed questionnaire for the interviews. Even though I tried to explain some of the questions that might have appeared as unclear to the respondents by rephrasing them and giving specific examples, some of the questions might have remained vague and incomprehensible for some of the respondents. Third, the techniques that I used for the interpretation and the analyzing of the data might not be convenient for other researchers. Hence, taking into account the mentioned above limitations, the results obtained from the data and the arguments made throughout this thesis further research, implementing different methodological approaches can be done in order more precise conclusions to be made.

Some limitations and impediments should be mentioned in relation to the actual interviewing process as well. Overall, the interviews seemed successful and productive. However, some obstacles appeared and some impediments had to be overcome. First of all, it should be noted that the fact that some of the questions were translated and the interviews were conducted in Bulgarian may imply the danger of missing valuable information. Second, some of the respondents were interviewed in an environment in which several distractions appeared. The interviews that took place in local cafes and bars were sometimes stopped for several minutes by passing people who were greeting or having a short chat with the respondents. In addition, the presence of the children of some of the respondents during the interviews had a distractive affect, too. The small kids were often interrupting the conversation by asking questions or requiring something. Some of the respondents disrupted the interviews themselves as well by going to feed their babies or picking up their phones. Third, I encountered some problems while trying to keep the respondents focused on the topic and the exact question that was being asked. Most of the time they were switching subjects and they were using the interviews meetings with me as an arena for sharing personal troubles and concerns.

5 RESULTS: Bulgarian Women's Leisure and Constraints

5.1 Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to present a precise picture of the specific leisure constraints that the Bulgarian respondents experienced. It will put light on the relationship between gender and leisure and it will provide a better understanding of the different possible leisure influences and their gendered aspect. In particularly, safety, media, expectations of the body and the men's impact on the women's leisure will be elaborated. The influence and the significance of the mentioned above issues will be disputed in this chapter. First, a general overview of the Bulgarian women's leisure will be presented-preferences of places and people during leisure and usual leisure practices will be examined. After that every of the possible gendered influences will be elaborated separately. Arguments in terms of leisure constraints, their gendered aspect and the significance that they have on women's leisure will be made. Finally, the chapter will conclude with the most persuasive arguments that were built amongst it.

5.2 Leisure Places and Activities

In order to get a general idea of the Bulgarian women's leisure questions about the ways in which their leisure time was spent, the preferred people who they spent their leisure time with, the chosen leisure places and the reason for these choices were asked. Further, the denial of participating in particular leisure activities and visiting specific leisure places was inquired. In addition, women were asked about their own vision of ideal leisure time and what according to them was missing in order such one to be experienced. The results of the above are elaborated below.

The Bulgarian women mentioned diverse leisure practices and various leisure places. Visiting spa and beauty salons or cosmetic procedures at home, gatherings with friends and watching television were pointed out as preferred activities by all of the women. The visits of the spa and beauty salons were characterized as a pleasant leisure activity. Antonia, 24 years old, a student living in Sofia, explained how she spent her leisure time and how it was satisfying for her when she was visiting the beauty salon in her neighborhood:

> "It is so nice when I have the time to visit the Beauty salon! I could spend hours and hours there...straightening my hair, painting my nails and I do not have to do anything, just enjoy it! No doubt it is one of my preferred leisure activities!"

The time devoted to beauty procedures at home was described as leisure time as well. Vasilka, for example, a student living in Blagoevgrad, explained how the maintenance of her body represents a big part of her leisure time in the following way:

"Off course I spend my leisure time cleaning my skin, epilating my body and applying some homemade masks…Now when I think about it I can say that a big part of my leisure is devoted to these activities.''

Reading books magazines and newspapers and watching television were characterized as leisure activities by all of the Bulgarian women. Watching favorite TV programmes, shows, serials and movies were mentioned as part of the women's leisure. The school teacher Maria, 30 years old, for instance, described the way she spent her leisure as follows:

"My leisure starts when I get home, after the preparing and the eating of the dinner. When all this is done I can sit on the couch and watch my favorite TV programmes! I can definitely call that my leisure time!"

A similar statement was made by Yanka, a full-time employed mother of two children, living in Sandanski. She explained that her leisure was spent *"in front of the television, watching some culinary show or a nice movie"*.

Dancing classes were also mentioned by one of the respondents as an entertaining leisure activity. Maya, 27 years old, was subscribed for salsa classes and she was attending to them twice per week. The woman explained that it was her way of keeping herself in shape and at the same time of *"having some fun with other people"*.

The above were mentioned as activities, occupying the respondents' leisure. Although most of the women did not talk about only one leisure activity, but various ones, they expressed their concerns about the lack of time for leisure and stated that they would like to have much more time for it.

Family, relatives and friends were the people with who the Bulgarian women spent their leisure time. The family was mentioned by the respondents as the group of people which accompanies the women during their leisure and participates in it. Mariana, 35 years old, married with two children, physiotherapist, for example, living and working in Sandanski, explained how her leisure is linked and devoted to the family in the following way:

"I am married with two children and my leisure is devoted and spent mostly with my family. When I have some free time I am taking my children for a walk or I do play some games with them at home. When both I and my husband are free we usually go out for a walk, with and sometimes without the children, and then we have dinner in some restaurant."

All the married women pointed out their children and husbands as participants in their leisure. For those who were not married intimate partners and friends were the ones playing the role of accomplices of the women's leisure. Friends' gatherings were described as important and

needed leisure for which the women were trying to find time. Ani, a master student in Sofia, living in Sandanski, was travelling during the weekends in order to be with her family and to spend time with her friends, she explained:

"I do spend my leisure time in different ways but I cannot imagine not seeing my friends! Especially during the weekend when I can see those of them who I grew up with! Always looking forward the weekend when I can gather with them and we can all go out!"

The respondents who were in a relationship mentioned their partners as the people who they spent their leisure time with. Antonia, for example, described her leisure in this way:

"Most of my leisure time is spent with my boyfriend, we live together and we do almost everything together, including leisure activities-we go out together for a drink, go to the cinema together, go shopping together...I can say that I spent my leisure time mainly with my boyfriend."

Although most of the women spent their leisure time in the company of other people, some of them talked about experiencing leisure during the time when they are alone. Maria, for example, shared that sometimes she feels the need to be alone, sitting in a room and reading a nice book. The woman described this experience as one that is pleasant and fulfilled with peace. Another example was given by Yanka, who described the satisfaction obtained from the time she spends by herself in this way:

"I like sometimes during my leisure to be forgotten by everyone! (laugh)Might be ridiculous but I really enjoy the time when I can be alone...for example when the kids are not at home and my husband is at work. Then, if there is no housework to be done, you know, cleaning, washing, cooking etc., I can enjoy the quietness by reading a book, watching a favorite show or just sitting on the balcony and doing nothing!"

Specific cafes, bars, clubs and other public places like parks and mountain resorts were indicate as favorable leisure places for the Bulgarian women. The Bulgarian respondents talked about the cafes, bars, clubs and discos as leisure places where they could experience nice time and meet other people. Dancing and drinking were mentioned as typical activities in these places. The women pointed out several reasons for choosing cafes, bars, clubs and discos for spending their leisure time. Some of them spoke about the great combination of dancing and listening to nice music that these places offered. Antonia talked about the reason she was visiting these place in the following way:

> *"I love music and I love dancing! With some alcohol, nice music and cool people the party is always nice!"*

Others mentioned their friends as one of the factors influencing their decision when considering going to those places. Three of the women stated that some of their friends often decide where the whole group of people will spend the evening. Vasilka, for example, talked about some of the evenings with her friends in this way:

> *"Sometimes it might be a big problem when deciding where exactly me and my friends will spend the evening. Some of us want to go to one place, others to another, it is not that I cannot choose where to go and I do not have preference, but I have to comply with them if I want to be with them."*

Meeting nice people was another reason that was mentioned by the Bulgarian women. Social interaction and new acquaintances were pointed out as important and pursued and the cafes, bars, discos and clubs were offering them. When talking about these places women often referred to some of them by using their names. Adriana, a student in Sofia, recently engaged, for example, described her favorite leisure places in the following way:

> *"Chervilo is my favorite club and I like to go there with friends, though I cannot afford to visit it very often, however, I try to spend at least one night per two/three weeks there and go crazy(laugh)!I prefer it because the coolest people go there and the party is always great!"*

None of the women expressed preference for going out and visiting cafes, bars, clubs or discos alone. If there was a case in which they were alone in one of these places it was in order to wait for their company there or to visit a friend who works at the same place. The respondents described the evenings in the discos, clubs and bars as ones spent in a company consisting of more than two people. However, this was not the case for the cafes. The respondents mentioned that often they go out during the day with a friend and sit in a café, drink coffee and chat. Sometimes, these meetings go together with some personal conversations.

Parks were characterized as leisure places where relaxation and recreation could be obtained at the same time. Maria explained the reason for pointing out the parks as a preferable leisure place in this way:

> *"Sofia's South Park is wonderful, especially during the summer! I can spend all day there! I like that there is almost everything there and I can combine a nice walk with having lunch or even dinner with friends. At the same time I do not have to think about my children's entertainment, because in the park there are a lot of playgrounds for children."*

A comparable explanation gave Mariana, who also mentioned the compatible nature of the park in Sandanski as a positive characteristic and, in addition, she talked about the helpful effect it had on her and her husband's health in the following way:

> *"Sandanski is famous with its clean and healing air and whenever is possible we [me and my husband] try to take advantage of it. My husband has asthma and the walks in the park affect his disease in a positive way. I enjoy it as well. Besides the contribution to the health, another reason for visiting the park is that it offers other opportunities-there is a nice lake and a restaurant next to it, so you can have some drinks and eat something as well.''*

The parks were presented as leisure places where some sport activities can be practiced. Three of the women talked about jogging alone or accompanied by friends or relatives in the parks. Ani, 27 years old student, living in Sofia, described some of her weekend mornings in this way:

> *"I do jogging once or twice per week, usually during the weekend, in the park. It is quite and the air is clean and fresh in the morning there."*

Amongst the mentioned preferable places were mountain camps which the women were visit during the weekends or on holidays. The respondents pointed out the relaxation and the opportunity for escaping from the busy city life as main reasons for spending time in these places.

Women talked about various places as being the ones that facilitate their leisure experience. However, there were places which the women pointed out as unpleasant, inferior and ones that they would not visit during their leisure. Amongst those places were crowded discos, soccer competitions, places that offer extreme leisure activities (bungy jumping), casinos and particular bars and clubs, which were described by the women as *"inappropriate for women"* and *"suspicious"* (Yanka, Ani, Maria, Antonia, Vasilka, Maya).

The discotheques, though described as visited leisure places, became ones that provide an unpleasant and negative experience when they are very crowded. Ani, for example, told me a story explaining her refusal to go to discos and clubs when they were overfull with people. She described her experience in the following way:

> *"I like going to discos and clubs with friends, but since they become full of people I prefer to leave. Once I went to a club with two girlfriends of mine. I was dressed nicely and I was wearing my lovely shoes that actually were the most expensive purchasing I have made for months. When we entered there were not a lot of people, but after an hour the club became so crowded that I needed 30 minutes to go to and come back from the toilet! When I got home I saw that one of my shoes was torn and my dress was burned by a cigarette. It was awful!...I think that this is one*

of the reasons why I would not go to crowded discos and clubs. There is no point to
be there! You cannot dance and people constantly step on your toes!"

The crowded atmosphere that may be created in the discos and clubs was not pleasant for Vasilka as well. Beside the irritation that such a situation could evoke, Vasilka described the inability to enjoy the experience there in this way:

"Not that I do not like places with many people, but then it becomes more stressful-
I have to watch for my purse and my phone in order not to be stolen, also to be
careful what I drink-I have heard some years ago about cases in which some drugs
were found in girls' drinks…yeah…I would avoid overcrowded places."

Soccer competitions were pointed out by the women as leisure places which the women would not visit. The Bulgarian respondents characterized them as *"men's places"*, ones that the women would not go to. As a main reason for their choice the women pointed out the aggressive environment that usually these places were creating and the danger of some possible violence. The women talked about the stadiums, where the soccer competitions were performed, as nasty and unsafe places, which a real lady should not visit. Maria, for example, explained why she would never go to a soccer competition in the following way:

"I do not understand what a woman would do there! The stadiums are always full
of drunken men who constantly scream and use offensive words. It is disgusting!"

Besides the arrogant behavior that the men performed during a soccer competition at the stadiums, the Bulgarian women pointed out the unsafe character of these places. Maria explained that she would feel insecure and vulnerable at such a place. She gave her reason in the following way:

"These places may be very dangerous, especially for women and children. The men
there often throw bottles of bier, fight with each other or may even start a fire,
for a woman or a child it can be very dangerous because they are physically not
able to defend or protect themselves. And the fact that almost all of the men are
drunk there enhances the possibility of something dangerous to happen, you know-
a drunken person does not think clear and you can expect everything bad."

The stadiums were not the only places which the Bulgarian women classified as undesirable and risky leisure places. Particular casino clubs were mentioned by the women as being *"suspicious"* and dangerous. Yanka talked about the casino situated on the street where she worked in this way:

"If you are a woman and you enter in the casino then you should be a prostitute! An-
other possibility is that you may be one of the waiters, otherwise I do not see what
a woman could do there-it is full of gypsies, pimps and suspicious people…maybe
some of them sell drugs as well…I have almost never seen a women to go there by
herself unless she is a prostitute, only prostitutes go there."

Specific bars and clubs were portrayed in almost the same way. Some of these places were consciously avoided by the women due to their mistrustful character. The Bulgarian women talked about several bars and clubs which they would not visit and different reasons for this were mentioned. One of them was the type of people who were visiting these places. Vasilka, explained why she does not visit the rock bar in her neighborhood in this way:

"I just do not like the people who go there. They look rude and ugly…with all those
dark clothes…not that I think that they are dangerous or bad people, I just do not
like them, that is why I would not go to this bar."

Another mentioned reason was the snobbish nature that some of the clubs and bars have. These places were described as full of high-hat people who were there only to discuss and show off their new clothes, cars and other properties. Two specific reasons were discussed by the women. First, some of them said that they would not visit these places because they do not like the type of people there and second, some of the women stated that they feel discomfort at these places, because of the required high standard there. Ani, for example, talked to me about the lack of comfort and coziness that she experiences at these places:

"Actually I do not go there not because I do not want to or because I do not like the
place, but because of the people there. They are always dressed with fashionable
and expensive clothes…it is too luxurious, which makes me feel uncomfortable, be-
cause I do not have the possibility to purchase these clothes and accessories. And
I have the feeling that everybody is looking at one another's clothes a lot, which
makes it even more embarrassing."

The type of music, though it was not the most important aspect, was also discussed as a factor determining the visit to some leisure places like bars, cafes and discos. The women preferred to listen to commercial and modern music in these places. The traditional music was described as boring and gloomy and the places that offer such kind of music were not amongst the favored ones for the women.

The women imagined their ideal leisure in different ways. Travelling, encountering unknown cultures and people and visiting famous touristic places were described as the desirable leisure activities. Moreover, the women described imaginary days during which they could devote a

whole day in spa salons very vividly and enthusiastic. Antonia, for example, talked about her ideal leisure as *"not getting out of the spa until the end of the day"*. Gatherings with friends in places like bars, cafes, discos and restaurants were mentioned as activities representing the ideal leisure time of the Bulgarian women. However, all of the women discuss the impossibility of the actual realization of an ideal leisure. The busy multitasking daily life, the hectic and stressful time were obstacles impeding the potential achievement of this ideal. All of the Bulgarian respondents shared that they would like to have more time for leisure and that this time is insufficient and limited. Various examples were given by the women in order to explain how and what restricts and defines their leisure. More specifically, the women referred to their families as the most important influential factor. Maria, for example, asked about the reasons why she could not characterize her leisure as an ideal one, gave the following answer:

> *"As I said I am a married woman and I have two children, who I have to look after. My time is extremely dependent on them and on my husband, the same is relevant to my leisure time. In this case I presume that they can be a main reason for not having enough leisure time and having such only when my responsibilities as a mother and wife are accomplished."*

Most of the Bulgarian respondents imagined their ideal leisure as one that is outside of their homes. Some of them talked about travelling and visiting favorite touristic places. Yanka, a mother of two teenage girls, seller in a shoe shop, who spent her leisure time mostly at home described her ideal leisure in this way:

> *"Going to another country for several days sounds like the ideal leisure time for me. Being away recharges my energy and makes me forget about the boring everyday chores and the tiring working days. Meeting other cultures and customs is always exciting for me!"*

Another example for an ideal leisure time outside the home gave Antonia, whose perception of perfect leisure was spending a whole day in the spa salon. Antonia explained it to me in the following way:

> *"I wish I had more time for spa salons. Spending a whole day there is the best leisure time I could imagine for myself!"*

Gatherings with friends and evenings spent outside, either for a dinner or various club entertainments, were mentioned by the women as an ideal way to spend their leisure time. These social events were characterized as *"needed and pleasant"* (Vasilka) and the women talked about the necessity of spending time outside their homes with and where there were more people.

Zlatka shared with me that her ideal leisure would be one during which she is accompanied by her friends and they all go to some place like bars, cafes and restaurants and she emphasized the importance of the social contacts that such places offered in the following way:

> "An ideal leisure would be a Friday or a Saturday with friends in a nice club where a lot of cool people go. And then have fun till the morning!"

I asked every of the respondents questions related to their individual perceptions and feelings about the possible lack of something during their leisure time, namely, what was needed in order their current leisure time to be experienced as an ideal one. The limited time between all the usual everyday activities that the women did, did not provide them with sufficient amount of leisure time. More leisure time was the appeal of the Bulgarian women. This absence was explained by the women as substituted by home tasks and chores. Besides the lack of time which was mentioned by all of the women there were other responses. Maya, 27 years old, living and working in Sandanski, for example, gave the following answer:

> "I suppose that I need new friends (laugh)! Now when all of my friends are married and with children we rarely go out together or when we do they are with their husbands almost always. I miss the old times spent with them and the old gatherings during which we could laugh, talk about boys, even chasing them…it was nice, all the talking now is about cooking, cleaning, babies' attributes, etc. it is not the same now…I often cannot fit in their conversations and it becomes somehow weird…"

The above findings are consistent with the findings from the Chasteen (1994) who interviewed 25 single women, 23 white and 2 African-American women from a midsized city the Southeastern United States. Part of her research was focused on the time constraints that the women were experiencing in relation to their leisure and the social integration of the single women into the environments of married, non-single women. The women from the study were feeling time oppression and a significant lack of free time. The social interaction between the single and the non-single women was one that evoked feelings of discomfort and awkwardness amongst the single women. The single women were experiencing troubles in spending time with their married friends, who were primarily socializing in the company of their spouses (Chasteen, 1994).

5.3 Leisure and Safety

The concern about safety made the women to act electively in relation to some leisure places. The Bulgarian women chose to visit leisure places, where there was no danger for their safety and avoiding ones that might appear as a potential threat for them. Amongst these places were suspicious clubs and private gatherings and some gambling places, which were visited primarily

by men. The respondents talked about the potential danger in these places in terms of men's alcohol and drug consummation, mainly. Yanka, explained to me why she avoided some clubs in this way:

"I do not visit places where some suspicious people go...like people using drugs or drinking a lot of alcohol or people that are involved in some criminality... you see...it is nothing wrong about the places, it is about the people, usually the men that goes there. I think that the possibility something dangerous to happen is bigger there than in some other places."

In addition, women were avoiding leisure places situated on dark streets and remote areas. The street lightening was mentioned as precondition for the Bulgarian respondents in terms of making a decision about choosing a certain route for walking or visiting a particular leisure place. In fact, not the dark itself was what was evoking feelings of fear, but rather the potential danger that the dark was providing a basis for. The Bulgarian respondents talked about their anxiety of possible crimes like robbery, raping, abduction and even killing which were more likely to happen at isolated and poorly lit places. The perpetrators of these crimes, according to the women, were men who had been consuming alcohol or were criminals or psychopaths. This anxiety was making the women more conscious and concerned about their surroundings, which influenced their behavior during leisure. The Bulgarian respondents were using taxi service as a way of transportation, they were avoiding suspicious leisure places and were taking certain precautions (such as carrying pepper spray). These findings are similar to the ones from the research made by Chasteen in 1991, whose research inquired also the perceptions of 25 single women in relation to environmental constructs associated with corporeality (streets, houses, etc.) and with the social and symbolic meaning attached to them (Chasteen, 1994). Chasteen (1994) found out that safety issues were the most significant and influential aspect that the women were taking into account when choosing their environment and they would make the biggest sacrifices in the name of safety. Chasteen (1994) discovered that the women perceive the world around them as fearful and dangerous and they do act and behave in accordance with this fear. Namely, they were adapting to this fear by taking certain precautions such as choosing to engage in leisure activities and being in surroundings, which would not portray them as potential victims (Chasteen, 1994).

The Bulgarian women talked about the men's presence during their leisure, mainly in bars and discos, from two perspectives. First, the men were introduced as guardians and people who the women would rely on. This perspective was presented in relation to the women's nightlife leisure mostly. These men were playing different roles in women's life, but all of them were in a close relation with the women, these were: intimate partners, brothers, friends who

the women were hanging out with, etc. The respondents talked about these men as people who were ensuring their safety in places like bars, discos and clubs. Antonia, who was weekly visiting the discotheque in her neighborhood, explained why she was feeling more protected when her company consisted of men, who she knew in this way:

"I always have a nice time with my girlfriends, but I do not feel always safe when I am only with them. I feel much safer when there are men with us. Sometimes some fights start in the disco and I feel much safer if my boyfriend if my boyfriend or some other friends (men) are there with us. I know that he/they would protect me if something is about to happen with me or with my girlfriends."

However, the men's presence during women's leisure was seen from a different angle. The second perspective could be viewed as opposite of the first one discussed above. The women were feeling the need to be protected by men namely from other men. Hence the men who were close to the women in one or another way were playing the role of guardians from other men, who were unknown. These unknown men who were visiting the same nightlife leisure places, where the women were experiencing their leisure as well, were viewed as a potential danger. The Bulgarian women talked about this danger from two different approaches. First, there was the physical safety, which the women were concerned about. Ani, for example shared her fears with me in the following way:

"I feel that I have to be cautious when I am out with my friends, especially when we go to a disco. Some of the men there may be dangerous, you know…when they get drunk or use some drugs many bad things may happen. I am mostly afraid of abduction, stealing and rape, some of the men may have such intentions."

Second, the sexual harassment which some of the women experienced during their leisure was discussed in relation to the safety issues. The respondents shared with me how the sexual harassment was interpreted as a danger by them. The Bulgarian respondents talked about lack of comfort and embarrassing which they were experiencing there and they related this to a potential danger. Ani talked about it in the following way:

"Sometimes they are staring at you with those dirty look, checking out all parts of your body like I am a naked girl at an exposition…it is very embarrassing and makes me feel uncomfortable. Plus, I am not sure if it can be dangerous sometimes…you never know what their intentions are and what could happen when they get drunk."

The Bulgarian women did consider the use of precautions during their nights out as needed. The pepper spray was characterized as the most convenient safety measure for them. All of the

women were acquainted with the exact instructions of the spray, its utility and the places where it can be purchased. The pepper spray was taking place in the women's purses and handbags along with their other accessories and for some of them it was inseparable from their nightlife. Moreover, the women talked about it as something usual, for them it was normal to buy a pepper spray for self-defense purpose. Adriana shared with me the reason to use precautions and why she chose the pepper spray as such in this way:

> "I bought a spray and I wear it in my handbag. In this way I feel more protected-If I am concerned that something dangerous might happen I know that I have a tool that I can use. I choose the pepper spray, instead other precautions, because it is easy to wear and to use. Plus, it does great work, without to cause some serious harm-a knife, for example, is much more dangerous, you may kill someone if you use it."

Maria, was strongly convinced in the need of precautions during the evenings out. She talked about it in this way:

> "I think that every lady should wear a pepper spray with her. You do not know what might happen on the street or in the clubs, discos…there are a lot of drunk and stoned people, you do not know their intentions. Having something to protect you, just in case, makes you feel surer in your safety."

However, none of the women mentioned self-defense classes as possible precautions that can be applied in case of danger during their leisure. Asked about if they would consider attendance to such classes the women said that they did not have enough time for them. Moreover, the women did not prefer to practice some physical violence in case of danger and reckoned that these classes would not be more useful than a pepper spray. The security in the clubs and discos made the women feel more secure in these places and the Bulgarian respondents relied on it when a potential danger was about to happen. Zlatka, who was weekly visiting one of the discotheques in her town, talked about the bodyguards there in the following way:

> "Not that I would not buy a pepper spray, I had one years ago, but in the disco I feel protected, because there is security and this is their job-to take care of the nice and calm atmosphere in the disco."

5.4 Leisure and Mass Media

Mass media in all its forms appeared to represent a big part of women's leisure. Watching television, reading newspapers and journals, surfing the Internet were activities that were occupying

the women's leisure. Acquiring the influence of media on women's leisure, I encountered an interesting contradiction between the opinions. From one side there was the rejection that the media may exert some kind of influence on the respondents and on the other side there was the agreement that certain trends, manners and styles are seen and learnt from the media. Antonia considered the connection with the media that she has as an important one. She talked about the media as being a source of information and one that helps her in making decisions about her appearance in the following way:

> "I watch fashion channels quite often. I like to be updated about the new trends and I do assume that this influences me in some way…, for example it influences my choice of clothes."

The media was viewed as a powerful and influential factor by almost all of the respondents. Still, one of the women did not recognize the persuasive character of the media. Maria thought that the media was not responsible for the people's choices and decisions, but rather the people themselves were. Maria talked about it in this way:

> "There is a big discussion nowadays about the effect of media on people's lifestyles and choices. However, I do think that we all as human beings are responsible for our actions and that we cannot blame only the media for imposing something onto our lives, it is us-the people who decide how to behave and what choice to make."

However, Maria also talked about her choice not to spend her leisure glued to the television and to reduce the amount of hours devoted to it. She explained to me that she consciously made this choice and that she believes that if more people reduce the amount of time they do spend in front of the screen they would be less influenced by the media.

Two different views on the ways in which media portrayed the women were expressed by the Bulgarian respondents. First, according to some of them, the media portrays and represents the women as the weak sex- powerless and fragile, and at the same time careful and kind. Vasilka talked about her opinion about the subject in the following way:

> "On the cinema, on the television and also on the advertisements...almost everywhere the women are presented as careful and sensitive mothers and wives, taking care of the children and doing the household chores. The media usually keeps more attention on the attractive, beautiful and notorious women but all of them are tender and fragile.''

These discoveries are consistent with a study done in a Midwestern community with 125 high school students. The study examined the influence of the gender stereotyping in media, more

specifically in advertising, on the participants' views and perceptions about the gender roles. The participants were divided into five classes, to three of which magazine advertisements which presented women in stereotypical characters were exposed. The other two classes saw advertisements portraying women in non-stereotypical roles. At the end the student were asked to ascribed qualities of the women who they saw on the pictures. Most of the students who took part in the study ascribed stereotypical qualities even to the women, who were not presented in stereotypical roles. Common descriptions associated with traditional women's roles such as taking care of their children, performing household chores, organizing a recycling campaign, etc. The results also shown that advertisement exposure forms ideas and beliefs amongst the participants in relation to gender-appropriate behavior and image (Lafky et al., 1996).

Besides the model of the women portrayed by the media discussed above, there was another view on the subject expressed by most of the Bulgarians. The media was accused by the women in presenting a false reality. The women talked about it in a negative way and they were expressing their irritation from the deceitful nature of the media in this way:

> *"Nowadays everything is so luxuriously presented on the TV and the people are drawn into this delusive reality, wanting to achieve the same. I said delusive because it is not real what we see-all the women that were made to look so beautiful with the help of the Photoshop, all the happiness that shines from the movie stars on the TV, whose life is well-known with drugs or alcohol addiction. All this is fake!"*
> (Mariana)

Ani also had a negative view on the influence that the mass media exerted on women. She talked about the women and the way in which they are confronted with the need to maintain a certain look nowadays, enforce by mass media, and the unrealism implied in it in this way:

> *"Unfortunately the media imposes on the women certain style and vision that are destructive. Usually this is the type of the extremely thin silicone beauties. This is very bad especially for the young girls, because they perceive these beauties as their idols and they do believe that in order to succeed in life they should be like them-anorexic girls, lined with silicone. In fact, you see, the media creates abnormal demands from the women."*

Mass media in the form of newspapers, magazine, journals, etc. occupies the Bulgarian women's leisure. The respondents explained that some of the press release was interesting for them and they were choosing to buy and/or read particular magazines and journals. The press that the women were usually choosing to read contained topics such as fashion, body care and famous people's stories. The Bulgarian women expressed preferences in particular articles as well. An-

toana, who was reading "Журнал за жената"(Journal for the woman), "Cosmopolitan", "Ell" and some other magazines, for example, talked about her choice in the following way:

"Some magazines are very interesting and amusing, but I do not read everything, only pages that I find interesting. I like to read articles about famous people's lives and I also read about new trends and styles."

The reading of the press was not only occupying the Bulgarian women's leisure, but also had an actual practical aspect. The given advises about beauty procedures, body shaping, effective diets, etc. were followed by the women. Antoana explained how this advises found a practical application in her life:

"I have not thought about it before, but actually I often apply some of the procedures that are mentioned in the magazines that I read. When I read about some new effective diet or some homemade masks I am eager to try it and I do try it."

Articles concerning fashion were amongst the popular ones as well. Antonia gave such an example and explained which information, published in the press, she found important in this way:

"When I have free time I like to sit or lay on the couch and read some magazine for women. Besides the cooking section, I read also publications about beauty advises, seasonal trends, you know, for example which is the fashionable color this season and so on. In this way I am up to date and know more about how to make myself more beautiful (laughing)"

Strong views about the harmful effects of the media exposure were stated by some of the Bulgarian women. Maria, expressed a very strong opinion about the negative influence that some of the press release may exert on women. Maria shared with me her view in this way:

"the magazines are full of anorexic dolls, made beautiful with the help of the Photoshop. It is disgusting, because it is so fake! Oh, my god and some women do give money for this bullshit [the magazines]! Unbelievable! I wonder also how so many women do not see how offensively most of the women are portrayed in the magazines…showing their naked bodies…It is very said because exactly these women play the roles of models for a lot of young girls and women who strive to be like them. And how healthy is this-nobody is concerned! The most important thing that the media teaches the women is to look perfect and that is it."

Yanka, who rarely read magazines and newspapers, mainly when it was needed to fulfill the time when she was sitting and waiting for customers, even found a depressive aspect of some

47

of the magazines. She also talked about the willingness of a lot of women to look like the famous actresses, models and notorious women. In addition, Yanka mentioned some harmful effects that the press may have on some of the women, such as weight concerns, in the following way:

> *"It is depressing to know that you cannot be like the women on the covers of the magazines and for some women it might be dangerous. They start diets, spend a lot of money for fashionable clothes etc. And imagine the ones that cannot look attractive, for example- do not have enough money or cannot lose weight! What about them?! Seems that they would constantly feel unhappy and this is just because so much attention is given to the appearance of the women."*

The above findings are consistent with a research done in Fuji with Fujian adolescent girls focused on the relation between the eating behavior and the influence of the television and media exposure. The study revealed that values, habits and attitudes were altered by the characters shown on the television, who played roles of models and idols and consequently effected the eating patterns of the respondents for the sake of achieving certain beauty standards. In the core of the impact, mentioned above, was the predisposition of the people to compare themselves to these idealized characters and thus create wishful identification with them. The study revealed that the Fujian girls tend to appreciate and admire the media images and, in addition, to replicate their styles, appearances, body shapes, etc. Hence, media, more precisely the printed media and the fashion industry, appeared as an influential factor in terms of body image and mediated the danger of eating disorders due to drive for skinniness (Becker et al., 2002). Another cross-sectional survey conducted in schools in Boston studied the impact of the exposure to fashion magazines on girls and their weight perceptions and concerns. The data obtained from the survey showed that the magazines had a significant effect on the girls' views on their body shapes. The images presented in the printed media created ideas of beauty and perfection. On the other hand, the survey confirmed that certain articles in the magazines were initiating weight control, dieting and exercising amongst the girls (Field et al., 1999).

Internet was also used by the Bulgarian women during their leisure time. Inquiring the relation between the media and its potential influential character for the Bulgarian respondent's leisure, I asked the women if they read similar informational materials on Internet as the ones that they read in the magazines. Zlatka, who was spending a significant part of her leisure time in front of her personal computer, explained that it often happened that she looked up a diet or some cosmetic procedures on Internet. She described this in the following way:

> *"Internet is an advantage when you want to start a new diet, for example, it is not like in the magazines and the newspapers where usually only one diet is presented. On Internet you can choose from hundreds. And it is the same with many other*

things-recipes for hair, skin etc. I find this a very big advantage, because not every
diet can be practiced by everyone and not every procedure is for everyone"

Although most of the women agreed that the mass media influences on one or another way their lifestyles, choices, behavior and appearance by portraying and imposing certain type of women playing the role of models, none of them could identify herself with some of these models. The Bulgarian women characterized themselves as individual and did not point out particular women (actresses, models, etc.) whose style, look and manners they were mimicking during their leisure time. However, the fact that the respondents were not specific in terms of names did not mean that they did not express a wishful identification with these models. Antonia, for instance, expressed her opinion about the subject matter in the following way:

"Every woman who is more or less interested in fashion, beauty, etc., would like to
look like a Hollywood actress!"

Which of the leisure practices the Bulgarian women actually considered as affected in some way by the media- imitated, imposed etc.- was the next issue on which the women expressed thoughts, views and beliefs. The connection between the media and its influence on the leisure practices of the respondents was made in relation to fashion programmes, sitcoms and some music channels. Zlatka, in this matter, talked about how a particular favorite sitcom had influenced some choices she was making during her leisure time in the following way:

"I started to order the cocktail "Cosmopolitan" because this was the cocktail that
was so glamorous in one of my favorite series "Sex and the City". So, I can say that in
this sense the choice what to drink in a disco or a bar was influenced by the media."

Mass media appeared as an influential factor determining the outfit and the style that were chosen by the women during their leisure time. Trendy clothes, shoes and stylish look were accompanying the Bulgarian women during their leisure time, particularly the nightlife leisure. Antonia described the way in which she was looking like when she was going out with friends, spending a night in a bar or discotheque in this way:

"When I go out I always put my brand clothes, off course! It is not like I am going
to do some jogging! I want to look beautiful and at the same time I do not want to
be different from the others, you know...I cannot go to a disco with my sport shoes
while the other girls are wearing high heels and stylish dresses!"

5.5 Leisure, beauty and expectations of the body

As mentioned before visiting spa and beauty salons and applying beauty procedures were significantly occupying the leisure time of the Bulgarian women. Though not all of the women were

visiting spa and beauty salons on a weekly basis all of them were practicing weekly activities which were related to the appearance of the face and the body. The main and the only reason for visiting the beauty and spa salons that the respondents gave, was the desire for achieving a beauty ideal. Ani, who was visiting a particular beauty salon, usually ones per two week, talked about her motivation to be a customer of this place in this way:

> "I wish my face was smooth and soft, but unfortunately it is not. I have an awful greasy skin, full of pores, and if I do not visit the salon at least ones per month it looks terrible! So the reason for going to the salon is to make my face to look beautiful."

The women, who were practicing some beauty procedures at home, due to different reasons-financial, time pressure, etc., also pointed out the same motives. Epilating, nail-polishing, home-made masks, etc-all of them were done by the Bulgarian women during their leisure time for the sake of accomplishing an attractive appearance. Expectations of the respondents were also tightly connected to the attractiveness that the spa and the beauty salons were supposed to provide. Zlatka explained to me what she mainly expects from a visit in such a place in the following way:

> "To look perfect! Are not these places for that?! When I go to a hair-dresser or makeup artist my goal is to leave from there looking perfect."

The spa and beauty salons were able to create feelings of good mood and self-confidence amongst the Bulgarian respondents. They were able to provide the respondents with inner satisfaction and self-assurance, which according to them was needed during leisure (Maria, Antonia, Zlatka, Antoana, Ani, Yanka). In addition, some of the women found a close mutual influential relation between their appearance and their mood. Maria, for example, talked about this influence in the following way:

> "It is not only that I just feel good when I look good, but sometimes when I do not feel good a visit to a beauty salon can positively change my mood, you know what the people say-if you do not feel good inside make something nice for you outside [for your body] in order to change your mood!"

Another perspective was the connection that the women made between the received self-confidence and its projection on the other people. Although the respondents expressed their own sense of satisfaction from the way they looked like after some beauty procedures as a factor of big significance to them, there was no point without the actual presentation of this appearance. What was essential for them was the beauty, the attractiveness to be seen and

subsequently appreciated by other people who were about to be present in the leisure places where the Bulgarian women were supposed to be. This evidence was constructed by some of the responses of the women. Namely, the respondents shared that they would not put the same effort in maintaining an attractive appearance, if there was no one to be attractive for. Maya, for example, explained the influence of the social environment during her leisure and the connection between this environment and her look in this way:

> "Well, off course every woman would like her prettiness to be noticed by the others, is not that normal? Nobody would put make up and fashion clothes when staying at home, the idea is they to be viewed and admired by other people."

The social environment was not only an arena for presenting beauty, styles and manners, but it was also defining exactly which looks and behaviors were suitable and admired. Namely, specific styles and attitudes were typical to specific social places. The link between the appropriate appearance, behavior, attractiveness and the public leisure was prominent and this was examined and proved by the responses of the Bulgarian participants. Particular looks and manners were ascribed to specific leisure practices and certain beliefs and views in terms of suitable outfits and behaviors were expressed. In addition, the respondents talked about the influence that this suitability and appropriateness may bring to them. It is important to be noted that the respondents discussed the appropriateness of their appearances only in relation to the public leisure mainly in places such as cafes, bars, discos, clubs, etc. None of them, for example, mentioned that a particular look or manners were required during their home leisure in the form of reading, watching television, etc. The issues of suitability and appropriateness concerned the leisure practices that were shared with other people, where certain verbal or non-verbal interactions were performed. Three main perspectives were mentioned by the respondents. First, there was the connection between the specific behavior, dress codes, physical appearances, that the Bulgarian women defined as required during their public leisure, and the suitable look. Maria expressed her opinion and thoughts about the obligatory look of the women and herself, in particular, in the following way:

> "A woman should always wear the right clothes for a specific occasion if she does not want to look odd in the eyes of the other people. The style, the clothes, they are like a visit card for her...I mean, if she does not know that on official dinner she should wear an elegant dress, for example, and she goes with sport shoes, this says a lot about her personality, I mean, an intelligent woman should know what and where she should wear...in this way she will be respected and appreciated by the other people. I personally always comply with these situations, there are certain social rules that has to be followed- this is normal and is admired."

Second, all of the respondents defined their appearance during their leisure in public places as different, namely, more attractive than the usual ones. The clothes, the style, the hair and even the manners were not the same as the ones at home, for example. Antonia, for instance, characterized her look when she was going out with friends as "more gracious and modern". Zlatka also talked about the variances of her look and the influence of the public leisure places:

> "I do not use make up during my leisure time spent at home, only when I go out. I think that in front of other people a woman has to show her style, to look beautiful and to behave like a lady."

Third, the women's appearances during their public leisure were considered as ones that could bestow the women with authority and attention. More, precisely, the Bulgarian respondents were assured in the relation between attractiveness and power that could be exercised during leisure. Maya, for instance, explained this relation in the following way:

> "The beauty is power! Whatever we say and think it is undeniable that the beautiful women have more privileges than the other ones. They are surrounded by more courtiers, they receive more attention, they are considered as nicer and friendlier, they are even served better. And, consequently, they have more choices and they can rule and exert control on others, influence their choices for example, etc."

5.6 Men and women's leisure

The indirect influence that the men as family members, relatives, friends and intimate partners can have on Bulgarian women's leisure was remarkable. A certain compliance with the men in general was expressed by the women. The men, having some relation with the women were perceived by them as important figures, whose leaderships and views were avowed as significant and ones that the women had to listen to. This compliance was based mainly on the belief of the men as the stronger sex. Antonia, for instance, explained why she consider her leisure time as one influenced by the men in her life in the following way:

> "Yes, I think that my leisure time is defined by the men. I consider men as the stronger sex in a relationship and we, the women, have to listen to their advices and opinions and to comply with them."

In addition, there were particular social constraints which the women talked about in terms of performing and maintaining respectable behavior. These constraints had their roots in some family values and beliefs, which were constructed and implemented within the family, mainly by the fathers of the women. A particular behavior was expected and was perceived as decent

and suitable within social environments and the women were taught from an early age how they should act. Though the role of the father had changed significantly by the time for some of the respondents it still was present influential on their leisure. Vasilka, for example talked about her thoughtfulness about the honor of her father and compliance with it during her leisure time in this way:

> *"All of the men who I have a close relation with play a certain role in my life. My father, for example, I can say that I perceive and think about him as 'the head of the family'. He has been taking the most important decisions always and he was always responsible about us, his children. When I was a teenager he did not let me go to some suspicious leisure places, now I can make my own decisions about it, but at the same time I do not want him to know about everything that I am doing during my leisure, I would not want him to know, for example, that I got drunk in a disco and I kissed with some boy, it would ruin his reputation in the city."*

The above findings are consistent with the study done by Green et al. (2006) in North East England in which the results from the interviews with young South Asian women showed that the family honor and reputation were significant factor determining and shaping the women's behaviour during leisure. The women were feeling that it is their duty to upkeep their families and relatives from malicious gossips and to perform behaviors during their leisure which would bestow their closest people with respectable status and would keep their morality (Green et al. 2006).

At the same time the men who did not have family or some relative relation with the women were also an influential factor that was shaping certain behaviors, manners and even physical appearances of the Bulgarian respondents. The women were acting differently when there were men in their social leisure environment. The Bulgarians were experiencing and performing these divergent behaviors in public leisure places such as cafes, bars, discos, etc. Antoana, for example, described this alternation in the following way:

> *"When there are men in a café or a bar where I am as well, I feel sometimes uncomfortable and I have to confess that I behave differently-I am trying to look more interesting, funny and attractive. Sometimes I am even checking my clothes…you know to see if I look good. It is not that I want their attention, I just want to look good in their eyes."*

Some of the Bulgarian respondents elaborated on the need of the women to look good in front of men during their leisure. They talked about how certain appearances and behaviors were performed by some women and that these actions were done in accordance with men's preferences. Maria, for instance, expressed her view on the subject matter in this way:

"We [women] are presenting to men what they want to see-they like to look at our beautiful clothes, shiny hair, good shaped bodies etc. Sometimes I have the feeling that many women are going out just to show off themselves to those men, to receive a kind of approval and admiration, it is like they do not value themselves enough and they need the men to like them in order to feel good and self-confident."

These findings correspond with the Irena Ateljevic's ones done in Croatia focused on embodiment issues in tourism and performing masculinity and femininity in Croatia. Irena Ateljevic's auto-ethnographic narrative methods included a story about the typical public behaviors of women and men in Croatia. The narrative reveals how the behaviors of the young women comply with and succumb to the men's expectations and perceptions of desirable female's manners and appearances. These performances implied certain bodily physicality, namely expressed through fashionable clothes and thin bodies, which the women were eager to expose to the men. The men, on the other side, were the ones who were pleased by and could enjoy the femininity played in front of and for them. An essential part of the story is the women's desire to perform the femininity which was appreciated and craved by the men. Namely, it was not against the women's will to comply to and satisfy the men's expectations towards them. They were gripped by the need to look attractive and fashionable and this had to be seen and presented to the men's public (Ateljevic et al., 2007).

5.7 Conclusion

Various leisure activities were occupying the Bulgarian women's leisure as it became evident from the findings presented in this chapter. Different places, providing leisure experiences were visited and diverse preferences and choices were discussed. The constraining character of leisure places and spaces became prominent by the safety concerns that the respondents expressed. Moreover, the findings from the responses about the mass media confirmed the link between media and leisure and the influential nature of the former. The results revealed that cultural beliefs, values perceptions and norms formed expectations in relation to the body appearances, manners and behaviors. In addition, the men presence in women's leisure was playing a significant role by anticipating and dictating practices, performances and standards.

6 RESULTS: Dutch women's leisure and constraints

6.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to reveal and examine the specific leisure constraints of the Dutch respondents. It will focus on the probable leisure influences and will elaborate on the correlation between leisure and gender. Safety issues, media, expectations of the body and the men's impact on the women's leisure will be approached and presented. Initially, a general overview of the Dutch women's leisure will be presented: preferences of places and people during leisure and usual leisure practices will be discussed. Afterwards, every of the probable gendered impacts will be examined separately. Arguments in terms of leisure constraints, their gendered aspect and the significance that they have on women's leisure will be made. Finally, the chapter will conclude with the most persuasive arguments that were built amongst it.

6.2 Leisure Places and Activities

The data obtained from the Dutch respondents showed that their leisure time was spent mainly outside their home. The women talked about various leisure activities such as travelling, participation in cultural events, visiting events of interest and attractions, attending dancing classes, shopping and practicing different sports. When elaborating on their leisure almost none of the women mentioned home-oriented leisure. An exception were Anita, 35 years old, a mother of two children, who, besides cycling, pointed out sewing and knitting as preferred leisure practices at home. Though the women discussed diverse leisure activities, travelling was described as the most desirable and pleasant one. Similarly to the responses of the Bulgarian women the Dutch women stated that they were intrigued by different cultures and places and all of them expressed their willingness and enthusiasm for travelling. Karin, 23 years old, a student living and studying in Utrecht talked about her leisure in the following way:

> "I practice a lot of different activities during my free time, but travelling is amongst my favorite ones. Off course for this [travelling]more time and preparation is required, but it is worthy-I see unknown and beautiful places, meet new people and cultures...this enriches my experience and charges me with a lot of energy and positive feelings."

Besides travelling, cycling was described as a pleasant activity practiced by the Dutch respondents during leisure. Biking was described as a type of transportation and at the same time as a leisure activity for the women. Anita, for example, talked about her biking experience in the following way:

"Oh, I am lost without my bike! I do everything by bike-shopping, taking my child from school…it is much more convenient and faster. And during the weekends me and my family do some cycling tour to a nice place in the forest or near the river, have a picnic or prepare a barbeque there, it is really nice!"

Cultural and organized social activities were pointed out as forms of leisure as well. Going to a theater and a cinema were amongst the mentioned leisure activities. Gatherings with friends, either in cafes, bars and discos or in outdoor places such as parks, for example, were also characterized as leisure oriented practices.

Practicing some sport activities was occupying the leisure time of the Dutch women. In some of these activities the women were participating as members of a club, others were done individually. Aafke, 27 years old, a student living in Wageningen, for example, was playing volleyball every week in the women's volleyball team in her town. Charlotte, 24 years old, a student from Wageningen University, living in Utrecht, was visiting dance classes. Ingrid, 24 years old, living and studying in Wageningen, on the other side, preferred to do sports individually. She was jogging in the mornings alone.

Discos, clubs and bars were visited by the Dutch women primarily in the evenings. Correspondingly with the Bulgarian women, the Dutch respondents were accompanied by friends and relatives at these places. Preferences in relation to bars and clubs were expressed as well. The Dutch women explained that they usually chose to go to a particular type of such places and the prerequisites for this were the music, the nice atmosphere and the people there. However, in contrast with the Bulgarian respondents, the Dutch ones pointed out the music, rather than the people, as the most important condition for choosing a specific bar, club or disco. Charlotte explained why she liked to visit with her friends a particular bar in the following way:

"I go to this bar, because of the music there…I cannot even call it a bar…it is more like a small café, but they play the music I like there and the atmosphere is really nice."

Analogous responses gave Roos, Aafke, Ingrid, Karin, Iris and Jasmijn, who characterized the music as *"very important"* and decisive when they were making choices about visiting specific bars, discos and cafes. In addition, some of the women mentioned that there should be an agreement amongst all of the people within the group in relation to the places where they would spend the evening and usually this fact was known and discussed in advance.

Mountain resorts and camping sites were also mentioned as places where the Dutch women were spending their leisure time. They were visiting these places with friends and/or relatives mainly during the summer when the weather conditions were appropriate for these activities.

Watching television in the form of movies, TV shows, series, etc. was occupying the Dutch women's leisure as well, though none of them characterized it as one the most preferable leisure activity. Nevertheless, it was not the same about going to the cinema. The women described it as more pleasurable experience than the one obtained from staying at home and watching movies. Karin, for example, talked about this difference in this way:

> "I sometimes watch movies on the TV when I am at home, but it is much more fun to go to the cinema with some friends. I suppose it is not always about the movie itself but the experience, we can laugh together, comment on it during the break and so on."

On the other side, Internet was occupying a big part of women's free time. The women were surfing the net searching for different kind of information and at the same time they were socializing through it, for example, by chatting and using Skype to communicate with friends and relatives. They characterized Internet not only as convenient and needed but also as habit-forming and obsessive. Karin talked about her personal attachment to Internet in the following way:

> "I cannot be even one day without Internet, it is like my life is dependent on it! It is like a contamination (laughing), I am so addicted to it! But yeah...all the information I need is there, plus I often get lost on Facebook and some other stuff..."

Interestingly enough, none of the women mentioned beauty and spa procedures as preferred leisure activities. This does not mean that they were not part of the Dutch women's leisure, but apparently they were not perceived as main leisure practices. The issues about the beauty and spa procedures and the Dutch women's appliances of them, perceptions and motives are elaborated further in the thesis.

As for the Bulgarian women, the time was an obstacle for the Dutch women's leisure. Most of them were defining their leisure time as insufficient and constrained by the time. The women were feeling overloaded with their everyday tasks and responsibilities and they had to shift from work and/or study to leisure which usually was not easy for them, especially when the work and/or the study required significant amount of time. Jasmijn talked about her busy scheduled and shared her desire for having more free time in this way:

> "I wish I could have more time for leisure. With my daily schedule is very difficult to find such-I go to school, I work in the weekends...it is difficult, there is always something that has to be done. Often when my friends call me and invite me to spend some time with them, I have to refuse, not because I do not want to go, but simply because I do not have time."

Family chores were also mentioned as an obstacle for experiencing more time devoted to leisure by one of the Dutch respondents. Anita, whose family was following a specific diet and whose husband had a full-time job, had to cook every day in the morning and in the afternoon she had to take her little daughter from school.

> *"My leisure time is mainly during the weekends, because during the week I am cooking, taking care of my daughter and preparing some stuff in the house. In the weekends I am more free, because my husband is at home then and he helps a lot, but anyway it would have been much better if I had more time for leisure."*

The Dutch respondents did meet difficulties defining leisure places which they would not visit. Although they expressed preferences about some leisure places they could not think of specific places that they would not visit during their leisure. In fact, they thought that not the place but rather the experience and the people they are with are of greater importance. Namely, the respondents shared that the choice to visit or not a particular leisure place is very subjective and depends on the situation. In addition, the women were also eager to try new and different leisure activities and they were willing to accept challenges. Jasmijn, 21, who has never visited a casino, for example, talked about her willingness to do so in this way:

> *"Though it is not one of the leisure places that I visit, I would like some day to go to a casino, it might be fun, it might not be, but anyway it is worth trying, why not?!"*

The ideal leisure for the Dutch women was mainly represented by travelling. Encountering new cultures, people and places were described as the most desirable and favorite activities. The respondents talked about various places they would like to visit during their free time with enthusiasm and aspiration. Iris, for example, described her ideal leisure in the following way:

> *"I always wanted to visit the Caribbean Islands, I really want to go there! Sunbathing on the beach and drinking some exotic cocktail- the perfect leisure, what more do you want!"*

Anita, on the other hand, shared with me that she always wanted to go to Japan. She had read a lot of books about the culture of Japan and she was intrigued by it. For her, personally, an ideal leisure would be "*a week or two in Tokyo*" where she could indulge in the culture.

Similarly to the Bulgarian women's responses nicely spent evenings with friends or families were also mentioned as ideal leisure by the Dutch women. Aafke, 28 years old, for example, was often inviting friends for dinners and/or a parties at her house and she had a lot of fun with them, while chatting, dancing, drinking and laughing together. She explained that for her it is a perfect way to enjoy her free time and at the same time to keep in touch with her friends.

Gatherings with close people were perceived as relaxing and entertaining. Leisure activities such as concerts or other public events were also pointed out.

The obstacles to experience an ideal leisure for the Dutch women were primarily the time constraints and the consequent busy schedules that the women were trying to fit into. The Dutch respondents talked about their hectic life and the lack of free time as a result. However, the personal lack of time was not the only impediment for experiencing leisure. The women shared that even when they were free it was not easy to meet with their friends, because usually all of them were busy or were having another appointment. Thus organizing the leisure time with friends required schedules and plans made in advance. Iris, for instance, often could not find a friend who she would have some drink in the evening with, because they had something else planned in their agendas and she had to stay at home watching some movie by herself. Anita also talked about the difficulties she met when trying to arrange a meeting with her older daughter, who was studying in another city in the following way:

> *"I called my daughter a week ago and asked her if she would like to join me shopping in the center this weekend. I called her on Thursday, thinking that she would have enough time to put the Saturday in her schedule as a shopping day. She replied that I cannot just call some days before and ask this, but that I have to inform her at least three weeks in advance. She said that she was booked the upcoming three weekends. There might be a day when I will have to contact her a year in advance for a simple meeting…imagine!"*

6.3 Leisure and Safety

Safety was an important issue for the Dutch women. All of the women found the safety of a big importance, but none of them expressed significant concerns about it during leisure. Actually, the women believed that enough precautions were taken for the safety of the leisure places, such as bars and discos. What was remarkable, however, was the fact that the respondents perceived the safety in a different way, they started to talk about safety in terms of transportation. For them, in order to feel safe, it was needed their bikes to be in a good condition, for example, which would provide a safe trip home. Though they were acquainted with the product none of the Dutch women have ever bought or used a pepper spray for self-defense. Other types of precautions were not mentioned as well. The women felt that they can be safe enough during their leisure and believed that it was not their responsibility to care about the safe environment in leisure places such as discos and bars. Iris, for example, explained why she did not consider herself as a person, who had to be in charge of the safety issues in these places in this way:

> *"Well, in most of the places there is security that is responsible for keeping the*

safety. Maybe there are places that are not safe enough, I mean where some fights
may start or something, but I do not feel frightened, namely because there are peo-
ple whose job is to solve these situations."

None of the Dutch women was participating in self-defense training, however, this activity was perceived more as a type of sport rather than one needed for self-protection. Thus Jasmijn, for example, asked if she would consider a subscription for such classes replied in this way:

"Why not? It is like every other sport! It would be fun!"

The respondents did not think that their safety was threatened in some way during leisure and they believed that even if there were some dangers involved during their leisure activities, they could make their own decisions about whether they would take a part in them. Iris, for example, talked about some parties and gatherings where some of the people were using large amount of alcohol and drugs. However, she did not perceived these places as dangerous, because she believed that it is her own responsibility to choose what she was going to consume, which she expressed in this way:

"It is up to you if you would take part in some dangerous activities during leisure
like taking drugs, for example or drinking a lot of alcohol. Nobody has ever forced
me to do or to try something. Every person is responsible for himself or herself and
his or her own actions."

There were not leisure activities in which the Dutch women would not participate due to safety issues. Some gathering and places, which were known as ones where drugs were used, were suspicious and the respondents preferred to avoid them, however, they stated that the main reason to avoid them was not related to safety exactly, rather it was the fact that they would feel out of place there.

The men presence in leisure places such as bars, discos, cafes, etc. was not perceived as threatening the women's safety factor as well. Even though the women acknowledged that some crimes and fights were initiated primarily by men, the Dutch respondents did not express significant concerns about their safety related to the men presence in leisure places such as bars and discos. The women admitted that the men were the stronger sex from a physical perspective, but this fact was not mandatorily associated with potential violence or danger.

6.4 Leisure and Mass Media

Mass media was occupying a big part of the Dutch women's leisure. Internet and television were the two most common and preferred forms by the respondents. Reading newspapers

and magazines was not amongst the prominent leisure activities for the Dutch women. They preferred to spend their leisure time on Internet and/or watching different TV channels. Mass media, however, was perceived and discussed as a big influential phenomenon, imposing certain lifestyles, trends and practices. The Dutch respondents talked about media as playing a role of managing almost all parts of the people's life. Although the media was seen as spreading its tentacles amongst all generations and sexes, the respondents acknowledged that there were significant differences between the ways in which mass media affects women and the ways it affects the men. The Dutch women talked about certain images of famous women (actresses, models, etc.) that the media exposes and how, consequently, these images become desired and replicated by the ordinary women. The respondents believed that in the core of this desirable replication was the beauty. The media represents the famous women as beautiful and wanted and thus their appearances, styles and traits became the signs of the beauty for the people. Iris shared her opinion about the reason why the women often imitate the celebrities' visions, styles and even attitudes in this way:

> "The celebrities are shown on the TV, in the newspapers, on Internet as attractive and beautiful. They are always admired and a lot of women try to look like them because they want to be attractive and admired, too."

Hence, one of the opinions about the way in which the media portrayed the women was that it gives priority and aspiration to the female's beauty and creates certain ideals and standards that were wanted and imitated. In addition, besides the desirable similarity discussed above, the respondents recognized the unattainable character of this resemblance. Jasmijn, for example, thought that the media portrays the women in unrealistic way and that the actual beauty and attractiveness that it showed were presented in deceitful manner. Jasmijn talked about the impossibility for a lot of the ordinary women to achieve these beauty standards in this way:

> "Media presents the women somehow imaginarily. I mean all those bodies and faces of famous people are far from the real ones and they are unachievable for a lot of the ordinary women. You know… how the actresses, the models look just perfect, though it is well known by the people that all this beauty might be fake, with the help of a lot of surgeries, diets and Photoshop, women still strive to achieve it. But… not every woman can afford these sacrifices…"

A different perspective had Aafke, who believed that the women were aware of the way they were portrayed by the media and that they did want to be represented in this way, namely, they are representing themselves. Aafke talked about the women's self-representation in the following way:

"I think that women portray themselves. They want to be seen and perceived in a certain way and this is done by exposing their bodies and clothes. They pick up on specific image and they want this image to be shown to the public."

Correspondingly to the Bulgarian women, the Dutch women did not consider that their appearances and behaviors during leisure were related to the ones of a particular famous person, however, they acknowledged that specific styles and manners were imitated mainly from the celebrities and the famous people that the media presents. Anita often got inspired by the clothes of some famous people shown on the television when she wanted to knit some new sweater or to needle a new dress for her daughter or for herself. She talked about it in this way:

"The celebrities are usually wearing beautiful, stylish clothes and I often get new ideas of making some new clothes from them. In this sense I think that you can say that I am copying their styles…"

The influence of mass media was closely associated with the fashion. The women discussed the role of the fashion in their lives. Iris, for example, talked about the influence that the media, and more specifically, the fashion had on her choices in terms of buying and wearing clothes and maintaining a certain style in the following way:

"I am interested about the current trends and I often watch fashion programmes or search on Internet for some new tendencies, thus I can stay up to day and I know what kind of clothes to buy and how to combine them."

The media was not only seen as dictating certain styles and outfits, but also as a crucial factor, defining bodily standards and images. The Dutch women, likewise the Bulgarian women accused mass media in creating fanatically urges amongst the women to look as thin and beautiful as the models and the celebrities were. The Dutch respondents discussed indignantly the possible harms that these urges may inflict such as eating disorders and low self-esteem. However, most of them acknowledged the fact that the society was well-informed about these dangers and that most of the women were aware of the potential problems. Jasmijn talked about the beauty standards that the media was enforcing and the influence that they had on her in the following way:

"Every woman wants to have a nice body and to look beautiful, me too. Somehow the beauty is still associated with long, slim bodies, the ones of the models, for example. I have read that this is a big problem for a lot of young women, who do not meet these standards, they do not feel good about themselves and often suffer from some diseases because of this, like anorexia. I cannot say that I can be affected

in the same way. I feel good in my body and even that it is not perfect I am far from
the idea of starving every day. After all, the most important thing is to be healthy."

6.5 Leisure, Beauty and Expectations of the Body

The Dutch women were visiting spa and beauty salons when they had the free time to engage in these activities. However, it should be noted that these activities were not mentioned and characterized as leisure ones. All of the women mentioned the hair-dresser salons which services they were using ones or twice per month or for a specific occasions (such as going to a wedding, a party, etc.). Other practices like sauna, solarium and some cosmetic and beauty procedures were also mentioned by the respondents, but they were more rarely used. In addition, similarly to the Bulgarian women, the Dutch women were applying some cosmetic procedures at home as well. Amongst those were epilating and applying some homemade facial and body masks. However, the Dutch women preferred the specialized salons for such kind of treatments mainly because it was easier, faster and professional. Aafke, for example, had chosen to apply laser treatment to her legs and she explained the reason for this choice and the satisfaction from it in the following way:

> *"Now I have much more time after this procedure. Before it I had to spend a lot of*
> *time epilating my legs or the other option was to shave them every day, both are*
> *really annoying and time-consuming. Now I just do not have to think about it!"*

Two main reasons for visiting spa and beauty salons were pointed out by the Dutch respondents. First, it was the relaxation aspect that these kind of places offered. Anita was going sometimes to a sauna with her older daughter and she explained her motivation and experience in this way:

> *"It is very relaxing and relieving. After this [the sauna procedure] I feel my body*
> *fresh and soft, but I also find it stress-relieving and calming."*

Second, there was the beauty aspect of the places. Namely, the women were visiting these places for the sake of achievement and maintenance of beauty and attractiveness. The aim was to realize a desirable look. Jasmijn shared how sometimes she arranged to go with a friend to a beauty salon:

> *"Sometimes, when I have the time and the money for it, I call a friend: "Let go and*
> *make ourselves pretty!" and we go."*

The Dutch women expected that a visit to a beauty salon would meet their requirements in relation to physical appearance. They had individual preferences and desires for their own look

and they were going there in order to realize them. However, besides the positive effects of the specific cosmetic procedures that the women applied to themselves, their expectations were also connected to the environment in these leisure places. Charlotte, for example, expected and gave a significant priority on the *"friendly atmosphere and treatment"*. Of great importance was also the possible social interaction at these places. Iris, for example, was visiting a beauty salon where a friend of hers was working as a hair stylist. Besides cutting her hair, Iris was sometimes applying some other procedures such as face cleaning and epilating. She explained that she was going to this particular salon, because she knew the people who worked there and thus she could have some nice chat with them.

The physical appearance during leisure was characterized as individual and freely-chosen by the Dutch women. They did not think that there were certain rules and norms for applying a specific style and/or behavior during leisure. Actually, they described the leisure time as the part of their life in which they could wear whatever they want and to look however they wished to. In addition, the physical appearance during leisure, the body, the clothes, etc. were not considered as ones of big importance to the Dutch respondents. Karin, for example, expressed the following opinion about the physical look during leisure in the following way:

> *"I really do not think that the outfit matters so much, maybe if I go to an interview for a job, but during leisure…no, I put on some jeans and a T-shirt when I go out, nothing special."*

Aafke confirmed that there might be occasions in which a certain style was required, but she also pointed out that usually there was a specific reason for that. Asked about whether she thinks that a particular look or style was necessary during leisure time she answered in this way:

> *"Not exactly…maybe for a party with a certain theme or some more special event like wedding…otherwise I do not think that there are some restrictions about the outfit during leisure time."*

Individuality and freedom were pointed out as central issue by the Dutch women in relation to physical appearance. The Dutch women expressed very tolerant views on the subject matter. They believed that every human being is unique and should have the freedom to show this uniqueness in the way he/she preferred to. Roos, for example, who was a first year student in Wageningen University, living in Nijmegen believed that *"everybody has an individual style and is free to wear whatever he or she wants and to behave in his/her own way…"*

According to the Dutch respondents the role that the body and the physical appearance as a whole were playing during leisure was not considered as one of greatest importance. The

women thought that bigger attention was given to the personality and to the individual charm that they possessed. The beauty and the attractiveness were described as appreciated, but they were not recognized as critical factors during the leisure time in public places such as cafes, bars, discos. Karin, for example, talked about the contradiction between the physical appearance and the character of a person in this way:

> *"You cannot judge people only by their look. Maybe you can understand something about a person by the way he/she dresses up, I mean you can guess what kind of music he or she listens to, for example, but hardly about his/her character that is why I do not think that the look is important."*

Contradictory to the Bulgarian women, the Dutch women were not concerned so much about their appearances during leisure. They preferred to wear comfortable clothes to the fancy and trendy ones that were worn by the Bulgarian women. The Dutch respondents pointed out two main styles in their everyday life. First, there was the official style which was defined as more classic and elegant and it was used when going to work or at an official meeting or a formal event. The second style was the casual one, which was common during leisure time. This style consisted of more usual, comfortable clothes which, in addition, were making the biking to and the *"dancing in the clubs easier"* (Jasmijn, Iris, Karin, Charlotte) for the participants.

The Dutch women were individually choosing their styles and appearances. Besides the influence of the media, mentioned above, the respondents did not think that someone or something impacted and/or dictated their looks. Some of the women admitted that sometimes they asked friends for their opinions and advices about certain outfit and look, however, the decisions were primarily made by themselves. Of big importance for the Dutch respondents were their own perceptions and their own approval of themselves. Iris, for example, who often was shopping with friends thought that she possessed an individual style and though sometimes she asked her friends for their opinions about a particular cloth, she was the one who was deciding whether to purchase it or not. Likewise Iris, Karin preferred to mainly comply with her own opinion when she had to buy or wear clothes, she talked about it in this way:

> *"It is me that has to like the clothes, because I am going to wear them. Sometimes I ask friends what they think about some cloth or accessory or if they think that something suits me, but this is more because of curiosity what their opinion is, it would not affect mine."*

6.6 Men and Women's Leisure

The Dutch women were frequently spending their leisure time with men. These men were friends, relatives, intimate partners, etc., who were often accompanying the women in various

leisure places. The respondents talked about gatherings with classmates, friends and different parties with significant men presence. These men were characterized as common part of the leisure environment and they were usually perceived in the same way as every other person in this environment was, without gender considerations. Almost the same was the situation with the men, who were strangers and were not close to the women, but were present at the same leisure places where the women were. The respondents explained that, although these men were unknown to them, they did not feel that their presence influenced their leisure in some way. The women did not consider that their attitudes, behavior and manners were somehow changed by and/or dependent on the men's presence. Jasmijn, for example, explained that she held onto her own individuality and that men could not influence or alter her behavior in this way:

> "I do not think that I behave in a different way when there are men, …I am myself and I do not change because of someone's presence…I do not see why would I…"

On the other side, Aafke shared that there were instances in which she was behaving differently because of the presence of a certain person, however she pointed out that this was not gender related. Aafke stated the following:

> "I behave different with different people. I think that it is normal to be more careful and kind with the ones who are close to me or the ones who I like, so yes my behavior changes with different people, but I do not think that it is gender related, it doesn't matter if it is a boy or girl."

The women did not feel that their leisure time was defined or constraint in some way by men. They believed that the choices and the decisions they were making in relation to their leisure time were freely and independently made. The Dutch respondents stated that they did not recognize any restrictive nature of their leisure for which the men were responsible. Only one of the women, Iris, mentioned that she often complies with her boyfriend's choices and preferences in terms of spending leisure time, however, she explained that this compliance was her own decision and she also pointed out that there was a certain equality in this process, she talked about it in the following way:

> "Well, I have to comply with my boyfriend and his leisure time as well. We often arrange our free time in such a way that we can be free at the same time. And yeah sometimes I am joining him and his friends and we go somewhere, where they want to, even if it is not fun for me, but this is not a constraint, it is a choice that I make…plus he also does the same sometimes when we are with my girlfriends."

6.7 Conclusion

It became evident from the findings that the Dutch women were practicing various leisure activities and were visiting different leisure places. Safety during leisure was defined as important and needed, however, the respondents did not express worries in terms of possible criminality during their leisure, rather they were discussing concerns in terms of safe transportation, related to the conditions of the vehicle. It became clear from the results that mass media was occupying and consequently exerting influences on the Dutch women's leisure, dictating styles, standards and appearances. The findings revealed that the respondents experience independence in relation to their appearances and behaviors. They described their choices and preferences as personal and self-determining. The men presence in the Dutch women's leisure was not recognized as influential factor that restricts somehow the respondents' leisure experience.

7 DISCUSSION: Comparative Analysis of the Leisure Constraints of the Dutch Women and the Leisure Constraints of the Bulgarian Women

7.1 Introduction

This thesis elaborated on and discussed the gendered aspect of the leisure constraints of the Bulgarian and the Dutch women. As the results from the research showed there were differences in the way in which certain issues, namely safety, mass media, expectations of the body and men presence influenced and restricted the leisure time and experience of the Bulgarian and the Dutch respondents. This chapter will focus on the comparison of the leisure time of the Bulgarian women and the leisure time of the Dutch women. Each of the constraining character of the issues elaborated in Chapter Five will be presented and analyzed in a comparative way in order to examine the similarities and the disparities between the leisure time of the two groups of respondents. In addition, it will integrate different theories which will support the findings and will help for their better understanding. Finally, the chapter will conclude with the most persuasive arguments that were built amongst it.

7.2 Discussion: Comparative Analysis

7.2.1 Comparative Analysis: Leisure Places and Activities

The data obtained from the interviews showed that the Bulgarian and the Dutch women had similar leisure patterns. Travelling, gatherings with friends, visiting nightlife leisure places, watching television, using Internet, practicing some sport were amongst the leisure activities occupying the leisure time of the respondents from the two groups. However, the Bulgarian women discussed and gave more examples about leisure activities at home such as cosmetic procedures and time spent at home simply "*doing nothing*" (Yanka), while for the Dutch women the leisure activities had more outdoor aspect and they associated leisure with practices and events outside their homes, namely going to the cinema (instead of watching movies at home), outside sport activities, visiting clubs and bars, etc. The Dutch respondents did not mention visits to spa and beauty salons as one of their main leisure practices. A particular leisure activity might be perceived differently by different people (Henderson et al., 1995). In this case, the perceptions of the Dutch women did not correspond with the perceptions of the Bulgarian women, namely, the former did not consider the spa and beauty salons as leisure activities. Further in this chapter a more precise comparison of the leisure time spent in spa and beauty salons, the perceptions, beliefs and purposes of the two groups of the respondents will be made.

Various factors were influencing the choice of the specific leisure places. Referring to clubs, bars and discos, the type of music and the atmosphere were mentioned as important by the two groups of respondents. The findings revealed that the Bulgarian women were experiencing troubles with and irritation from the crowded environment that was present in some of these places. The Dutch women did not mention similar concerns, which indicated that the crowds were not amongst the factors that could impede their leisure experience. The leisure places themselves did not appear to have subjective nature for the Dutch respondents. More specifically, the women did not discuss any obstacles and problems in relation to visiting various types of places during their leisure because of certain stigma endorsed to them. Moreover, the Dutch respondents were eager to try new things and were open and positive towards new experiences. However, this was not the case with the Bulgarian women, who ascribed characteristics of the leisure places, which were determining factor for the actual visits of these places. Namely, the respondents did hold strong beliefs about some *"suspicious"* and "*inappropriate for women*" places (Yanka, Ani, Maria, Antonia, Vasilka, Maya). Therefore the fact that spaces and places are culturally constructed and dependent was supported by the responses of the Bulgarian women (Drexler, 2004; Aitchison, 1999). Some leisure places were seen and perceived through cultural lenses and consequently certain meanings, values and beliefs were ascribed to these places. Hence, for the Bulgarian women some culturally constructed leisure places appeared as limiting for the leisure experience. The Bulgarian respondents stated that they would not visit certain places and from their answers it was obvious that traditional beliefs, norms and attitudes were the reason for this restriction:

> *"If you are a woman and you enter in the casino then you should be a prostitute! Another possibility is that you may be one of the waiters, otherwise I do not see what a woman could do there-it is full of gypsies, pimps and suspicious people...maybe some of them sell drugs as well...I have almost never seen a women to go there by herself unless she is a prostitute, only prostitutes go there."* (Yanka)

It became evident from the responses that both, the Bulgarian and the Dutch women did not have enough time for leisure. They were all drawn into the everyday life chores and duties and the time for leisure was concise and not sufficient. However, there were differences in the types of duties that were refraining the leisure time. The Bulgarian women talked about their housewives' chores and obligations, which constrained their leisure. Women usually spend more time on domestic tasks, therefore household duties decrease the time spent by the women for leisure (Mi-Hye, 2006). The Dutch women pointed out primarily their work and school as reasons for not experiencing enough leisure. The balance between work and leisure is problematic for the Dutch women, which defines the time constraint character of their leisure (Facts and Figures

of the Netherlands, 2008). It was clear from the responses that the two groups of respondents were often spending their leisure time with friends. However, this was not always possible and easy. Namely, another difficulty in terms of leisure that the Bulgarian and the Dutch respondents discussed was the fact that for some of them it was problematic to find friends who they can spend their leisure time with. Some of the single Bulgarian women explained that they were experiencing difficulties with spending leisure time with their married friends. The respondents were rarely seeing their girlfriends, because of their permanent obligations with family chores and responsibilities. Moreover, even if they had the opportunity to spend some time together, the Bulgarian respondents explained that they did not feel comfortable amongst their friends anymore due to the preoccupation of their friends with thoughts and conversations which were unfamiliar and not related to them. The marital status had influenced their friends in a way that it was creating a certain distance that was negatively influencing the leisure experience:

> *"I suppose that I need new friends (laugh)! Now when all of my friends are married and with children we rarely go out together or when we do they are with their husbands almost always. I miss the old times spent with them and the old gatherings during which we could laugh, talk about boys, even chasing them…it was nice, all the talking now is about cooking, cleaning, babies' attributes, etc. it is not the same now…I often cannot fit in their conversations and it becomes somehow weird…"* (Maya)

The Dutch women, in contrast with the Bulgarian women, did not mention impediments, in relation to their leisure, coming from the marital status of their friends. The obstacles were coming mainly from the fact that many of their friends were occupied with other activities, such as work and school:

> *"I wish I could have more time for leisure. With my daily schedule is very difficult to find such-I go to school, I work in the weekends…it is difficult, there is always something that has to be done. Often when my friends call me and invite me to spend some time with them, I have to refuse, not because I do not want to go, but simply because I do not have time."* (Jasmijn)

7.2.2 Comparative Analysis: Leisure and Safety

Safety issues were of great significance for both, the Bulgarian and the Dutch respondents. For the women it was important that the leisure environment could offer them nonviolence and protection. However, there were differences in the way in which the women from the two samples talked about safety during leisure and their perceptions, concerns and perspectives.

It became obvious from the results that, according to the Bulgarian women, leisure had a dark side and it was associated with danger in terms of various crimes. The Bulgarian women were threatened by the fear of potential violence which was more likely to happen in nightlife leisure places, visited by people involved in criminality and/or places with high ratio of drug and alcohol use, although one of the Bulgarian respondents explained that she was feeling safer in places where there was a guard present. The dark and poorly lit streets, leading to some leisure places, were evoking feelings of anxiety and danger. However, the women actually were not afraid of the places themselves, neither the streets, but rather the people, more precisely the men, capable of committing a crime. An interesting discussion point is also the fact that the Bulgarian women described men, who were their friends, intimate partners or acquaintances as their protectors from other men, who were unknown and suspicious. It was evident from the responses that the women were feeling much safer when there were men, who can protect them in case of danger. The fear from a potential danger, that women experience, is a reason for using different precautions (Green et al., 2006; Chasteen, 1994). This statement was supported by the results that showed that the possible danger made the women feel the need to use certain precautions, specifically pepper spray as all of them mentioned:

> *"I think that every lady should wear a pepper spray with her. You do not know what might happen on the street or in the clubs, discos...there are a lot of drunk and stoned people, you do not know their intentions. Having something to protect you, just in case, makes you feel surer in your safety."* (Maria)

The Dutch respondents were concerned about their safety as well, though, they believed that it was not their responsibility to maintain and be concern about the peaceful and save atmosphere, namely, there were people whose job required this:

> *"Well, in most of the places there is security that is responsible to keep the safety. Maybe there are places that are not safe enough, I mean where some fights may start or something, but I do not feel frightened, namely because there are people whose job is to solve these situations."* (Iris)

The Dutch women did not position unfamiliar men as a source of or reason for fears and worries and they did not consider men, who were close to them as ones playing roles of guards. Neither they mentioned the pepper spray (or some other precautions) nor did they express fears provoked from potential crimes. In fact, they primarily associate safety with the possibility to have a safe trip to their homes after their leisure time. This safety of the trip concerned transportation issues such as riding a bike, which was in a good condition. Another contrast that was evident from the responses of the Bulgarian and the Dutch women was the fact that the latter

would consider attendance to self-defense classes, not because they thought that they would need to learn how to protect themselves, but because of their sport and entertaining nature.

7.2.3 Comparative Analysis: Leisure and Mass Media

Mass media was recognized as a significant influential factor by both, the Bulgarian and the Dutch respondents. It was evident from the results that it imposed styles, standards and images which had influenced various aspects of the women's lives, including leisure itself. Media was not only occupying a big part of women's leisure, but it also was stretching its tentacles in a way that it was imposing certain appearances and attitudes during leisure as well. McLaren's theory positions mass media as a creator and a dictator of trends, styles and standards (McLaren, 2007). The Bulgarian and the Dutch women talked similarly about the dictating of the beauty standards and their imaginary nature and media being a great provider of them:

> *"Nowadays everything is so luxuriously presented on the TV and the people are drawn into this delusive reality, wanting to achieve the same. I said delusive because it is not real what we see-all the women that were made to look so beautiful with the help of the Photoshop, all the happiness that shines from the movie stars on the TV, whose life is well-known with drugs or alcohol addiction. All this is fake!"* (Mariana)

> *"Unfortunately the media imposes on the women certain style and vision that are destructive. Usually this is the type of the extremely thin silicone beauties. This is very bad especially for the young girls, because they perceive these beauties as their idols and they do believe that in order to succeed in life they should be like them-anorexic girls, lined with silicone. In fact, you see, the media creates abnormal demands from the women."* (Ani)

> *"Media presents the women somehow imaginarily. I mean all those bodies and faces of famous people are far from the real ones and they are unachievable for a lot of the ordinary women. You know… how the actresses, the models look just perfect, though it is well known by the people that all this beauty might be fake, with the help of a lot of surgeries, diets and Photoshop, women still strive to achieve it. But… not every woman can afford these sacrifices…"* (Jasmijn)

> *"The celebrities are usually wearing beautiful, stylish clothes and I often get new ideas of making some new clothes from them. In this sense I think that you can say that I am copying their styles…"* (Anita)

72

Nevertheless, there were some differences between the opinions and the views of the Bulgarian and the Dutch respondents, taking into account their responses. First, there was the fact that the Bulgarian respondents were reading printed media such as women's magazines, journals, newspapers more than the Dutch respondents, who were spending their free time primarily on Internet or watching television. The printed media and the fashion industry exert impact on the women's perceptions of their own bodies and create certain body criteria (Becker et al., 2002). Thus the Bulgarian women, who had greater exposure to the printed media, as it was obvious from the responses, were obtaining information about what was fashionable, beautiful and wanted:

> "I have not thought about it before, but actually I often apply some of the procedures that are mentioned in the magazines that I read. When I read about some new effective diet or some homemade masks I am eager to try it and I do try it." (Antoana)

> "When I have free time I like to sit or lay on the couch and read some magazine for women. Besides the cooking section, I read also publications about beauty advises, seasonal trends, you know, for example which is the fashionable color this season and so on. In this way I am up to date and know more about how to make myself more beautiful (laughing)" (Antonia)

There were different opinions about the way in which women were portrayed by mass media. The Bulgarian respondents could recognize a traditional portrayal of the women by the media, while this was not the case for the Dutch women, who primarily saw the media as enforcing imaginary images of women or, as one of the Dutch respondents stated, the women were actually consciously portraying themselves in a certain way- they were aware of the image that they would create by exposing themselves and in fact, this was in accordance to their will and goal.

7.2.4 Comparative Analysis: Leisure, Beauty and Expectations of the Body

The Bulgarian respondents devoted their leisure to spa and/or beauty procedures on a weekly basis. Conversely, the Dutch respondents did not consider these practices as leisure activities. For them these procedures were more necessary than pleasurable and they applied them when it was needed and when they had enough time left for them. The central motivation for the Bulgarian women to visit spa and/or beauty salons was the achieving and/or maintenance of beauty. Beauty and attractiveness are not only craved by the women but they are also imposing power by enforcing certain beliefs and standards(Wolf, 1991). As Naomi Wolf states, the beauty ideology exerts control on women by making them submissive to the beauty ideal that they want to embody (Wolf, 1991). The woman's body becomes subservient to the woman's mind,

due to the fact that the body is constructed in a way that its performances are done through the prism of the general social and cultural discourses (Ateljevic et al., 2007; Per Cornell in Fahlander et al., 2004;). Therefore, beauty, as socially and culturally constructed ideology, influenced the Bulgarian women in a way that defined and controled the women's leisure, namely, their leisure was devoted to achieving or maintaining the beauty ideal:

> *"The beauty is power! Whatever we say and think it is undeniable that the beautiful women have more privileges than the other ones. They are surrounded by more courtiers, they receive more attention, they are considered as nicer and friendlier, they are even served better. And, consequently, they have more choices and they can rule and exert control on others, influence their choices for example, etc."* (Maya)

Different was the case for the Dutch women. Besides the physical attractiveness, that spa and beauty salons were supposed to provide, another reason for visiting such places by the Dutch respondents was their relaxing character. In addition, they expected a friendly atmosphere and treatment at these places, which was not mentioned by the Bulgarian women. As for the reasons, the expectations of the Bulgarian women were related to reaching certain physical standards and attractiveness. They talked about desirable changes in relation to their physical appearance and they expected to realize them at places such as spa and beauty salons. For the Bulgarian respondents these places were not only a provider of beauty, but also of self-confidence, which appeared as a consequence of this beauty. The attractiveness, however, had no value unless it was seen, presented to the public, which was happening in many leisure places, such as cafes, bars, discos, etc.:

> *"Well, off course every woman would like her prettiness to be noticed by the others, is not that normal? Nobody would put make up and fashion clothes when staying at home, the idea is they to be viewed and admired by other people."* (Maya)

> *"I do not use make up during my leisure time spent at home, only when I go out. I think that in front of other people a woman has to show her style, to look beautiful and to behave like a lady."* (Zlatka)

The Bulgarian women believed that specific styles and appearances were appropriate and admired in specific places and vice versa. For them particular leisure places, such as bars, cafes and discos, required specific looks and outfits, namely, more attractive and fashionable ones. The new cultural geography positions places and spaces as meaningful and powerful (Aitchison, 1999). Social and cultural values, understandings and beliefs in terms of beauty, attractiveness and body standards were embedded in leisure places such as cafes, bars, discos, etc. and they were expected and admired. This was not the case for the Dutch women, who did not feel

the influence that spaces and places may exert on their appearances and/or styles. They were convinced that their clothes and looks were freely and individually chosen and did not feel any external forces or impacts on their choices:

> *"I really do not think that the outfit matters so much, maybe if I go to an interview for a job, but during leisure…no, I put on some jeans and a T-shirt when I go out, nothing special."* (Karin)

Moreover, controversially to the Bulgarian respondents, the Dutch respondents preferred more customary clothes during their leisure, because of the comfort that they provide while biking and/or dancing. The Dutch women did not think that the physical appearance and the outfit were playing a significant role during their leisure, while for the Bulgarian women they were of big importance.

7.2.5 Comparative Analysis: Men and Women's Leisure

The Bulgarian and the Dutch women were spending time with and around men, who were playing various roles in their lives. These men were family members, intimate partners, friends and random acquaintances. It became evident from the findings that there were differences in the role and influence of the men on the Bulgarian women's leisure and the role and influence of the men on the Dutch women's leisure. The Bulgarian respondents acknowledge their compliance in relation to leisure with the men's opinions and views. A reason for this compliance were the women's perspectives and beliefs, namely, they thought of men as representatives of the stronger sex, who they had to listen to and act in accordance with:

> *"Yes, I think that my leisure time is defined by the men. I consider men as the strong sex in a relationship and we, the women, have to listen to their advices and opinions and to comply with them."* (Antonia)

Controversially, the Dutch respondents did not express any compliance with men in terms of their leisure. The Dutch women were making decisions about their leisure by themselves and they believed that their choices were not influenced in any way by men. In addition, the Bulgarian women were experiencing specific constraints by men, who were family members. The women's behaviors and manners are dependent on and in accordance with the maintaining of the family honor (Green et al. 2006). This was confirmed by the responses of the Bulgarian women. Cultural values and social norms, which implied the need for the women to perform decent behaviors and manners during leisure in order to keep the family honor, were determining the Bulgarian women's leisure. This family honor, however, was more men's honor, the honor and the reputation of the men in the family, fathers, brothers, husbands, was to be

preserved and maintained. Therefore, the women were experiencing certain constraints during their leisure in order to upkeep the honor of the men in their families. Consequently, the men appeared as an influential factor determining and restricting the leisure experience of the Bulgarian women:

> "All of the men who I have a close relation with play a certain role in my life. My father, for example, I can say that I perceive and think about him as "the head of the family". He has been taking the most important decisions always and he was always responsible about us, his children. When I was a teenager he did not let me go to some suspicious leisure places, now I can make my own decisions about, but at the same time I do not want him to know about everything I am doing during my leisure, I would not want him to know, for example, that I got drunk in a disco and kiss with some boy, it would ruin his reputation in the city." (Vasilka)

Behaviors, manners and appearances of the Bulgarian women during leisure were influenced by men presence. The Bulgarian respondents behaved differently when there were men. The women were performing manners and were maintaining appearances which were found as appropriate and were appreciated by the men. They were feeling the need to be approved by the men and this lead to changes in their performances and looks:

> "We [women] are presenting to men what they want to see-they like to look at our beautiful clothes, shiny hair, good shaped bodies etc. Sometimes I have the feeling that many women are going out just to show off themselves to those men, to receive a kind of approval and admiration, it is like they do not value themselves enough and they need the men to like them in order to feel good and self-confident." (Maria)

The Bulgarian women were submitting to the men's expectations and desires in terms of bodily appearances and behaviors during their leisure. The Ateljevic's story depicted similar case of the Croatian women, who were publically presenting certain femininity to the men. This particular femininity, expressed through clothes, bodily physicality and manners, was desirable and anticipated by the men (Ateljevic et al., 2007). Hence, men appeared as an influential and determining factor for the appearances and the performances of the Bulgarian women during their leisure, which defined the constraining character of leisure.

The Dutch respondents did not recognize similar alternations in their actions and looks due to men presence. They explained that they also behave differently with different people, but this was not gender related, rather it was the person himself/herself and the women's personal relation with him/her that was a reason for not behaving in the same way with everyone:

76

"I do not think that I behave in a different way when there are men, …I am myself and I do not change because of someone's presence…I do not see why would I…" (Jasmijn)

"I behave different with different people. I think that it is normal to be more careful and kind with the ones who are close to me or the ones who I like, so yes my behavior changes with different people, but I do not think that it is gender related, it doesn't matter if it is a boy or girl." (Aafke)

7.3 Conclusion

In this chapter the comparative analysis of the leisure time of the Dutch respondents and the leisure time of the Bulgarian respondents were presented. The results from the data analysis showed that there were differences in the leisure time of the two groups of women. With the help of the new cultural geography the meaningful and powerful character of leisure places was recognized and confirmed for the Bulgarian women (Drexler, 2004; Aitchison, 1999). Dissimilarities were found in the way in which safety issues influenced the leisure time of the Bulgarian and the Dutch women. The former appeared to be more concerned about possible danger, related to criminality, during their leisure than the latter and there were differences in the way in which safety was perceived. Mass media was an influential factor for the leisure time of both-the Bulgarian and the Dutch respondents, however, the former had different views on the way in which mass media portrayed the women and they were regularly reading printed media, which was not relevant to the latter. Embodiment theory served for explanation and discussion of the relation between the woman's body and its submission to cultural and social ideologies(Ateljevic et al., 2007; Per Cornell in Fahlander et al., 2004;). Expectations of the body were defining particular styles and behaviors of the Bulgarian women during leisure, while this was not the case for the Dutch women. Furthermore, the presence of men during leisure and the men's opinions, views and roles were defining the leisure experience of the Bulgarian women, while for the Dutch women there was no evidence of any influence of men on their leisure.

8 CONCLUSIONS: Concluding Remarks and Recommendations for Further Reference and Research

8.1 Introduction

The results from the data analysis of the interviews with the Bulgarian and the Dutch women were introduced and discussed throughout this thesis in order a more detailed picture of the leisure time of the two groups of respondents to be drawn and thus the research questions, presented in this thesis to be answered. The aim of this chapter is to provide clear answers to the research questions of the thesis by focusing on the gendered aspect of leisure and the specific leisure influences and constraints. The chapter will conclude with some recommendations for further reference and research.

8.2 Concluding Remarks

Answers to three main research questions were to be found in this thesis. These were as follows:

- What constrains women's leisure?

- What are the power relations entailed in women's leisure?

- What are the main differences in leisure patterns of women from Bulgaria and women in the Netherlands?

Constraints: women's leisure

The results from the interviews showed that time appeared as a constraining factor for the leisure time of the Bulgarian and the Dutch respondents. The lack of time for leisure was mentioned by the two groups of women. Further, need for safety and the fear from potential danger were restricting the leisure experience for the Bulgarian women. Mass media, expectations of the body and men were proved to be restraining for the Bulgarian women's leisure.

Power relations: women's leisure

Leisure spaces and places with their meaningful character were exerting their power and influence on the way in which the Bulgarian respondents were spending their leisure. Certain cultural and social norms, values and beliefs were rooted in leisure spaces and places and the Bulgarian women were performing in accordance to them. With their aspect of potential danger some leisure spaces and places were exerting influence on the Bulgarian women's choices and behaviors. Expectations of the women's bodies were culturally and socially constructed and were controlling the Bulgarian respondents' appearances, who were succumbing to them.

Mass media also appeared as a powerful factor, determining the women's behaviors, looks and styles in leisure places and spaces for both the Bulgarian and the Dutch respondents. Men were playing a powerful role in the Bulgarian women's lives by controlling their behaviors and appearances.

Main differences: leisure patterns of women from Bulgaria and women in the Netherlands

In contrast with the Bulgarian women, who mentioned several home-oriented leisure activities, the Dutch women were spending their leisure more often outside their homes. Work and education appeared as restricting the amount of time for leisure for the Dutch women, while the Bulgarian women mentioned mainly the household chores as limiting the time for leisure. The Dutch respondents did not express concerns about visiting certain leisure places, while the Bulgarian respondents explained that they would not visit particular leisure places due to the cultural and social connotations and beliefs related to them. The Bulgarian women were concerned about safety during their leisure in terms of criminality, while for the Dutch women safety was important in relation to safe transportation that vehicles in a good condition could provide. Contrary to the Dutch respondents, certain precautions in terms of safety were used by the Bulgarian respondents. Printed media was read by the Bulgarian women, but not by the Dutch ones. The Bulgarian women mentioned visits to spa and beauty salons as their leisure activities, which was not the case for the Dutch women. Expectations of the body were not influencing the leisure of the Dutch women, which in fact was the case for the Bulgarian women. Contrary to the Bulgarian women, men did not appear as an influential factor for the leisure of the Dutch women.

In order to give more in-depth and detailed answers to the main research questions, given the gendered aspect of the thesis, four possible influential issues were approached and discussed- safety, mass media, expectations of the body and men. This lead to formulating the following four sub-research questions:

- What kind of influence do the safety issues have on women's leisure?

- What kind of influence does mass media have on women's leisure?

- Is women's leisure influenced by expectations of the body and how?

- How are men involved in women's leisure?

Leisure and Safety

Safety appeared to be an important and influential factor for the women's leisure. The danger of potential crime during leisure had restricted the leisure experience of the Bulgarian women, who consciously were avoiding certain places and were taking precautions in order to avoid possible threat. Although the Dutch women did not express the same concerns as the Bulgarian ones did, safety was a significant issue for them in terms of safe transportation, which, for example, using a vehicle in a good condition could provide.

Leisure and Mass Media

Mass media affected the leisure time of both, the Bulgarian and the Dutch respondents. It was dictating and imposing styles, appearances, behaviors and manners. Mass media was penetrating the women's leisure by defining the certain suitability of outfits and looks, regulating beauty standards and trends and enforcing definite images, practices and performances. Hence, media played the role of a constraining factor of the leisure experience. The image of the women that mass media was projecting was perceived by the Bulgarian women as traditional one, positioning the woman as a mother and a housekeeper, being fragile and kind to her partner. The Dutch women as well as the Bulgarian women recognized the unrealistic character of the women's images presented by mass media and the destructive consequences that these images may bring to some of those women, who want to resemble them.

Leisure and Expectations of the Body

A significant part of the Bulgarian women's leisure was devoted to meeting certain expectations of their bodies. The respondents expressed desires to look attractive and admirable and this was the main reason for either visiting spa and beauty salons or applying beauty procedures at home. Leisure and beauty were interwoven-the Bulgarian respondents were feeling the need to look attractive and fashionable during their leisure in public places. The prettiness and the trendy styles were to be seen, otherwise they were of no value. The beauty was anticipated and admired in certain leisure places and consequently, it created specific expectations of the body which were defining a constraining aspect of leisure. The Dutch women, however, did not experience similar pressures in relation to expectations of their bodies during leisure. The beauty procedures were not characterized as leisure by them and were not practiced that often as they were by the Bulgarian women. The leisure for them was not connected to beauty and attractiveness, in fact, they preferred casual and comfortable clothes and did not give priority to fashion and prettiness.

Men and Women's Leisure

The men were not only part of the Bulgarian women's leisure, but they were also an influential factor shaping and defining the leisure experience. First, the men's opinions, views and decisions about the women's leisure were to be listened to and complied with. The men were considered as the stronger sex and traditional cultural beliefs and norms bestowed them with power and control, which was exerted in relation to women's leisure as well. Second, the honor of the men, who were family members, had to be preserved and maintained, which also meant that the women had to behave in certain decent way during their leisure. Third, the presence of random men during women's leisure was also influencing the women's performances and appearances. The Bulgarian respondents were feeling the need to be appreciated by and meet the expectations of the men. Thus, the women behaved and looked during their leisure differently, namely, in accordance with the men's requirements and standards. Therefore, the men were not only present during the Bulgarian women's leisure but they were also an influential and restrictive factor of the women's leisure experience. In contrast to the Bulgarian women, the Dutch women did not consider that their leisure was constraint by men. The Dutch respondents did not express any concerns in relation to certain compliance with men, neither were they feeling the need to change their behaviors and appearances in order to be admired and appreciated by the men.

8.3 Recommendations for Further Reference and Research

There are some recommendations for further reference and research that I would like to make and address towards students, researchers and other scholars interested in leisure and more precisely, the gendered aspects of the constraining character of leisure, which this thesis focused on. Due to the fact that I had to fit in certain schedules and deadlines, required from me as a student, I did not have enough time to implement participant observation into my study as an addition to the in-depth interviews. Conducting participant observations may contribute to deeper indulging into the leisure time of women, their actual behavior and attitudes. Moreover, observational methods might be helpful for filling the gap that may exist between stated and real behavior, which means that "*How people say they are likely to behave and how they actually behave may be inconsistent*" (Bryman, 2004:165). Furthermore, in my thesis I focused on four specific influential factors on women's leisure- safety, mass media, expectations of the body and men presence. However, there might be other factors that may constraint and influence the leisure experiences for women and a study elaborating on them can be conducted. In addition, a research focusing on investigating possible solutions for overcoming the various influences, constraints and ways to control them can be done by, for example, applying psychological and communicational theories in the field of behavior and attitudes change. All of the recommendations mentioned above may contribute to deeper understanding and knowledge

of the leisure phenomenon.

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APPENDICES

1. List of Respondents

Respondents	Age	Nationality	Place of Living	Education	Social Class	Marital Status
Aafke	28	Dutch	Wageningen	Persuing Masters	middle	Not married
Adriana	25	Bulgarian	Sofia	Persuing Bachelors	upper-middle	engaged
Ani	27	Bulgarian	Sofia	Persuing Masters	middle	Not married
Anita	35	Dutch	Ede	Bachelors	middle	married
Antoana	35	Bulgarian	Blagoevgrad	Masters	middle	divorced
Antonia	24	Bulgarian	Sofia	Masters	middle	engaged
Charlotte	27	Dutch	Utrecht	Persuing Masters	middle	Not married
Ingrid	24	Dutch	Wageningen	Persuing Masters	middle	Not married
Iris	21	Dutch	Utrecht	Persuing Bachelors	middle	Not married
Jasmijn	21	Dutch	Utrecht	Persuing Bachelors	middle	Not married
Karin	23	Dutch	Utrecht	Persuing Bachelors	middle	Not married
Liselotte	25	Dutch	Utrecht	Persuing Masters	middle	Not married
Maartje	23	Dutch	Utrecht	Persuing Bachelors	middle	Not married
Maria	30	Bulgarian	Sofia	Masters	middle	married
Mariana	35	Bulgarian	Sandanski	Masters	middle	married
Maya	27	Bulgarian	Sandanski	High school	lower-middle	Not married
Roos	23	Dutch	Nijmegen	Persuing Masters	middle	Not married
Vasilka	24	Bulgarian	Blagoevgrad	Persuing Bachelors	middle	Not married
Yanka	34	Bulgarian	Sandanski	High school	lower-middle	married
Zlatka	27	Bulgarian	Sandanski	Bachelor	middle	Not married

2. Questionnaire

1. Introduction

- An explanation about the purpose of the interview and the topic of the research is provided.

2. **Collecting personal information about the respondents**

- Nationality

- Place of residence

- Age

- Education

- Marital status

- Social class

3. **Overall information about leisure activities and practices, spaces and places, perceptions and ideals.**

- How do you spend your leisure time?

- Who do you mostly spend your leisure time with?

- Are there particular places where you go during your leisure time and why do you prefer them?

- Are there particular places where you would not go during your leisure time and why?

- Can you describe your ideal leisure time, how do you see it?

- Is this the same as your real leisure time? If not, why?

4. **What are the power relations entailed in women's leisure?**

- Do you miss something in your leisure activities? Please, explain what.

- Who/ what do you think affects your leisure time the most? Please explain.

5. **What kind of influence safety issues have on women's leisure?**

- In which leisure activities you would not participate? Please explain why.

- Do you feel save in leisure places, with significant presence of men(cafes, bars, discos)? Why yes or why not? Please explain.

- Do you feel the need to use some precautions during your leisure? Why and what?

- Which of your leisure activities do you reckon as dangerous or not safe enough? Why?

- Are there any leisure activities you do not participate because of safety reasons?

6. What kind of influence mass media has on women's leisure?

- Could you explain how media portray women in general? What do you think about this?

- Which of your leisure practices do you reckon as ones affected by mass media? In what way? Please explain.

- Can you relate your behavior and attitude during your leisure to one of a favorite famous person or role model (actress, model, etc.)?

7. Is women's leisure influenced by expectations of the body and how?

- Do you read women magazines (or related press) during your leisure time? Do they affect your leisure time? How? What kind of affect they have on you? Do you apply certain practices and do you follow certain advices given there? Please explain.

- Do you visit spa, cosmetic salons or something a like?

- What is the main reason for visiting spa and cosmetic salons? What do you mostly expect from a visit in a spa and cosmetic salons?

- Do you think that a certain behavior, dress code or a specific physical appearance is required during your leisure time? Please explain.

- What role do you think your own body and face appearance play during your leisure? Please explain.

- How your appearance during leisure differs from the one when not engaging in leisure activities?

- What/who do you think dictates and defines your appearance during leisure?

8. How men are involved in women's leisure?

- Are you spending your leisure time with men? Why or why not? Who with? Can you place men in your leisure in some way? Please explain how, where and when?

- Do you behave differently during your leisure when there is men presence? Please explain.

- Do you find your behavior during leisure dependent on men presence? Please explain.

- Do you feel that your leisure time is defined or constraint in some way by the men playing a particular role in your personal and social life? In what way?

- Which roles these men play in your life (are they fathers, boyfriends, random acquaintances, etc.)?

9. Closure of the interview

- Expressing gratefulness for the participation in the research and offering something small as a gift of thankfulness

- Offering a hard or digital copy of the written thesis.