

YOUNG NORWEGIANS
BELONGING AND BECOMING IN A MULTIETHNIC
HIGH SCHOOL



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1. INTRODUCTION

The sound of loud Arabic music filled the small group room in Skogbyen high school. It was the end of October and in the middle of a science lesson, but none of the seven pupils in the work-group had started doing their science assignment. The science teacher, Henrik, entered the room. He sat down on a desk, asked them to turn down the music, and proceeded to tell the pupils how they were going to measure the level of fat in potato chips. Yalda said conversationally that she was a vegetarian. Striking a friendly tone, Henrik asked her what she normally ate, but Yalda wouldn't say what her favourite dish was called. She would only say that it was Indian. Marte, who sat leaning back, her hands in the pockets of her hooded jumper and her usual Palestine scarf draped around her neck, chimed in: "It's really good, with beans and buns, and rice and sauce, mmmm!"

One of the girls still listened to music on her iPod; the muffled sound was audible to us all. In a resigned voice, Henrik said: "Come on, turn the volume down a bit!" Ramin, the only boy in the room, exclaimed: "Listen to their chatter!" Inas didn't miss a beat: "Yes, we're almost only girls, and we girls we chat, chat, chat!" She paused a little, then said: "We North Africans, we *must* talk. I *must* talk".

After the lesson was over, I lingered in the group room with Uma while she packed up her things. She had just started telling me that she wanted to be a psychologist for young people with a multicultural background: "Especially those who think it's difficult to fit into Norwegian culture and who want to preserve their parents' culture. I think it's a very important topic for society and everyday life", she said. "Both me and my mother wanted me to be in this class with many foreigners". I asked tentatively: "What about the Norwegians in class?" -"No, I don't know... I haven't talked much with them. It sounds really racist... but they are a bit on their own". I continued: "But what about Marte? Marte is Norwegian?" As she packed up her things to leave, Uma replied: "Yes, but she is just like us, she is just like a foreigner. I think of Marte as a Moroccan!"

This thesis is about the 15-16 year-old pupils in the field note above and their classmates. It is based on my observations of daily life in a high school in Oslo that I have called Skogbyen high school,¹ and on the interviews I conducted with pupils at the school. It is about why Uma didn't talk much with the 'Norwegians' in her class, why Marte is identified as a 'foreigner' and why Yalda finds it hard to talk about her favourite dish to her teacher. It is about why the pupils hadn't yet started work on their assignment, but still maintained a good relationship with their teacher. Some of the most central themes of this thesis are evident in the excerpt above: the formation of identities and groups, different senses of belonging and entitlement, and the dynamics of segregation, inclusion and exclusion in a school in which ethnic minority pupils disproportionately outnumbered ethnic Norwegian pupils.

The teens went to high school during a crossroads period in their own lives and at a particular juncture in contemporary social relations in Norway. Firstly, the pupils went to school at a time when official ideals of equality – between genders, sexualities, ethnicities and different social groups, as well between teachers and the pupils – were more strongly articulated than ever before (Gullestad, 2002, Nielsen, 2009, Røthing, 2008). Secondly, the school they entered at the beginning of the 21st century also demanded specific skills of its pupils: communication skills, the ability to work in groups and a strong ethic of self-discipline (Hermann, 2007, Hølleland, 2007, Skarpnes, 2007). It was, moreover, a time when Norwegians were still getting used to living in a receiving country, as immigration started to overtake emigration during the 1960s (Statistics Norway, 2010b). Lastly, the pupils entered school at a particular time in their lives, youth, with its quick shifts and changes, and when it is common to ask: who am I, and how do I fit in? Where am I going in life (Erikson, 1968 [1994])?

The crossroads at which these four axes meet – Norwegian equality goals, new demands for skills at school, changing ethnic relations, and youth – form the basis for the research questions that guided my investigation: How is ethnicity produced and lived in the context of a multi-ethnic high school at these crossroads of individual, collective and institutional processes? What consequences do forms of ethnicity shaped at this crossroads have for high school pupils' possibilities for individual development and different senses of belonging?

¹ The names of the school, surrounding areas and the informants have been changed.

In the three introductory chapters that follow, I will lay out the empirical, theoretical and methodological background for the study. In this chapter, I explain the contextual basis of the research questions.

The Umbrella Project

This project is part of the umbrella project *New World – Old Gender? Growing up in a Gender Equality Era*, led by Harriet Bjerrum Nielsen. *New World – Old Gender* aimed to investigate what Nordic equality measures, as well as other social changes, have meant for children and youths' processes of development and learning (Nielsen, 2007).² A central object has been to analyse norms, expectations and negotiations about gender relations, taking into account the intersecting character of different social categories. In most respects, I followed the design and research focus guidelines set by *New World – Old Gender*: to investigate the relation between social changes and individual changes in gender relations and how this becomes visible in the learning arena, to study different arenas such as school and family in relation to each other, and to keep a temporal aspect in considering how gender and other social categories, such as ethnicity, may change over time. I also followed *New World – Old Gender*'s encouragement to combine discourse analyses with psychosocial approaches and to use a combination of interviews and fieldwork.

In other respects, my project developed in its own distinct direction. The *New World – Old Gender* projects aimed to study boys and girls together, as much previous research has focused on one gender at a time and let the other gender serve as a generalised foil to the gender in focus. However, I am mainly, though not exclusively, concerned with girls, mostly because there was a substantial majority of girls in the classes I studied. My project differs further from the umbrella project in that it foregrounds ethnicity rather than gender. The focus on ethnicity is not because the pupils were ethnically mixed, *per se* – there were 20-30% ethnic Norwegian

² Ten related subprojects investigated this for different age levels and contexts, specifically schools, family and leisure activities. The school studies were conducted in the Norwegian equivalent of primary school (*barneskole*, conducted by social anthropologist Stian Overå), secondary school (*ungdomsskole*, conducted by sociologist Helene Toverud Godø) and upper secondary school/high school (*videregående skole*, which is the present study). Professor Harriet Bjerrum Nielsen conducted a longitudinal project following children in school through nine years of compulsory education (Nielsen, 2009). Other projects focused on parenting, generations, children's daycare, sports and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). The project was financed by The Research Council of Norway and hosted by Centre for Gender Studies at the University of Oslo.

pupils in the programme for general studies (*studiespesialisering*) which I studied, and the pupils who were Norwegian-born to immigrant parents were most commonly from Pakistan, India, the former Yugoslavia, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan. Rather, it is because ethnicity seemed to be deeply meaningful for the pupils during the time I was there, and the approach of pursuing the pupils' emotional investments was a crucial part of *New World – Old Gender*, and my own, methodological design (see chapter 3).

The school context

This study focuses on school life as one important context for young people's lives.³ Schools are simultaneously *embedded* in society and *separate* from society. This means that they may mirror, magnify, underplay or change elements of the community of which they are part, while they are also semi-closed communities that have their own logic and rhythm. Because of their self-contained character and because they reflect central aspects of society, schools are important sites to study that could say much about a range of themes, for example about ethnicity, gender and social class. Focusing my fieldwork on the school world gave me access to study how the school's pedagogy and organisation – in Skogbyen's case, a particularly *modern* organisation – impact on the formation of the pupils' friendship groups and subjectivities. This enabled me to address questions about the relationship between a modern school and its pupils, which is a central topic in this thesis. These questions included whether the pupils' needs correspond with the school's ambitions for them, and whether the pupils' norms of classroom behaviour and sexuality match the school's norms. In the analysis that follows, I make a distinction between the pupils' relation to the school as a physical and social site, and their relation to the school as a pedagogical institution.

Secondly, this context allowed me to investigate the pupils' daily life in school, which is where my main focus lies. I followed the pupils from the beginning of high school and over one semester, from the time they were for the most part as unknown to each other as they were to me. Therefore I was able to ask, based on the particularities of the Skogbyen school context, how borders, cultures and identities are

³ In Norway, high school is free, and although it is not compulsory, very few do not attend. For the Norwegian *videregående skole*, I will use the American term *high school* because it corresponds to the age group in question: 15-18 years old. It consists of three years, and the pupils begin after 10 years of compulsory school.

constructed, experienced and negotiated in and in between people previously unknown to each other. Research on ethnic formation has rarely focused on – or perhaps had the chance to follow – such a process from the beginning, perhaps because ethnographers often come into a situation when patterns are already established, or at least often describe them as such, while interviewers are mostly likely to access narratives of that which has already happened.

A common lack in school-based studies of ethnicity and gender is that they often do not bring in the world around the school, such as family life, to any substantial degree (Aarset et al., 2008). The realm of the family is central to understanding ethnicity (Prieur, 2004: 9). In this thesis, I gained insight into these aspects of their life through interviews with the pupils. The families will be important in three ways: their emotional meaning for the youths, their providing values, guidelines and sanctions, and how and to what extent they function as resources and supporters of schoolwork.

Through investigating the construction of identities among young people in a particular moment in contemporary Norwegian history, this thesis aims to contribute to addressing some crucial issues in Norwegian society today: how mechanisms of marginalisation, integration and segregation work, and what effects the gender equality era⁴ has had on young people growing up today. The subject matter of this thesis demands the use of a multidisciplinary variety of conceptual and analytic tools; I draw on literature from partly overlapping fields like social anthropology, sociology, and culture, youth and gender studies. In the remainder of this introduction, I will discuss the project's position in relation to relevant previous research, framed by the four axes of Norwegian equality goals, new requirements for skills in schools, changing ethnic relations and youth.

The Norwegian school of similarity and difference

The Norwegian school is a well-suited site to study the effects of the official aims of the equality policy agenda in Norway because these aims are so well established. The school has been used as a tool aimed to reduce social inequalities since the implementation of universal primary education in 1739 (Slagstad, 2001: 111).

⁴ By 'gender equality era', I refer to the period during the last four decades where gender equality has been a central aim in politics and pedagogy (Halsaa, 1990, Nielsen, 2009).

Initially, the focus on difference was related to social class and the divisions between city and country. Bringing girls into school was not initially done out of an intention of promoting gender equality, but rather to ensure that girls were educated on how to become good wives and mothers (Røthing, 2009: 91). The attention to gender equality in school is a fairly recent development; the first mention of goals of gender equality in Norwegian curricula can be found in 'Mønsterplanen' 1974 (Kirke- utdannings- og forskningsdepartementet, 1974). There were increasing demands by pupils and teachers that efforts should be made for girls as well as boys to be active, visible and self-going (Rudberg, 2009, see also Öhrn, 2002 for an overview). While gender was arguably the most central topic for debates about differences in the Norwegian school in the 1980s, the attention of researchers, politicians and the media has been increasingly directed towards differences between 'the Norwegians' and 'the immigrants' (Gullestad, 2002). This tendency is visible both in media debates, as the Norwegian anthropologist Marianne Gullestad argued, and in school politics. In a recent study of school politics in Scandinavia, Idunn Seland argues that worries about social cohesion in Norway can be traced back to the 1990s, and that specific measures to reduce marginalisation especially targeted ethnic minority pupils (Seland, 2011: 213-214).

The ideal of equality is one thing, whether it is achieved is entirely another. Despite historic and current efforts to reduce differences and counteract marginalisation in school, there are systematic differences between pupils in Norway today. One way research has shown this has been through statistics, which show worse results in the educational system on all levels for some ethnic minority pupils (NOU, 2011). Second generation ethnic minority pupils have better results than first generation immigrants. Seen as a group, ethnic minority pupils have a somewhat smaller percentage of high school completion, and they score lower in the exams league tables than average. This is more common among the children of immigrants from non-Western countries (Lauglo, 2010).

The significance of ethnic background is further complicated by the fact that a number of statistical reports link ethnicity to social class. Young people with a non-Western background more often have parents with lower education and income than majority youth (Støren, 2005), although there is great diversity within the category of 'young people with a non-Western background'. In a recent report, Birkelund et al suggested that the statistically most important factor in determining grades in high

school is not ethnicity, but social class (Birkelund et al., 2010, see also Bakken, 2003, Bonesrønning and Iversen). Despite a general picture of high dropout rates for ethnic minority pupils, those who do finish upper secondary school, go on to higher education in higher numbers than ethnic Norwegians. Young people from immigrant backgrounds more often than ethnic Norwegian youths apply to, and start, high school, and finish the first year. This has been viewed as the result of the ‘immigrant drive’, partly explained by a likely wish from immigrant parents to encourage their children to gain higher levels of education than they have themselves (Birkelund and Mastekaasa, 2009).

Especially for girls with immigrant background, the statistics speak an encouraging tale. This group does particularly well in school, and finish high school in higher numbers than the average in Norway, and also in higher numbers than ethnic Norwegian girls (Aalandslid, 2009). In general, girls fare better in school than boys do, both in terms of finishing high school and in terms of grades. There are, however, great differences between ethnic groups and between schools. In a 2009 report, sociologist Anders Bakken finds large gaps between different schools’ grades, and he finds that the ‘minority gap’ – the grade differences between minority and majority ethnic pupils – may also differ between schools. Some schools don’t have a minority gap at all, and he finds the same in terms of gender – some schools have large gaps between boys’ and girls’ grades, others very little. He finds that social class is the gap that never completely disappears; even in the schools that have the smallest gap, the difference is significant (Bakken, 2009).

This type of research gives a necessary background for understanding patterns, but not the mechanisms that produce them. We know that differences are reproduced and that ethnic background is important, although the image is complex and more often than not intertwined with social class. But what happens *inside* school? It is vital to try to explain the divergence between the aims of equality and the inequalities that actually exist. This becomes even more salient in light of the new requirements that schools ask of their pupils.

New requirements

The most recent school reforms in Norway⁵ tie the framing of pedagogical requirements to the development of the whole person, in the context of the ‘new economy.’ In an analysis of recent reforms in Norwegian high schools, sociologist Ove Skarpnes argues that the reforms’ creators took into account generally changing demands in working life, especially the shift from traditional industry towards other occupations such as occupations in the arts, cultural industries and bureaucracies (Skarpnes, 2007). Modern requirements encompass the employees’ active involvement, enthusiasm, flexibility and their personal skills. One of the most important skills in modern Norwegian working life is self-discipline (Skarpnes, 2007: 198-9). Self-discipline is also one of the main aims for secondary education, and it has inherent value for the achievement of other important skills and qualifications (Frønes, 1999, Hermann, 2003, Skarpnes, 2007). Building schools with open solutions (‘åpen skole’ or ‘baseskole’) is a trend that has been in and out of fashion over the last 30-40 years (Vinje, 2010). Once again today, the physical openness of space in schools is intended by politicians, architects and school administrators to prepare the pupils for life after school, to prepare for learning as it is done in colleges and universities. Ideas about collaboration, group-based learning, and arguably, of democracy (Barnstone, 2005), are manifest in the use of transparent official buildings.

Skogbyen’s architecture and pedagogical framework worked as vivid illustrations of the school’s close affinity with the central tenets of Norwegian social policy and education the last few decades. Ideas from the newest educational reforms were built into the school, where self-discipline was perhaps the most defining feature of its pedagogy – not only as a learning goal, but as a *requirement*. The pupils were often gathered in a large auditorium to learn about their tasks during 90-minute long lectures, and after all instructions were given, they were organised in groups in small rooms or any place in the large school where they could find space. The teacher walked around and visited the groups, but pupils were often left to undertake the set tasks on their own. At the time that I conducted my research there, the school had recently been rebuilt with more large spaces and less rooms and walls. There was seldom stability in the rooms the pupils used, walls could be moved and borders were

⁵ Reform 94 and Læringsplakaten from 2006. The two reforms are almost identical in terms of the overarching goals and aims for education and what the pupil ought to be and to become (Ulstrup Engelsen, 2008, Engelsen and Berit Karseth, 2007).

flexible and see-through. In a sense, the architecture reflected the emphasis on self-discipline: there was a lack of definition and authority in the building structures.

In this study, it is also relevant to consider how these pedagogical and architectonic structures related to the school's aims for equality. Norwegian anthropologists Thomas Hylland Eriksen and Torunn Arntsen Sajjad argue that while people are generally allowed to live out their cultural diversity in their homes and in their spare time (Eriksen and Sajjad, 2010, see also Walle, 2010), there are stronger demands on similarity in school. However, similarity in school isn't always simple to demand, as schools contain elements both from the private and the public realm (Eriksen and Sajjad, 2010: 138). I will explore the question of whether expressions of difference between pupils are influenced by an open organisation of schools as described above, where pupils are left to their own devices more than before.

Youth

During youth, ethnicity becomes a more relevant division for many, as researchers frequently have found (Hammarén, 2010, Bäckman, 2009a, Staunæs, 2004). In Norway too, many researchers report on ethnic 'splitting' in youth (Frøyland and Gjerustad, 2012, Haavind, 2006, Løvseth, 2006, Prieur, 2004, Jacobsen, 2002, Gulbrandsen, 2002). In a study of a Danish high school, Dorthe Staunæs' informants point out that one difference between the Danish and the Turkish peer groups is how youth is enacted (Staunæs, 2004). Mostly, the youths in these studies understand this separation to be connected with their different interests as they grow older: the ethnic Norwegians had started to drink alcohol and to have boyfriends and girlfriends, while many ethnic minority youths did not.

Researchers have also found that experiences of increasing differences between minority and majority ethnic youths are *gendered*. In a study of young immigrants to Norway, sociologist Annick Prieur investigates the meaning of ethnicity in Norway in terms of how cultural background has shaped her informants (Prieur, 2004). She concludes her study by arguing that ethnic background is important in that it generally gives an *experience of being different* from ethnic Norwegians. She relates several stories of what her informants have experienced as increasing differences from ethnic Norwegians. The girls in her material differ from the majority Norwegians in more ways than the boys do, especially in terms of

following the traditions of their parents' country of origin. The Danish anthropologist Yvonne Mørck described gender as the central pain (*smertepunktet*) in the lives of immigrants and their children in Denmark (cited in Prieur, 2004: 47). At this time of life, many change their relations across gender and ethnicity (Thorne, 1993, Staunæs, 2004). Often, religion and background culture are important factors for how one may act, especially in terms of sexuality (Haavind, 2006, Prieur, 2004, Haavind, 2002). This is particularly evident for girls. It has been argued that as the sexualities of 'the others' have become more visible in Norway, Norwegian sexualities have also become more visible as 'Norwegian' (Mühleisen et al., 2009: 11).

What is often lacking in studies of ethnic minority youth cultures, anthropologist Christine Jacobsen suggests, is that they aren't only 'in between cultures', but that they are *youths*, and therefore also in opposition to and/or in some type of relation to their parents. As Jacobsen writes, conflicts that Norwegian youths experience may too easily be perceived as a generational conflict, while similar conflicts for minority youths may be understood in terms of culture (Jacobsen, 2002: 34). Nonetheless, as social theorist Paul Gilroy has pointed out (Gilroy, 1993a), youth culture is often characterised by *hybrid* cultural forms, adapted from a number of different sources – from peers and parents to media and education (see for example Frønes, 1999, Mørck, 2000). In hybrid youth cultures, the youths' shared 'outsiderness' may work as a social glue where being outsider is turned to advantage, drawing on connotations to tolerance and cosmopolitanism (Andersson, 2010: 14)

One example of a typical hybrid cultural form is the sociolect 'kebabnorsk' (literally 'kebab Norwegian'), which is spoken in ethnic minority social milieus in Oslo, particularly eastern Oslo, and also in Skogbyen high school. In linguistics, this type of sociolect is referred to as a multilect, alluding to the fact that they are made up of a multitude of words from the languages of recent immigrants (Opsahl, 2009). The name 'kebab Norwegian' reflects this. Apart from the fact that a kebab is a dish originating in the Middle East, from which many of Oslo's ethnic minorities come from, the kebab is shaped through many different cultural influences (for example, it tastes and looks differently in Norway than in England), and it is something that many youths eat. The sociolect works in a similar way: it is infused with words from many different languages such as Arabic, Kurdish, Urdu, Berber, English and Serbian, and

it is something that many youths speak.⁶ In describing linguistic phenomena such as kebab Norwegian, hybridity is a useful term. In the next chapter, I will discuss some limits to a more extensive use of hybridity, and also discuss how identity formation takes a particular hue in youth.

Lived ethnicity

A common way of reviewing previous literature on ethnicity in Norway is to distinguish between one group of researchers who are preoccupied with value differences and boundaries, and another who are more prone to focusing on hybridity. The former group of researchers take the view that previous research has been too accepting and naïve in their description and analyses of ‘the others’. The latter group of researchers criticises the former for having dichotomous and implicitly hierarchical understanding of us and them and failing to question whiteness and ‘Norwegianness’. This debate is discussed at length elsewhere (see for example Gullestad, 2002).

Another way of conceptualising research on ethnicity is in the division between whether the researchers are primarily preoccupied with redistribution or recognition. Lois McNay argues, following Nancy Fraser (Fraser, 1997), that there is an entrenchment in feminist thought between material and cultural feminist researchers. This division can be extended to other identity categories, such as ethnicity. According to cultural feminists, materialists are too occupied by simplistic divisions and economic forces, and according to materialists, culturalists are too preoccupied with identity politics (McNay, 2004: 175). Both see gender – or ethnicity – as a *structural* position, but for different reasons: while the materialists locate gender within or intersecting with capitalist class relations, the culturalists locate it within symbolic or discursive structures. Researchers from a culturalist school would be preoccupied with *recognition*, encompassing questions of identity, appreciation and belonging. McNay’s point is that if we wish to grasp connections between individuals and social structures, we must find a way to mediate between redistribution and recognition. Ethnicity, like gender, is situated on the axes of *both*

⁶ The term *kebabnorsk* was used by the pupils, but not always. I will, however, use this term here, as it has become established in research in this field (see for example the kebab Norwegian dictionary by Østby, 2005) since the first master thesis recorded the phenomenon in Norway in 1995 (Aasheim, 1995).

redistribution and recognition (cf. McNay, 2004: 176). I will briefly show the relevance of both, and where this study is located in between the two.

Studies that are preoccupied with redistribution are most apparent in (although not exclusive to) statistics. One example is Lars Roar Frøyland and Cay Gjerustad's recent report on youth in the same age group as the informants in this study, conducted at more or less the same time that I was conducting my research (Frøyland and Gjerustad, 2012). They found that pupils' general well-being in school drops after the transition from junior high to high school for ethnic minority youth, while it goes *up* for ethnic majority youth. They also found that ethnic minority youths are far more likely than ethnic majority youths to think it will be difficult to find a job after higher education. A majority of the ethnic minority youth have friends who also come from minority backgrounds. Their findings show signs of social segregation among youths in Oslo. The same tendency for young people to have friends with the same ethnic background as themselves is even stronger for the ethnic majority youths, even in parts of Oslo with a high proportion of ethnic minorities.

Studies of school textbooks may illustrate the relevance of a culturalist perspective, for understanding what possibilities there are for pupils to foster different senses of belonging for example to the school or to the nation. In a study of social science textbooks in junior high school, Åse Røthing and Stine Svendsen show how 'Norwegian sexuality' is characterised by being 'modern' via gender equality, freedom and 'homo-tolerance', in contrast with the sexual praxis and norms of non-Norwegian 'others' (Røthing and Svendsen, 2009). Their analyses show a selective culturalisation, however: only sexual praxis forms that live up to the 'Norwegian' ideals are depicted as 'Norwegian', while the sexual forms of non-Norwegian 'others' are more commonly portrayed as problematic, for example parents' control of girls' sexuality and forced marriages (Røthing and Svendsen, 2009, see also Røthing and Svendsen, 2010). Another example is findings from a study of teaching books for English in junior high. The Norwegian scholar Ragnhild Lund (Lund, 2004) shows that the books mostly use texts with apparently culture-neutral situations, but that nonetheless depict Western culture. She also finds that in the back of the books in one learning series for English language, there are pages called 'Norwegian pages' where all the pictures are of white people, and half of the pictures are of Norwegians out in nature (Lund, 2004: 75-76). These images give some clues as to what may effectively symbolise 'Norwegian culture'. Both of these studies raise the question: what does it

mean for pupils to not recognise themselves, literally, in the syllabus? The American feminist poet Adrienne Rich once wrote: "When someone with the authority of a teacher, say, describes the world and you are not in it, there is a moment of psychic disequilibrium, as if you looked into a mirror and saw nothing" (Rich, 1986: 199).

In this thesis, I analyse the connection *between* structures of redistribution and the possibilities of recognition as addressed by Rich. To grasp the connection of power, structures, identity and emotions, my research question is directed at the site of the students' *lived lives* – their practice, self-narratives and their interaction. I will argue for an analysis of lived social relations, which also involves the negotiation of tension and conflict (cf. McNay, 2004: 185). To clarify my focus further, I will use an analysis by anthropologist Marianne Gullestad as a point of departure. Gullestad discussed in her book *Det norske sett med nye øyne* (Gullestad, 2002: 62-64) an autobiography by Mah-Rukh Ali, who wrote it when she was still in school. Ali is a Norwegian citizen, but with parents from Pakistan she often experiences being categorised as Pakistani. Ali reasons that she is indeed Norwegian: she has a Norwegian passport and she celebrates the constitution day, May 17th, just like most people in Norway. In Gullestad's analysis of Ali's reflections, she commented that Ali is placed rigidly in an either/or-category by people around her, and not in terms of grades of similarity and difference or as both at the same time. Doing this is a form of violation on a micro level, and it is imperative to try to understand this type of micro power and what consequences harassment and being denied as a Norwegian may have for self-worth. Gullestad also pointed out that "identity and self-worth is not something one 'has' once and for all, but something that is presented, discussed, negotiated, confirmed – and denied – in relations with other people" (Gullestad, 2002: 64, my translation).

Gullestad offers an analysis of lived relations between ethnified or racialised structures and recognition. However, for my purposes, it is necessary to focus on what people actually *do with words in practice*, so as to see how power and structures are actually lived. This makes it possible to highlight the nuances of how superimposing categories of difference, as in Gullestad's example, or implicit and explicit demands of similarity, as I discussed above in relation to the school setting, may work in various ways in interaction. It is necessary, in other words, to turn Gullestad's question around: What does it mean if it is Ali who calls herself Pakistani, despite her Norwegian passport? And what if similar processes of ethnification or

racialisation move the other way – if ethnic Norwegians are boxed into rigid categories?

Most literature on ethnicity in schools focuses on the minority groups as actual numerical minorities within school. This might explain why much of this research discusses ethnic minority groups' actions and formations as acts of defence or positioning, and often only analyses the power that is exercised by the majority ethnic pupils. That the demographics at Skogbyen were the opposite of the demographics elsewhere in Norway is one of the reasons why I will argue for rethinking the relationships of power, belonging and marginalisation between groups traditionally thought of as marginalised.

In *Miljonsvennar* (Bäckman, 2009a), Maria Bäckman studied Swedishness in a Swedish suburb where white ethnic Swedes were in the minority, much like in Skogbyen high school. She focuses on the meanings that 'Swedish' and other categories gain in the local context, and she asks what happens in the creation of borders. This focus on border-work notwithstanding, Bäckman is critical of a general focus on difference in ethnicity studies. She found also a significant creation of *similarity* between the young people in the school she studied. I think Bäckman's point is important, and I will pursue this point in my analysis: that to study group and subjectivity formation, we must also focus on where notions and constructions of similarity may overlap and extend boundaries. Moreover, I also want to search for something that is often missing in studies where the focus is on experiences of difference: Can it be that there is – alongside issues of power – some *desire*, some emotional investment, in being in various ways 'different'? I will return to the questions of the ambiguities of power and the possibilities of emotional investment in difference in the next chapter. Before I get there, I must clarify some central terms.

'Race', ethnicity and ethnification

The two concepts *ethnicity* and '*race*' refer in this thesis to social and political distinctions that are made between people (Knowles, 2003: 18). The terms have most commonly been considered as two separate concepts: while '*race*' is often linked to physical aspects, most notably skin colour, *ethnicity* is mostly linked to cultural aspects like identity, belonging, religion, tradition and cultural practice (Gunaratnam, 2003, Fangen, 2007). However, this isn't a straightforward dichotomy of biology vs.

culture. As cultural theorist Stuart Hall has pointed out, ‘race’ as biological category and ethnicity as social/cultural are now muddled (Hall, 2000: 223, see also Gunaratnam, 2003, Kennedy-Macfoy and Nielsen, 2012). In a diasporic world, skin colour is used as a signifier to connote social and cultural difference, and therefore, biological markers are always a part of discourses of ethnicity (see also Wade, 2002, Haraway, 1992). Moreover, ‘race’ is a false marker, because although it is tied to perceived physical markers (skin colour, facial shapes etc), these aren’t distributed evenly amongst people in neat categories (Malik, 2008) and as Linda Alcoff writes, ‘race’ is marked on people’s bodies and read through “learned perceptual practices of visual categorization” (Alcoff, 2007: n.pag.). For *ethnicity*, the opposite deduction is common: cultural aspects are often constructed as something inherent (Hall, 2003 [1996]). Because of these issues, it is rather through how ‘race’ and ethnicity operate and what effects they have on practice that researchers must learn what ‘race’ and ethnicity are (Alcoff, 2007).

Language is always shaped by how it was used in the past. The word ‘*rase*’ – ‘*rase*’ – is no longer widespread in Norway⁷ (as well as large parts of Europe), partly as a reaction to the scientific racism in 19th and early 20th century and racial-political discourse in 19th and 20th century Europe.⁸ ‘*Race*’ is often used within quotation marks in academic writing nowadays in a number of languages, including English. In Norwegian research, politics and media, *ethnicity* is generally used instead of ‘*rase*’ (Jacobsen, 2002: 46), which is largely the line I adopt here. However, a problem with avoiding mentioning ‘race’ altogether is that with only one broad term that is meant to cover all but only refers to the cultural aspect, what is specifically biological is left out. By only using *ethnicity*, we risk leaving out processes through which ‘race’ becomes ethnified, and vice versa, as people will engage in the reading of skin colour and other physical racialised traits in their conscious and unconscious classification and understanding of other people. I will therefore use the terms together when I refer

⁷ However, see Gullestad’s discussion of how the words ‘rase’ and ‘neger’ are contested, but still used by some in Norway (Gullestad, 2002).

⁸ American and British research has added much to the body of Scandinavian research on “race” and ethnicity, partly due to their long history of colonialism, immigration and - in particular the US’ – affinity with slavery. They have the possibility of looking back to several generations of migration than we can in Norway, and, thus, describe common trajectories for third, fourth, even fifth generation of descendants of immigrants. For a useful overview of American theory on “race” and ethnicity, see Ann Locke Davidson (Davidson, 1996). The Norwegian scholar Eileen Muller Myrdaahl has argued that not using the word “race” might hinder an understanding processes of racialization in the Norwegian context (Myrdaahl, 2010).

to the interrelations between the concepts (cf. Gunaratnam, 2003: 4). Similarly, I employ both the terms *ethnification* and *racialisation*. The term *racialisation*, more common among Anglo-Saxon writers, refers to the process of differentiating people according to ethnicity and ‘race’ and making the differences seem natural and stable (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1993: 12, Omi and Winant, 1994, Keskinen et al., 2009, Gunaratnam, 2003). Because of the intertwined nature of *ethnicity* and ‘race’, the meaning of the term *ethnification* isn’t significantly different from *racialisation*, but *ethnification* is more commonly used by Norwegian scholars (Gulbrandsen, 2002, Eide, 2010). Both refer to the processes of producing and expressing ‘race’ and ethnicity I wish to analyse in this thesis.

In general, whenever the pupils’ ethnicity is relevant, I mostly use the terms *ethnic Norwegian pupils* to refer to those who were born in Norway to non-migrant parents. People born in Norway to two immigrant parents are defined as *Norwegian-born to immigrant parents* by Statistics Norway (Statistics Norway, 2010a). In the interests of brevity, I will refer to the pupils in this category as *minority ethnic pupils* when relevant. For Norwegian-born pupils with immigrant parents, *country background* refers to the parents’ country of birth. These terms are based on physical movement: migration, a factual relation – parent and child – and a factual geography, where one is born. Ethnic identity is closely entwined with these issues, at the same time as it is analytically separate. Issues relating to identity, subjectivity, and young peoples’ ways of speaking don’t pay much regard to these carefully designed terms. One central question of this thesis is to clarify and analyse the relationship between these statistical categories and experiences of self-defined identities, and the possibilities for developments and belonging in the classroom setting.

The structure of the thesis

I begin with a careful analysis of the way ethnic communities were formed in school. The first analysis chapter, *The Split*, traces processes of group formation from my first meeting with the pupils and over time. What feelings were brought into school, and how did those feelings come into play when creating friendship groups? How did the pupils conceptualise the groups that formed? I investigate on what basis the local ‘ethnic’ groups formed and how borders intensified.

Why and how coming to Skogbyen evoked certain feelings will be the topic for the next chapter, *Belonging and Becoming*. It is about understanding why pupils felt deeper belonging to certain groups, and analysing this with respect to the meaning of ethnic background. I suggest that it is fruitful to conceptualise belonging on the axes of layers and articulations, and ask *how* senses of belonging operate in the pupils' lives.

The next two chapters argue that although academic achievement and sexual mores were some of the strongest markers of local ethnic group belonging, they criss-crossed and overlapped with group borders. In *The Meanings of Noise*, I analyse how attitudes to school were formed and played out. I understand pupils' attitudes towards school in relation to the school's particular pedagogical and architectural form, the local and national communities as well as their situations at home. I analyse noise as an affective practice and argue that a particular form of girls' aggressive relational noise drew on gangster imagery, expressed frustration and disempowerment from success in a school that was perceived as 'Norwegian', and also expressed a need for protection from indignity, and that this was made possible by the school system and the Norwegian equality paradigm.

In *Balancing Respectability*, I analyse girls' attitudes and expressions of sexuality, both in terms of how sexuality was understood as multiple economies of respectability in school and between daughters and their family. I argue that for some, maintaining sexual-moral borders worked as a rectification of indignities suffered in school, and that although sanctions of girls' sexual conduct or norms varied considerably, *all* the girls had to balance sexual honour in different ways, and their stories invariably revolve around a search for dignity, security and respect.

2. POWER, NARRATIVES AND IDENTITIES

How are ethnic categories and identities created and made visible in school? Why do people create them? And what do they do to people? In this chapter, I will present the theoretical framework I use to investigate the formation of ethnicity and how it is lived. To investigate this it is important to use terms and tools that will enable me to discuss the pupils' practice and the narratives that permeate their lives. I need words and empirical categories with which to understand the pupils not only as objects but as subjects, and at the same time, I need to avoid fixing the pupils in unchanging ethnified or racialised positions. But how is it possible to study processes of ethnification without falling prey to unwillingly essentialising people in stereotypical discourses – and without also losing the means to give meaning to anything at all? The British sociologist Yasmin Gunaratnam suggests a doubled research practice that has both theoretical and methodological implications, working both 'with' and 'against' racial and ethnic categories (Gunaratnam, 2003). There is 'perverse relationship', Gunaratnam writes, between the *theoretical* recognition of how ethnicity and 'race' are layered with often contradictory, power-laden meanings, and the real way essentialising categories are lived in everyday life and used in identity production and politics (Gunaratnam, 2003: 33). Her double research practice addresses this dilemma: it is necessary to acknowledge people's practice and need for putting themselves and others into categories, but it is simultaneously vital to analyse what the informants do with words to create meaning (Gubrium and Holstein, 2009: 25).

In what follows I discuss concepts and theoretical tools that together offer a framework which help me to investigate how ethnicity is produced, lived and narrated between structures and emotions, between redistribution and recognition. I will draw on postcolonial theories, narrative theories and a theory of affective practice, which complement each other well for my purpose.⁹ Postcolonial theories provide tools to grasp power and structures, which narrative theories cannot grasp as effectually, while on their part, narrative theories offer better tools for conceptualising identity,

⁹ I will use those terms and understandings that concretely help my analysis, but will not give here any extensive presentation of the authors I mention.

emotions and the possibility for change (Thompson, 1981, McNay, 2000). Theories on emotions provide a third piece of the puzzle, and they also form a meeting place for the aspects of postcolonial theory and narrative theory that are central to this study. I suggest in particular that a theory of affective practices provides a useful site of analysis of lived ethnicity and aspects of power, negotiations and possibilities for change. Emotions and affective practices play a central role in understanding why people align with collectives, why something is narrated, and they make it possible to catch that which is *not* narrated. This theoretical framework will allow for conceptualising Gunaratnam's double research practice, because it enables me to grasp the relationship between essentialising narratives and diversity. The framework will help to answer questions such as how collective, unifying narratives may come to stand for a whole group, and what effects such homogenisation may have on individuals in that group (cf. Gunaratnam, 2003: 30).

My levels of analysis are individual narratives and practice (micro), collective narratives and interaction (meso) and larger social discourses (macro). I focus on the micro and meso level in the study and in my discussion of theories below. When I draw on larger social discourses, this will refer to official, political or media images and discourses, for example manifest in the school's structure, textbooks and newspapers. The macro level may also refer to the discourses that seem to stem from a larger 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1983), for example national or religious communities, often associated with strong communal feelings.

Ethnic boundaries and postcolonial theory

Parts of the literature on ethnification can be traced back to the proposition to focus on ethnic difference, suggested by the Norwegian social anthropologist Fredrik Barth and his colleagues in the late 1960s. For Barth, "[t]he critical focus of investigation (...) becomes the ethnic boundary that defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it encloses" (Barth, 1998 [1969]: 15). His idea of *ethnic boundaries* has become one of the most central insights in modern theories on ethnicity, and one that is central to understanding dynamics in how groups form, the hierarchies and power between them, and how identities are often formed in opposition to others.

I am inspired by Barth's suggestion to focus on the on-going negotiations at the borders between cultures and on how different ethnic identities interconnect.

However, I think that studies of ethnicity must not stop with only group formation. The production of meaning doesn't only happen in the moment; it is also necessary to include in my analysis a focus on what people *bring into* the encounters with each other, and how ethnicity is a vital aspect of identity in itself, also without juxtaposition to others. In practice, it is after all the 'cultural stuff' that hinders or enables people to cross over the boundaries (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1993: 4). Moreover, a central development of Barth's theory of ethnic group constitution is to break up the notion of difference: people are not only different to other groups, and similar within that group – they are also different from each other (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1993: 9).

Postcolonial theory is a heterogeneous field, characterised from the beginning by an aim to critically investigate power relations in terms of culture, 'race' and ethnicity, traditionally how the 'West' was and still is created in contrast to the non-Western (Fanon, 2008 [1952], Said, 2003 [1978], Spivak, 1999, Bhabha, 2002). *Ethnic boundaries* was and still is a central concept, for example in the notion that communities often are two-sided: by signalling a strong 'we', they simultaneously exclude 'the others' (Christensen and Siim, 2010). In *Orientalism*, literary theorist Edward W. Said eloquently showed how the idea of the Orient helped define Europe "as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience" (Said, 2003 [1978]: 1-2). Postcolonialists argue that this worldview of seeing the world in 'us and them' still lingers in an imagined cultural distance and difference (Ekström and Gerholm, 2007). While 'grand narratives' of difference are created in culturally hierarchical binaries, postcolonial research has as one main aim to deconstruct these notions (Chrisman, 2004, Ekström and Gerholm, 2007).

In this tradition, a primary focus has been on what impact meetings between people who are racialised in different ways have on the formation of subjectivities in members of the 'colonised' group (Fanon, 2008 [1952], Fanon, 1963, Said, 2003 [1978]). I find this framework useful in conceptualising how youths who enter a school like Skogbyen experienced being in ethnic majority or minority. As many scholars have suggested, important aspects of identity are created in juxtaposition to and difference from others (Bhabha, 1994, Fanon, 2008 [1952], Derrida, 1976). One of postcolonial theory's forefathers, psychiatrist and philosopher Frantz Fanon, argued that colonialism subverted the colonised individual's power of asserting their own positive identity and a sense of self, and that meeting with white people

introduced a crushing self-doubt in ‘the Black man’ (Fanon, 2008 [1952]). Power, marginalisation and dichotomisation are central ideas in such a framework.

This power can be made visible in people’s different possibilities to access language. Fanon wrote in *Black Skin, White Masks*: “A man who has a language consequently possesses the world expressed and implied by that language. What we are getting at becomes plain: mastery of language affords remarkable power” (Fanon, 2008 [1952]: 9). Fanon wrote this in the context of black people in the Antilles who mastered French in the 1950s. His point of view stemmed from an era when the relationships between coloniser and colonised perhaps were commonly perceived more simply than now, but Fanon’s own work was pioneering precisely because he showed the highly complex nature of the relationship between coloniser and colonised, especially from a psychological perspective. In today’s society, which is marked by different and complex multicultural challenges, the analysis of power, language and discourse (Foucault, 1970) must also take into account the fact that dynamics of racialisation and dynamics of power have changed. They have become more complex and more ambiguous, and must not be confined to the dichotomies of racism/antiracism, dominant/subordinate, as cultural scholar Ien Ang argues (Ang, 1996: 41). Although most researchers now are interested in the multiple dimensions of marginalisation (Andersson, 2003), analyses of power relations that move along a uni-directional pathway seem still fairly common in research informed by postcolonial theory. Analyses from *more* than the angle of ‘the oppressors’ (to use a postcolonial term) are all the more important because power relations are more complex than a simple ‘oppressor/oppressed’ relationship. I agree, therefore, with Tuula Gordon, who wrote that what is marginal and what is central can vary and depend on the speaker (Gordon, 2000, see also Andersson, 2003). Marginality, she suggests, is an analytic category that doesn’t necessarily mean powerlessness.

In more recent postcolonial research, multicultural youth cultures are seen as a *hybrid* of different cultural elements. The term *hybrid*, in this context, stems from literary theorist Homi Bhabha’s work. With this term, he suggests that the celebratory premise in postcolonial society is that cultures and subjects meet and become cultural hybrids (Bhabha, 2002). He critiques the term ‘multicultural’, because he sees it as hiding the fact that cultures exist on uneven ground, where one culture often occupies the centre, while others are in peripheral positions.

However, as sociologist Mette Andersson also notes, *hybridity*, like *multiculture*, seems unduly positive (Andersson, 2005). One example may be Ove Sernhede's description of how youths transcend ethnic boundaries. He comments that: "Things are different for the young. At day-care, everyone plays with everyone, and in school, you co-operate with others who have different ethnic backgrounds. During leisure time, you are out in the streets and cultivate friendships that supersede the ethnic boundaries drawn by the parental culture" (Sernhede, 2005: 275). This positive image of "openness to absorbing and testing the different expressions, articulations and outlooks on the world inherent in different cultures" in Sernhede's descriptions of Swedish youth culture (Sernhede, 2005: 275) stands in opposition to recent descriptions of Oslo, where researchers find increasing ethnic segregation between youths (Frøyland and Gjerustad, 2012). Possible country differences notwithstanding, it is perhaps likely that both images exist at the same time. Moreover, 'hybridity' isn't always a cause for celebration. This theory emphasises free play and in-betweenness, and power, ideology and structure become less visible (see also Ahmed, 2000: 12). It lacks attention to intra-group power relations, and also the struggle for power between minority and majority groups. On a cultural level, the term hybridity nevertheless points to how cultures develop and become part of each other, not existing side by side without changing, and it is in this capacity that I will use the term.

Formations of gender are closely related to formations of ethnicity. Although sharing many of the same theoretical concerns, particularly regarding marginalisation and power, gender theory was slow to integrate perspectives of 'race' and ethnicity. Racism wasn't seen as a concern in the early 'white feminist' movement, and its early development of a framework that integrated gender and ethnicity overemphasised the experiences of white women in colonising positions (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1993: 105). There are two aspects of the ensuing theoretisation of gender as parts of postcolonial processes that are central for this study. One is the suggestion voiced for example by Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davies. They argue that women are in the cross-fire of ethnic and racialised border-work, and write that "[w]omen are often central in ethnic and national reproduction and transformation, not only as biological reproducers of the members of the group, or central in the transmission of its cultural artefacts, but also as markers of the borders of collectivities" (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1993: 10). Increasingly, attention is brought to how belonging (or what in this body of research often is called 'citizenship') isn't only gendered, but also connected

with sexuality (Narayan, 1997, Richardson, 2000). Often, it is put upon women to be ‘culturally authentic’, to carry the family honour and symbolise national integrity (Espiritu, 2001: 435). The second relevant aspect of this line of argument for this thesis is the values of gender equality, which I mentioned in the previous chapter. Nordic postcolonial feminists have suggested that “the notion of gender equality is at the core of the discourse on nationhood, and is central to defining who belongs to the nation and who does not” (Keskinen et al., 2009).

Before turning to narrative theory, it is important to note the ways in which narratives have been used in postcolonial theory, which has borrowed much in this respect from the related body of postmodern theory. Postmodern theory has regarded so-called grand narratives with great scepticism. Grand narratives, or metanarratives (Lyotard, 1985), refer to totalising conceptions of history or society. Postmodernist thinkers reacted to linear, grand narratives, for example colonialism, Marxism and Christianity. In this school, a grand narrative justifies a culture’s power structures. As philosopher and literary theorist Gayatri Spivak, another of postcolonial theory’s founders, sees such narratives, they are imperialistic in their practice: potentially dominating and excluding, and it is, therefore, important to be aware of the homogenising impact of the collective narratives, or indeed, of narratives in general (Spivak, 1999). To counter totalising grand narratives, researchers should seek to replace these narratives with small, local narratives, according to these thinkers (Spivak, 1999, Bhabha, 1994).

Narratives, then, is a word that is filled with meaning in relation to usurpation, totalisation and power, but also with the hope of deconstructing these grand narratives, a hope which lies in smaller, local narratives. Addressing postcolonial research influenced by Bhabha, literary scholar Laura Chrisman writes: “Narrative is now [after Bhabha] seen to proceed by imposing unity on heterogeneity, excluding and subordinating multiple discourses in order to produce coherent and comprehensible form. In other words, narrative seeks to banish ‘difference’ in the interest of promoting ‘identity’ and teleology” (Chrisman, 2004: 194). According to Chrisman, there is in this movement little space to discuss collective narratives other than as oppressive. Below I will argue, however, that it is fruitful to combine insights from postcolonial theory regarding group constitution, power and hierarchy, with narrative theory and a conceptualisation of emotions and practice.

Narratives

I use narrative theory to understand the meaning-making process, to ask how the pupils make sense to themselves through narrative and maintain or gain a comfortable identity position, or one that it is possible to live with. Each academic discipline operationalises narratives slightly differently. From a restrictive sociolinguistic definition, to broad narratives of, for example, life histories presented by social anthropologists, ‘narrative’ can be used to refer to single stories of interviewees to a narrative that the reader constructs from different pieces of information and events (Riessman, 1993). The philosopher Paul Ricoeur provides useful theories to conceptualise the relation between narratives, emotions and practice. I will show how his narrative theory may be a mediator between the (‘modern’) theories of identity formed in opposition and the (‘postmodern’) ideas of variation and change.

For Ricoeur, the word ‘narrative’ refers foremost to how the telling of a story is a way to make sense of events, unlike the most common use of the word in postcolonial theory. In a narrative, different events with different human desires, motivations and anxieties are combined – though not necessarily collapsed – into a theme and plot (Ricoeur, 1984, Ricoeur, 1991). Which events are selected to make up the plot of the narrative isn’t arbitrary; they are linked to the individuals’ emotional and biographical background as much as they are connected with the larger societal discourses at a specific time in history. In relation to my study, this means that the emphasis that the pupils continually put on certain characteristics and events is significant. It also suggests that the meanings these stories have are multifaceted and different for different pupils.

Narrative identity

In main postcolonial and poststructural thinking, identity narratives, just like grand narratives, are viewed with scepticism (Chrisman, 2004, Prieur, 2002). Commonly, identity is instead seen as something always unfixed, never unified. This idea, voiced by for example the prominent postcolonial cultural theorist Stuart Hall (Hall, 2003 [1996]), comes from one of the founding ideas of postcolonial theory: that the subject is a product of a series of cultural differences. A focus on the constituting effect of difference may help explain group dynamics and some aspects of identity on both the group and subject level, but in terms of the latter, it falls short (for further discussions

of this, see Nielsen, 1994). For Hall, a common sense notion of identity's stability is an illusion. In "Who needs 'identity'?", he writes that "we construct a comforting story or 'narrative of the self' about ourselves" (Hall, 2003 [1996]: 277). An 'everyday' understanding of identity does not view identity as fundamentally unstable. The gut feeling of most people is that even though I change, I am still, on a fundamental level, *me* (see also Prieur, 2004: 169). As the Swedish poet Tomas Tranströmer wrote in his small memoir *Memories Look at Me (Minnena ser mig)*: "I carry inside myself my earlier faces, as a tree contains its rings. The sum of them is 'me.' The mirror sees only my latest face, while I know all my previous ones" (Tranströmer, 2011 [1993]).¹⁰

I want to understand how the Skogbyen pupils' identities may change and be created, sometimes in opposition and at other times not in opposition. However, I also want to understand what poststructuralist and postcolonialist conceptualisations of identity don't explain sufficiently: why our identity may feel rather stable (even though it changes), and why we invest in certain discourses and not in others. Ricoeur's understanding of identity is a way to get around this without at the same time throwing the baby out with the bath water.

Ricoeur conceptualises identity by embracing the paradox of stasis and change. He argues that, in a sense, identity consists of two parts: *idem* and *ipse*. *Idem* is the part of identity that is quantitatively and qualitatively sameness: continuity and sustainability, it entails being identifiable and being able to identify. It is the aspect of us that is rather stable, official and juridical identity, for example, as in questions of legal citizenship. While *idem* is the answer to the question, 'What am I?' (a Norwegian citizen, woman), *ipse*-identity, self-hood, is the answer to the question 'Who am I?' (Ricoeur, 1992). While *idem* is embodied continuity, *ipse* is closer to a 'core', our 'individuality', our self – something which 'Norwegian citizen' doesn't cover, although being a Norwegian citizen may be important to the *ipse*-identity. *Ipse* and *idem* identity stand in a dialectical relationship. Ricoeur clarifies the difference between *ipse* and *idem* in this way: "The difference between *idem* and *ipse* is nothing more than the difference between a substantial or formal identity and a narrative identity (cited in Blundell, 2010: 100)". "In practice", Blundell explains, "the latter

¹⁰ Translated from Swedish by Robin Fulton: "Innom mig bär jag mina tidigare ansikten, som ett träd har sina årsringar. Det är summan av dem som är "jag". Spegeln ser bara mitt senaste ansikte, jag känner av alla mina tidigare".

form of identity is broader because it encompasses the former; the narrative of ipse identity is a configuration of the 'substance' of the idem identity" (Blundell, 2010: 100).

Ricoeur suggests that the form of narratives itself is what enables the possibility for change. According to Ricoeur, telling stories is a creative act, we create new plots and characters, and thereby also new meanings. This change or new meanings are always rooted in history. Narratives are partly created by the person's biography, partly by the culture. As I read Ricoeur, the unconscious is heavily interwoven into the fabric of narratives. Narratives also have deep historical roots. We create new narratives and interpretations in the context of this historicity as well as in the light of what Ricoeur calls cultural signs.

I present Ricoeur's notion of identity because of the way his dual identity notion may help us understand the processual in racialisation: in particular, self-narration in terms of the available categories of identification and change. Narratives are what mediate between these two parts of identity, between Tranströmer's 'earlier faces' and the 'me' that can look back at them. But where Hall presents 'the story of ourselves' as hollow, comforting but not true, something with which to loosely hold together a tenuous construction that is our identity, Ricoeur presents narratives as that which mediates between idem and ipse-identity, between the fleeting and the continuous. The ipse-identity is always developing, always processing and narrating itself in and with what one experiences in life. This narration makes a re-interpretation of one's previous experiences and ultimately oneself not only possible, narrative is the main medium through which self-understanding is processed. In this narration, we depend on the idem-identity, because it is through this that other people understand us (for example in categories like 'black', 'young', 'Norwegian citizen'). Ipse-identity is, therefore, a social identity, dependent on those around us who judge us partly by interpreting our bodily signs: how others read us will influence our own reading of us. Narrative identity is neither totalising nor stable, nor does "it exhaust the question of what it is to be a subject, either as someone who can maintain him or herself as a self over and through time or as the possible plural subject of action of a group or community or political entity" (Pellauer, 2007: 84).

When I talk about *re-narration* in this thesis, I am referring to this process of identity. For example, starting a new school where ethnic minority was majority, many of the pupils perceived themselves differently and *were* perceived in a different

way depending on their *idem* identity in this context. They would all need to re-narrate themselves in different ways, drawing on others' interpretations of them, and their own interpretation of the context in which they found themselves. Ipse identity draws such experiences together in a narrative understanding of oneself. I think such an analytical separation is crucial to be able to grasp both how people may change while at the same time feel that they are "still me", to understand how context and others' interpretation have an impact on our self-narration, but also on what emotional and discursive basis people change. This theoretical separation of identity aspects is also useful for highlighting how a status as an ethnic minority or as a majority doesn't *determine* our identity, but rather will contribute to shape it. I present a reading with Ricoeur that keeps a hold of a core self, but that also keeps in view how self-understanding through narrative presents possibilities and makes structures and limitations more visible.

Narratives as mediators

Narratives may function as mediators in more than one sense. Ricoeur writes that it is the narrative (or a 'text') that is the "mediation between man and the world, between man and man, between man and himself" (Ricoeur, 1991: 431). In the same way, one may see the pupils' narratives as mediating between the pupils and history in terms of its segmentation and its duration, between the pupils within school and between groups in school, and between the pupils' narratives and their own 'deep motivations.'

In terms of narratives mediating between "man and himself", Ricoeur writes that "we learn to become the narrator of our own story without completely becoming the author of our life" (Ricoeur, 1991: 437). Building on ideas from psychoanalysis, he theorises about the connection between narratives and deep motivations. He writes: "The stimulus to initiate is some desire. Desire is not only a force that moves or impels a person. It is also a reason for the initiative in question. It is a reason that makes the initiative intelligible and meaningful. (...) In sum, agents in and by their bodiliness both are capable of initiating and sustaining something new in the world" (Ricoeur, 1992: 109-112).

Narratives, according to Ricoeur, mediate also between man and the world, or between the micro, meso and macro levels as I sketched out above. Through this, we

can grasp some of the mechanisms in how we live in and are shaped by culture. He writes: “self-understanding passes through the detour of understanding the cultural signs in which the self documents and forms itself” (Ricoeur, 2006: 158). That self-understanding is formed by understanding cultural signs (past and present) means that there are powerful restrictions on how the self may be formed (McNay, 2000: 80). For example, when I was at Skogbyen, the media’s representations of ethnic minorities in Norway were almost all negative (Integrerings- og manifoldsdirektoratet, 2010). In the media, boys are mostly presented in terms of crime and troublemaking, while girls are mostly seen as meek and subdued and as the potential victims of oppressive practices (Alghasi, 2009, Eide, 2011). Images like these may influence the action of the pupils in the classroom setting. In other words, their perception of their future self may constrain and shape them now (McNay, 2000: 94). In this way, the meaning-making process is both formed by and forms action. On the other hand, for Ricoeur, constraints and possibilities are not only external: they also surface from the pupils’ investments in different narratives. It is the self-construction through narratives that makes a creative formation of the self possible. In this way, a Ricoeurian narrative analysis provides a means of locating ‘the self’ as a psychosocial entity where neither the psychological nor the social has privilege (see also Andrews et al., 2000).

Identity in youth

That my informants are *youths* is integral to the understanding of their identity and group processes. In psychologist Erik Erikson’s developmental theory, youth is the phase in life when peer groups and identification models in society play the most important role in defining one’s own identity and belonging (Erikson, 1968 [1994]). Erikson’s and Ricoeur’s identity understandings are similar in that both emphasise the role of society in the development of identity. Both argue that people partly form their identity through imagining other people’s reactions to themselves and others. During any given era and in a particular context, there are only a limited meaningful models for identification, or what Erikson called “workable combination of identification fragments” (Erikson, 1968 [1994]: 53). However, with regard to this thesis, it is important to conceptualise that people in similar positions and with similar idem identities also draw from *different* discourses. Ricoeur’s separation between idem and ipse helps to explain the personal investment in different identities or discourses in a

way that Erikson's theory cannot. In turn, Erikson may contribute to Ricoeur's general concept of identity by specifying how identity processes happen in *youth*, especially through his ideas of youths' particular kind of identity search and need for belonging, and the way this corresponds to social changes and crises.

Although Erikson's theory of stages of development has been criticised for being vague and for lacking empirical evidence for his theories (Tetzchner, 2001: 590-600, 607), Erikson's main argument is still salient: that the formation of identity is continually on-going, but reaches its peak – its formative crisis – in adolescence. The existential questions are: who am I? What will I be? There is a delay – a moratorium, created in the waiting for adult responsibility. In this delay, teens are able to explore their possibilities, and this empowers the teens to experiment with roles, and to find a niche and a set of values. The moratorium is the status of a teen who hasn't yet made a commitment to a value system, but is in a phase of experimentation and exaggeration. Erikson has also been criticised for presenting the possibilities to explore the moratorium as universal, although the possibilities of free experimentations with roles are *not* equally distributed. This phase will, therefore, differ from person to person in terms of ethnicity, class and gender and through history (Nielsen and Rudberg, 1994: 97, see also Koteskey, 1991: 66, Henriques et al., 1998 [1984]: 209).

Describing gender socialisation, Harriet Bjerrum Nielsen and Monica Rudberg argue that the different theories help explain different parts of gender identity: the social, the cognitive and the emotional. Some theories are more relevant in certain phases of life (Nielsen and Rudberg, 1989: 16). In youth, the social aspects of gender are likely to be of great importance. Drawing on Erikson, they describe youths during puberty as behaving as *caricatures* of the 'feminine' and the 'masculine'. The formation of these caricatures depends on what youth environment the boys and girls are part of (Nielsen and Rudberg, 1989: 225). The consequences of using narrative theory in combination with pursuing the pupils' emotion could risk leading to a lopsided or exaggerated image of the pupils' lives and how ethnicity is created, especially, as teens' stories and practices may be prone to caricature. It is important to bring this awareness into the analysis, but also to consider whether they might clarify some central tropes in *society*, precisely because of their possibly exaggerated nature.

These identity theories cannot sufficiently explain how narratives, power and structures operate in people's everyday lives (McNay, 2004). I will now discuss how the study of *emotions* may contribute to such an analysis.

Affective practice as lived ethnicity

Emotions are shaped by social structures and also convey these in everyday experience (McNay, 2004: 187). This notion corresponds to Raymond Williams' idea of *structures of feelings* (Williams, 2006 [1961], cf. McNay, 2004: 187). Williams' term has been highly generative, although not much elaborated as a theory. He writes how we may find, in a particular culture:

a particular sense of life, a particular community of experience hardly needing expression, through which the characteristics of our way of life that an external analyst can describe are in some way passed, giving them a particular and characteristic colour. We are usually most aware of this when we notice the contrasts between generations, who never talk quite 'the same language', or when we read an account of our lives by someone from outside the community, or watch the small differences in style, of speech or behaviour, in someone who has learned our ways yet was not bred in them. (Williams, 1965: 63-4)

One of my tasks is to understand *why* pupils tell the stories they tell – and sometimes what the telling of them conceals. In Williams' view, these structures of feelings both shape and set limits to our practice and experiences, and these structures may be easier to recognise, he suggests, by an 'external analyst' than for those who live inside the given culture. To return to postcolonial theory, the structures may shape our emotions through the way that we create ourselves in relation to 'others'. Homi Bhabha deepens this notion by suggesting that the feelings that may be created of 'otherness' is tainted by both *derision* and *desire* for that which is seen as other (Bhabha, 1994: 96).

Emotions will also be central in understanding why people feel a sense of belonging to certain collectives. Cultural scholar Sara Ahmed argues that "[t]he collective takes shape through the impressions made by bodily others" (Ahmed,

2004a: 27). The process of ethnification or racialisation is conditioned by the *imagination* of collectives (Anderson, 1983). Belonging to a community is related to identity in that it presents a basis for identification in terms of emotional ties (Ahmed, 2004a, Williams, 2006 [1961]). I am inspired by Ahmed's theory about collective feelings. She suggests that the way people feel about others is what aligns them with a collective, and this collective will in turn be created by a series of such alignments (Ahmed, 2004a).

However, not all human experiences will be possible to narrate; experiences may be embodied or pre-discursive in different ways. An analysis of emotions grounded in *social interaction*, therefore, plays a central role in understanding *why* something is narrated, and in trying to capture what is *not* narrated.¹¹ Ahmed's theory is shaped for a discursive or literary use, and not practice, as social psychologist Margaret Wetherell argues (Wetherell, 2012). The American sociologist and psychoanalyst Nancy Chodorow argued in much the same vein as Wetherell, but over a decade before, against considering emotions as discourse (or as 'narrative' in a purely cultural sense). The meaning they give to experienced can't be grasped through a purely linguistic approach (Chodorow, 1999: 155).

As a theory that aims to understand the role of emotions in the formation of collectives, I found Ahmed's notion of emotions and collectives useful. But because her theory could not help me to answer my questions about how this happened in *practice*, with living and often self-contradictory individuals, I therefore turn to Wetherell's suggested term *affective practice*, which she has adapted from Valerie Walkerdine (Walkerdine, 2010). One of her most central points is that the turn to affect in the social sciences may benefit from viewing affects as a social practice. She underlines that in contrast to for example what Ahmed (Ahmed, 2004b) calls the *sticking* of emotions ("an emotion moving to 'land' on an individual"), we must view emotions as a joint, inter-subjective and relational activity (Wetherell, 2012). In particular, this may be seen in these authors' point that feelings are sometimes created from scratch, and sometimes rehearse previous patterns of feeling. Wetherell stresses that emotions in the latter case are socially organised, embedded in larger structures as routines of affective practices.

¹¹ I use emotions and affect interchangeably (see Wetherell, 2012: 2-3 for an informative discussion of different meanings of the terms).

Living under signs

I ask in this study how ethnicity is produced and lived between the institution, peers and family. The answers to this question are situated between the material and the cultural, or between redistribution and recognition. Following my argument in the first chapter, to ground an analysis of emotions in interaction and practice gives rise to the possibility of understanding how ethnicity is lived, both in terms of how it is shaped by social structures and how social structures shape the formation of identities. I locate the analysis between postcolonial ideas of structures and power, and narrative theories of identity formation. Above, I have shown that the narrative framework gives me tools to discuss the subjective understanding and interpretation of the world, but say little about social systems and power. I find perspectives on power and larger views on social systems and conceptions in postcolonial theory, but discard a traditional postcolonial/poststructural view on identity; instead, I turn to Ricoeur and his concept of idem/ipse identity. The combination of postcolonial and narrative theories that pay heed to emotions give me the possibility to investigate how ethnicity is produced between different layered processes, and what this does to the individual pupils living under signs to which they may or may not want to belong (cf. Skeggs, 1997).

I will continue to elaborate on and develop some of the theoretical aspects, particularly as regards narrative theory, in the next chapter, because the approach that I have sketched above is intertwined with and suggestive for this study's methodology. The theoretical framework suggests that an approach that combines fieldwork and interviews may be fruitful. This is for two reasons. Firstly, it might enable a way to follow Gunaratnam's suggestion of a double research practice, to mediate between de facto dichotomising narrative constructions on the one hand, and, on the other, the complexities of experience and narratives. Secondly, the combination of methods enables the theoretical recognition of both the determining power of structures and the possibilities for change. I turn to this discussion in the next chapter.

3. METHOD

The choice of methods has been guided by the aim of capturing what was most important in the pupils' own understanding of themselves, their identity, and included in that, their desires, fears, worries and wishes. What meant something to them in their school life? What identities and distinctions were meaningful to them? In this chapter, I will show how I shaped the fieldwork and interviews to shed light on these questions, and how an open approach was fundamental in determining what I got to learn from and about the pupils. I will also discuss how I collected and analysed the material and how I have chosen to present the material and analysis in the thesis.¹²

External guidelines and circumstances

The umbrella project *New World – Old Gender? Growing up in a Gender Equality Era* proposed a set of methodological guidelines that were instrumental in the choice of my design and methods (Nielsen, 2007). The *New World – Old Gender* projects were to include a time-dimension and combine ethnographic methods with free association narrative interviews (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000), which I will elaborate on below. Taking the lead from the umbrella project, the school was initially chosen in collaboration with the other participants to get at modern pedagogy and a pupil group that had a balance of social backgrounds, ethnicities and genders. The school was to match the other school projects under the *New World – Old Gender* umbrella: the chosen primary school, junior high and high school were to be more or less similar in demographics and pedagogy.

As the main goal of *New World – Old Gender* was to investigate gender formations, I chose a programme for general studies (*studiespesialisering*) because the probability of getting a gender balance was greater there than for example in health care (more girls than boys) or construction (more boys than girls). However, as it turned out, most of the boys in the main class I followed dropped out early in the first term, and I was left with mostly girls as my research participants. The ethnic balance also turned out to be different from what I had anticipated. The statistics that

¹² The project was reported to the Norwegian Social Science Data Service (NSD) and approved.

we had access to when we decided on the schools we would approach, showed an overview of the whole school, and not specific programmes. Although the statistics read approximately 50% ethnic Norwegians for the school in general, it turned out to be about 20-30% in the programme for general studies. As I was part of a larger project with strong guidelines as to design and method, where the choice of Skogbyen was designed to match the choice of the other participants' chosen field schools, I couldn't change schools when this became clear. I was in the paradoxical situation where I had to formulate a research question related to the available research sample, not, as is more usual, to choose a research sample on the basis of a previously formulated research question.

That the school was highly modern was both beneficial and detrimental to my purpose. One motivation for choosing a school like Skogbyen was that since it was a pioneer in terms of pedagogy and architectural design, my analysis of the relationship between the demography of the pupils and the school itself could prove relevant for the future research in this area. One drawback of this approach is that most schools are *not* open plan, nor do they emphasise self-discipline as strongly as at Skogbyen, therefore, my descriptions may not resonate to most common lived realities in Norwegian schools with respect to the pupils' meeting with pedagogy and architecture.

That said, the purpose of qualitative studies isn't necessarily to be representative. Instead, case studies are interesting because they may help us gain deeper insight into larger processes and social mechanisms (Andenæs, 2000). The Skogbyen case offers the possibility of investigating phenomena such as the formation of ethnicity between individual, collective and institutional processes, and the aims of gender equality policies, which I am looking for in this study. In fact, because of the more particular or 'extreme' aspects of the school and the class in terms of pedagogy and architecture, gender and ethnicity, it is likely that some general processes are made even more clear, for example the theme of ethnic segregation. I don't mean by this that the analysis of processes of individuals and collectives in Skogbyen is a miniature image of Norway, but rather that they bring pieces of the world outside into school and work as a comment on the wider culture (cf. Prieur, 1994). The pupils relate to larger discourses, bring these into the school and these influence them on a level of self-understanding. In turn, the pupils' narratives may help shape the outside world.

In addition, my own background from literature studies shaped the way I entered this project. In *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, Robert Emerson, Rachel Fretz and Linda Shaw write:

Having been trained in a particular discipline (such as sociology, anthropology, or folklore), the field researcher draws upon and develops ideas which make sense within the conceptual language of that discipline. While disciplinary concerns will already have shaped many field note entries, in actually composing ethnographic texts the researcher self-consciously makes his observations and experiences of particular local scenes speak to the concepts and traditions of a scholarly discipline. (Emerson et al., 1995: 169)

My background in literature guided my writing of the ethnography and my choice of theory. However, my lack of training in a social science discipline meant that whenever I had to make choices regarding methodology, I struggled to work out some guiding principles. The lack of a clear obligation to follow a disciplinary guide is both a liberty and a weakness, although I clearly already had guidelines from the umbrella project, and my own interests that shaped my observations and field notes. My interest in gender and ethnicity issues undoubtedly guided my attention as I conducted my field work. Yet because I had an open question to begin with, it was consciously the *pupils'* interests that directed me the most. When their focus turned out to be ethnicity in particular, I read theories on the subject from different disciplines. My theoretical interest grew out of the material, and not vice versa, although my background in literature studies might perhaps have given me a predilection for some of the main theories I use: postcolonial theory with its roots in literary theory, and narrative theory.

The school and its inhabitants

Skogbyen high school is in an eastern district of Oslo. The area around the school is highly heterogeneous, with one of the highest percentages of immigrants in Oslo, at the time of my fieldwork around 40% (Statistics Norway, 2009). The area is represented by all levels of income and education, but has a predominance of lower

income and education levels, and housing standards vary from villas to terraced houses and apartment blocks.

In the c-class there were about 25 pupils.¹³ They were 15-16 years old when they started first grade. There were nine boys at most, but their number quickly dwindled and after a month or so they were four remaining – but with a couple of additional boys who seemed to come and go at will. Although I followed the c-class, in Skogbyen this meant a lot of mixing, especially with the d-class. They had certain subjects like mathematics and some languages (for example Arabic) across school classes, and during the first two weeks of school, they were organised across of the c- and d-class in smaller groups.¹⁴ When the pupils were organised into classes, I followed the c-class. The pupils who were Norwegian-born to immigrant parents were in the majority in c-class, and most commonly their parents were from Pakistan, India, former Yugoslavia, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan. The majority of the pupils were Muslims, a small minority were adherents of other religions like Christianity, and another minority were non-believing.

The 2001 law of ‘Fritt skolevalg’ – ‘Free school choice’ meant that the pupils could choose high schools, but they were accepted according to priorities based on their grades. In effect, *choice* was something that only the pupils with good grades had. This marriage of choice and grades led to a specific social construction of the groups in school: many of the pupils who lived in the area would apply to the school because it was closest to home, and these were mostly ethnic minority pupils. Most of those who applied to this school as a first choice would be accepted because the required grade point average was relatively low.

As many pupils told me, Skogbyen had a mixed reputation. The pupils had mostly heard of it being modern and with young teachers, but also that it had more than its fair share of noise, chaos and violence. Because of this, the best pupils would apply elsewhere, and many pupils left the school early on, especially boys. Although I cannot say for certain why this was, the case of 15-year old Adham is suggestive. He lived in the area, had good grades and parents from Eritrea, and wrote in a letter to the school board that he thought there were too many minority ethnic pupils there. He got his wish granted: a transfer to a neighbouring ‘white’ and predominantly middle-class school. The same was the case with Abdul. His father didn’t want him to go to a

¹³ An overview of the pupils, including those I interviewed, is included as an appendix.

¹⁴ For this reason, I mostly refer to the pupil group at large as ‘in Skogbyen’.

school that was “that chaotic”, and he left the school after one month. That it was boys who were most likely to leave the school, might be a coincidence – it doesn’t necessarily mean that the boys to a larger extent than girls were sent by their parents and/or wanted to go to schools that they thought were better.¹⁵ Although these particular pupils might have left in order to fulfil their ambitions, rather than dropping out *per se*, statistics show that generally, boys are more frequently school dropouts. In Norway, 83% of all pupils graduate from the programme for general studies five years or less after they started, but boys do so less than girls – and this tendency is much stronger for ethnic minority pupils. Of ethnic minority pupils, 65% of the girls graduate after three years, and only 42% of the boys (Statistics Norway, 2012).

The parents of most of the pupils typically earned a living by working in lower middle to middle class jobs such as technology assistants, hairdressers, shop owners or assistants, or bus and taxi drivers. However, many pupils had parents who had come to Norway as adults. Their background was hard to pinpoint in traditional schemas because some parents had had high status jobs in the country they left. Some of these continued to use their expertise in Norway, although not always in the same way, but others’ skills and qualifications weren’t recognised or used. Cultural scholar Yen Espiritu notes that “the upper/middle/working-class typology, while useful, does not capture the complexity of immigrant lives” (Espiritu, 2001: 418).¹⁶ I suggest that a way to capture the complexities better for my purpose is to detail, where relevant, what resources were available to the pupils in their lives outside of school, for example what direct and indirect support, and sometimes pressure, parents offered their children. The resources available to children at home may be detached from the status of their parents as workers in Norway. Nevertheless, I include overarching class classifications when their background may easily be indicated as such (for example, teacher parents indicating middle-class), and when it is relevant for the analysis.

The group of teachers in the programme for general studies were mostly between 25-35 years old, a handful of them had just recently finished with teacher education. In the c-class, the regular staff of the core subjects consisted of 5 men and 2 women. All had an ethnic Norwegian background except Ammar, who had

¹⁵ In a similar Swedish study, Rene Rosales describes that it was the girls who quit (Rosales, 2010).

¹⁶ Annick Prieur finds indications in her qualitative study of immigrants in Norway that the father’s education seems to be decisive (Prieur, 2004: 38).

emigrated from Pakistan in early adulthood. Ammar was the teacher whose groups and class I followed.

Observation and interviews

I did participant observation and conducted in-depth interviews with pupils. Combining fieldwork and interviews meant that each method enriched the other. The fieldwork generally gave me insight into practices, habits, doings and sayings, while the interviews and field conversations generally gave me an understanding about how life was experienced, felt and interpreted (although there were frequent overlaps between the type of information I accessed through interviews or participant observation). Combining the two helped me understand things I had seen or discussed better, to check that what I thought I saw and understood in the field was correct, and vice versa. Combining methods was also important to gain access to practice and narrative production (Gubrium and Holstein, 2009: 39), that is, to be able to answer questions like: What was it in the culture that created these particular collective narratives and practices? What do the narratives say about culture? And what was the impact of those for individuals?

Participant observation

My main aim for doing participant observation was to capture everyday lives in school, and to see how people talk, interact and make meaning (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983). I was at Skogbyen from the first day of school with the first year pupils, from August 2008 to January 2009.¹⁷ After the main fieldwork was finished, I came back on three occasions during their three years in high school to spend one or several days with the pupils, once in April 2009, three days in January 2011 and once in June 2011. I followed the pupils' school day practices every day, both in the classroom and during breaks. To follow social meanings when they are created and negotiated, it is useful to be present on a daily basis (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1987). For me, being there from the first day was instrumental, because I thereby chanced upon the possibility to observe a process of ethnicification/racialisation from the beginning and in detail. The main theme of ethnic splitting was strongly shaped by

¹⁷ I was at Skogbyen from mid August to mid September, and from the end of October to mid January.

the fact that I was there in the beginning of the school year. As I came back at later points over the years, I saw the borders became less rigid, and had my main fieldwork been at a later point, I would very likely have seen even greater nuances.

I had one break in the main fieldwork during the autumn of 2008. I undoubtedly missed important processes and events, but the subsequent visit made me notice change more clearly, as well as the changes in my own perception (Gunaratnam, 2003). It was also necessary to get some time off to process my first impressions and write them down, and to develop some early analyses that I could later draw on when I was back in the field. This effect was further strengthened for the visits to the school in the subsequent years. As Ricoeur argues, distance enables interpretation (Ricoeur, 2006 [1981]). Having some distance brought into sharp relief the pupils' positioning in the classroom and created a space for analytic reflection.

When observing the students, I tried to pay attention to all of the students in equal measures – a task that proved almost impossible. In class, my eye would be caught repeatedly by the pupils who made themselves visible; my ears would lend themselves more easily to the pupils who made themselves heard. I was completely taken by surprise by the level of noise and the amount of attention given to it, and the majority of the teachers' futile efforts to stop it. It is possible that the pupils noticed this, and that they, therefore, maximised the noise and narratives about noise when I was around. It isn't possible to know what the situation would have been had I not been present in the classroom. It is safe to say, however, that the class I followed most closely, the c-class, was notorious for being the noisiest of the four classes in the programme. Indeed, when I had to choose between two classes and chose to follow Ammar's class since he was the one who had first accepted my presence, one of the pupils, Malika, told me that I would get the noisiest class, and that I had to be aware of the fact that not all classes were that noisy. Nonetheless, noise-making turned out to be a key in understanding my material, as I will discuss in chapter 6.

Field role

The first day at school I explained my research to the pupils, explaining that I was doing a PhD in cultural studies and wanted to know what they were interested in. With the wish to make them understand that what I wrote would one day be published in some form, I told them that what I wrote would eventually be a book. Malika, one

of the most extroverted girls in the class, asked me if I was an author. I hesitated, but answered: "I don't make things up, but you may call me an author if you like". Since then, the pupils frequently called me 'author.' In the following I will elaborate on why I think that my access to the field was shaped by my emerging field role as 'the author', and how my ethical responsibility was made clearer by it (although the field role is not shaped once and for all, as sociologist Dag Album has noted, see Album, 2008).

What I may learn from the field depends on my social position and my access to the field. Martin Hammersley and Paul Atkinson point out that the people one meets in the field will attempt to place the researcher in the social geography (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983: 77). One of the most important aspects of the field work was to find a role for myself that would be understandable, without making me too conspicuous. The range of roles that a young woman may naturally take on in the school world is rather limited, and few of the possible roles were very easy to successfully combine with the tasks of an ethnographer. As a 30-year old in the field, there was never any danger that I would be taken for a pupil, but that I would have been seen as some kind of teacher was more than probable. Sociologist Annette Lareau describes how she struggled with balancing not disturbing the natural rhythm in the classroom while at the same time she functioned as a teaching assistant (Lareau, 1996: 207-209). She spent a long time getting comfortable in the classroom before she decided to become a teaching assistant, and she was able, for example, to be more authoritative with the pupils. Such a teaching assistant role wouldn't have been beneficial for my intention of getting to know the pupils on their own terms, and not only *as pupils*. A teacher's and a researcher's roles are in a sense the opposite of each other: where the teacher wants to give her point of views, knowledge and ideas to the pupils, the researcher wants the same *from* the pupils. With the funding for PhD students in Norway, I was able just *be* in the field, without having to be employed by the school to be there.

Being seen as an author, *being* a kind of author and in turn having some authority, ethical aspects of the research process became especially visible, both for me and for the pupils. One such aspect was to protect the informants' feelings in social settings. These were young teens, a group ordinarily not well traversed in what a researcher in cultural studies actually does (cf. Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983: 77). Therefore, seeing me as an 'author' was a more obvious communication of the

fact that what I witnessed and what they told me could eventually be published in some form. If my field role was to be explained in relation to the pupils' knowledge of what a researcher or an ethnographer does, it would have been difficult for the pupils to place me in their social geographies and to understand my project and its consequences for them.

The pupils' raised awareness revealed some central ethical implications as well as implications for the direction that the research took. It might help explain why they embraced me so quickly as the author: it seemed to be related to a common wish to be visible, even famous. One day during the first week in school, Inas asked if I was going to become rich by writing my book. "I doubt it", said I, we laughed a little. Malika, sitting next to Inas in a group of four female pupils, interjected: "Don't be so sure, it's so popular with how it is now!"¹⁸ I didn't immediately understand what Malika meant by saying 'with how it is now'. Nonplussed, I looked at her while she continued: "What about those films, *99% Ærlig*¹⁹ and *Schpaaa*²⁰!" Inas shouted happily: "Ooohhh, I want to see *99% Ærlig*!" Malika explained to me that "those films, too, are about immigrants"; she corrects herself hastily, "I mean foreigners". Inas continued loudly: "And I will read your book, of course, it is about us!"

These pupils apparently saw my recording of them as a part of a larger cultural project in which filming, writing novels about, and researching multicultural, urban young people meant bringing into light the situations of people they identified with. This not only shows that a central mode of identification was an ethnic minority community, but it also implies a longing for visibility. The actors and real youths portrayed in these films had gained some fame among Malika and Inas' peers; they were local celebrities.

The increased awareness of the fact that what I saw and wrote may become public also led many of the pupils to express a wish to be included in the book. Many of the pupils hoped, perhaps, that they, too, could experience some of this kind of exposure and fame through the book I was writing and that they now had an opportunity to become part of. Their eagerness and willingness to be included in the book was striking. They continually asked me about the book, about what I wrote and if I wrote anything about them. They engaged in friendly competitions about which

¹⁸ Det er jo så populært med hvordan det er nå!

¹⁹ (Langlo, 2008)

²⁰ (Poppe, 1998)

groups I was to follow that day or during a lesson. They were disappointed when I told them I had to change the name of the school and their names. I interpret this as a great desire to be seen, and also, to be seen in a specific way. To many, it was obvious that it was their ‘foreignness’ that would be the centre of my attention. And they were in some ways right; because it was already in the centre of their attentions at this time, it became mine. The wish to be seen and ‘published’ may also be a response to the current celebrity culture that has developed over the last ten years globally, with people in reality TV shows becoming instant celebrities. As media scholar Su Holmes notes, celebrity “saturates the ‘everyday’” (Holmes, 2005: 24).

This urge to be seen lent me some power of definition of what and who was important. This might have been the same whether the pupils viewed me as a researcher or an author. However, their increased knowledge about the fact that there would be a book about them at the end of my study, could perhaps mean that what the author saw and wrote may have had implications for the pupils’ position and status in the group, and her or his own sense of value. On the other hand, there were situations in which I did not feel like I was an adult in a clear power position in relation to the pupils. Experiences where I felt unknowing, new, uncertain and outside made the seemingly simple dualism of adult power researcher and young, disempowered informants more fluid and complex (cf. Thorne, 1993: 27).

Further, my role as the author gave me the possibility of appearing as an ‘acceptable incompetent’ (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983: 93), much like the Norwegian sociologist Sverre Lysgaard, who consciously adopted the role of an apprentice to gain access to particular data (Lysgaard, 2001 [1961] , see also Fangen, 2004: 113). It also helped that, according to one of my key informants, I was not a ‘babe’, one aspect of which means that I apparently do not look as though I live on the west, and more high status, side of Oslo. It happened more than once that the pupils thought I was from the Skogbyen district. I got ‘cred’ for living in Vålerenga, especially because Vålerenga Football team was the team that the majority of the pupils supported. These things might be part of the reason why, for example, pupils took time to explain slang expressions and the origins of the words to me. I took this as a sign of friendliness and helpfulness. The girls especially started early on to explain kebab Norwegian expressions to me, and whenever I didn’t get a joke, they noticed and explained it to me. Perhaps some of this helpfulness was because as an author I seemed understandable and trustworthy? At least it might have contributed to

the fact that they tolerated my nosiness into whatever they were doing with good humour. That I was an independent adult who wasn't employed by the school, and who was always interested in their lives and in listening to them, probably contributed to their acceptance of me.

So far, I have discussed how the pupils understood me. Another issue is how I understood the pupils. The classroom is a well-known arena, so well-known in fact that it is in danger of becoming *too* well-known than the opposite. H. S. Becker proposes that classrooms are harder to observe than sites that feel more foreign. He writes that "it takes a tremendous effort of will and imagination to stop seeing only the things that are conventionally 'there' to be seen" (Becker qtd. in Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983: 92). Things that were too similar to what I was used to from my own days in high school probably went unnoticed by me. It is difficult to know. Nevertheless, the meeting with this school and this group of pupils was characterised by some clear differences between my former experiences and their lived reality. I was used to the boys in class getting the most attention from the teacher, and that the teachers were rather authoritarian. I was used to teachers teaching at one end of a classroom behind a desk, while the pupils would sit more or less quietly, listening, asking questions and writing. I was used to an ethnically homogenous classroom with mostly white, ethnic Norwegian teachers and pupils. At Skogbyen, many of these patterns were turned upside down. Although some things were well-known, Skogbyen still felt fairly unfamiliar. This might have led me to overemphasise what felt as new to me, and to overlook what was familiar and, therefore, less visible.

Both in terms of gender and ethnicity, there were probably many subtleties that slipped from my attention, and most likely a number of things I misunderstood or misread because of my limited knowledge of all the different languages and cultures that were present in Skogbyen. On the other hand, my obvious difference from the majority of the pupils made them explain to me what it was like not to be white or not to have Norwegian parents, for example. Their general level of reflexivity (especially as regards 'culture') and the pedagogic and empathetic manner in which they explained aspects of their lives to me, made me question the assumption that similar is best to gain 'deep' or valid information about others' experiences, which is common

in much feminist and ethnicity research (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000, Gunaratnam, 2003, Kvale, 2006 [1997]).²¹

Interviews

I interviewed 26 pupils. I aimed to interview all of the pupils who were in the c-class at the time I conducted the interviews, but there were some exceptions to this rule: a couple of pupils who were often not in class in the c-class at this point could not be interviewed. I also chose to interview some of the pupils who were in the first group I followed, and one who had changed classes from the c-class during the term. 17 pupils were interviewed alone, while nine were interviewed either in pairs or, in one instance, a group of four. The reason for this was that although I always asked the pupils for individual interviews, I agreed if they preferred to be interviewed in groups or with a friend; I assumed that they would be more comfortable during the interview if they determined the form of the interview. A few pupils were interviewed several times, in some cases because they for different reasons wanted to be interviewed more than once,²² and in some cases because I considered them key informants (I will define below who these pupils were). During the three years I also had email correspondence with a few pupils. I interviewed the pupils mainly between November 2008 and January 2009, after we had gotten to know each other somewhat. I proceeded with the interviewing rather slowly – not more than one interview per day – while continuing with the participant observation between interviews. I recorded the interviews with the pupils' consent. I did not conduct formal interviews with the teachers, but I had several informal longer conversations with four of the main teachers. My conversations with the teachers happened mostly during lessons, however.

After every interview I wrote a short synopsis and field notes in which I described the room, how we sat and the pupils' appearance. I also recorded my general impressions of the pupils in the interview context, and marked interruptions and whether the pupil seemed especially emotional (happy, sad or upset) at any point during the interview. These notes have been useful for the analysis of the interviews:

²¹ However, there is much feminist methodological discussion that also refutes this approach to research (see for example Phoenix, 1994).

²² Because they liked it, or as was the case for one pupil, because she wanted to get out of class for a while.

they have enabled me to return to the interviews and listen more closely for issues that were particularly meaningful to a pupil. Listening to the pupil's voice and reading my notes about their emotional expressions, for example, gave further depth to, and sometimes confirmed, the direction of my analysis. For some key informants, I have used these notes to write brief portraits included in the analysis.

I experienced a shift in my relationship with the pupils when I stopped being a participant observer and became an interviewer. Although in general the pupils seemed relaxed, it was apparent that some of the pupils who were vocal and visible in the classroom seemed more nervous and restricted during interviews. The opposite was also the case, that pupils I rarely heard in class, opened up to me in the interview far more than I would have anticipated. Positions took on different meanings in different contexts. My position as middle-class white grown-up became apparent in a different way during the interviews than it had during the participant observation period. Some of the pupils seemed to discuss ethnicity less candidly during the interviews than they did in ordinary school day situations with their classmates. Some of this became important in my analysis (see chapter 5).

In interviewing the pupils, I was inspired by Hollway and Jefferson's Free Association Narrative Method (FANI). The method was a part of the umbrella project *New World – Old Gender's* design. FANI is designed to elicit narratives and emphasises the pursuit of the narrator's emotions (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000), and is particularly productive in giving an insight into the meaning of everyday life and encounters, because of the "emotionally laden stories" (Chodorow, 1999) that are produced. At the beginning, my intention was to get a sense of the way the pupils felt about their identity, and how they experienced their everyday lives, especially the emotional investment in different discourses and collective narratives circulating in school. Elements from FANI were highly effective in producing such material.²³

I opened the interviews by reminding the pupils about their anonymity, and telling them that they could always tell me to delete things they had told me. I told them that I was interested in hearing about what was important in their lives – I gave no further limitations on the things we would discuss. My FANI-inspired opening

²³ In the umbrella project there was an initial suggestion to use photographs, which the pupils were to shoot during their days at school, as basis for topics in the interviews. Besides the fact that coordinating cameras and photographs would claim a substantial part of my time in the field, I realised upon starting interviewing that I would be able to conduct interviews inspired by FANI perhaps better without these snapshots, as the students then would be freer to choose the topics of discussion themselves.

question came to be crucial. I asked all pupils: “How did you experience starting at Skogbyen?” Posed in this way, the question opened up the interview for stories, as the question was open-ended enough to give room for individual experience, and still specific; the stories they told me had to be connected with a certain time (the start of school) and a certain space (the school). The question did not, however, determine whether pupils should tell me about the social or the academic aspects of starting school. By ensuring that they finished telling me all that they could think of initially (by waiting, prompting by nodding or saying “yes?”), the answer to this question gave me an outline that I followed. If the pupils first mentioned how much they liked their fellow pupils, then talked about what subjects they liked, I made a note of this, and returned to each topic in the manner and order they mentioned it, thereby giving them the opportunity to develop each topic.

I allowed the pupils to steer the topic from then on, but ensured that we covered certain key themes: their feelings about academic achievement, their relationships with their parents and family, their relationships with friends, their view of the class, and I also prompted them to elaborate on issues related to sexuality, while remaining sensitive as to whether particular pupils were comfortable discussing this or not. If they did not introduce these subjects themselves, I prompted them with questions such as: “Can you tell me about a time you got a grade you remember really well in Skogbyen?” “Is there anything you would do differently from your parents?” Because of my open-ended interview method, what emerged from the interviews was what was important to the *pupils*, not just answers to a predetermined set of research questions. I tried to avoid an extensive use of why-questions, as such questions often are thought to elicit clichéd answers that only tap into common discourses or lay-sociological explanations (Clarke, 2002, Hollway and Jefferson, 2000). However, why-questions were sometimes essential, as in one interview, when I asked Ingrid why she had chosen to go to Skogbyen when it was so far away from her home and required her to make such a long journey every day.

I departed from FANI in that I only had a few specific questions that were prepared. Aside from these questions, however, I tried to maintain a relaxed tone in the interviews, since I knew the pupils and I had talked a lot with most of them; I didn’t want to create a greater distance between them and me than was necessary. Another departure from the FANI approach was that my follow-up questions aimed to be natural responses to the stories the pupils told me. This made the interview

resemble more closely a natural conversation. This relaxed tone included both parties joking and me volunteering some comments – I tried not to be a stranger in the situation, but to continue being me, the person they knew from the classroom setting. I was, after all, going to continue with the participant observation between interviews, and I didn't want to jeopardise my relationship with the pupils by suddenly seeming remote and detached.

This method may have been slightly biased in terms of presenting the emotional investment in certain narratives. Many of the pupils, especially the girls, were highly invested in discussing sexual mores, for example among youths, in relation to the school's and parents' rules, and differences for boys and girls. It was also the case for classroom noise. This may have meant that only those pupils who were bothered by, or preoccupied with, sexual norms and rules, or the level of classroom noise, would talk about it of their own accord. In this way, these themes gained a seemingly massive emotional power. However, this bias in the interview method was somewhat corrected by the combination with the fieldwork: I could easily see how the pattern of noise affected the dynamics in classroom, although perhaps not all pupils were equally conscious about it. Moreover, which pupils brought up which topics during the interviews gave in itself valuable information. Only a minority of pupils didn't introduce ethnic segregation, sexuality, noise-making or low achievement in one way or another during the interviews, which attests to the almost ubiquitous nature of these topics in the pupils' narratives. It came to be a matter of some importance how the people who addressed these topics did so, and how those who didn't avoided those topics and raised others.

Gendered visibility and communication

In October, when I came back after a break from my fieldwork, I discovered that many boys had left school. Only five boys remained in the c-class, four of the boys attended lessons regularly, and a couple of other boys attended from time to time. Three others whose names were on the class list were rarely present. These boys were often assumed by other pupils to have left school, until they suddenly came back. When I came back during the next two years, these were the boys who had dropped out completely.

In addition to being few in numbers, it was difficult to get hold of the boys in the c-class. During lessons, the boys were quiet and mostly did what they were told to do. Other observer researchers have also noted the difficulty in paying equal attention to research participants who follow the rules and don't make themselves particularly noticeable (Thorne, 1993, Nielsen, 2009, Lidén, 2005). During the breaks, the boys disappeared out of sight before I, or anyone else, knew where they went to. I found out after some investigation that a few went to play ping pong, but they mostly went on their way individually. I sometimes found two of the boys just walking around randomly in the corridors, alone, seemingly without purpose. Perhaps to avoid being visibly alone? Mostly, the girls in class didn't have any idea about where the boys went, and the boys who could be found didn't know where the other boys were. In short, the boys were not a tight-knit group. This was another lesson for me in the importance of the demography of the school class. Because of this unforeseen obstacle, I was forced to take an early decision to angle the focus of my research on sexuality towards the girls in c-class. Sexuality, which emerged as one of the themes central to pursue in my investigation of the formation of ethnicity, was the topic that suffered the greatest as a result of the dearth of boys in c-class.

I found that gender was an important variable in the pupils' level of communication, and in some cases, their communication style. Doubtless, being a white middle-class woman led me to bias towards and against certain narratives and ways of telling (Gunaratnam, 2003: 60). For some of the girls, the emotional trajectory I sought to follow during the interview developed to such a degree that it was sometimes ethically problematic. In many cases, girls opened up to an extent that suggested that they saw me as a therapist figure. For example, when I ended one interview after two hours (I normally I tried to keep them within 90 minutes, as the length of school lectures), and I apologised for keeping her for so long. The pupil replied: "No, no, to be completely honest now, I... I must thank you really, because this is like a therapy session for me. I think it is just lovely. I needed this, it was just great. I need to talk about things a bit".ⁱ When another girl was on her way out after the interview, she turned, looked at me and said that she had told me more than almost anyone else she knew, and that she greatly appreciated it. A third girl reacted like this when I say thank you: "It was very nice to kind of get it out. You are my only friend, I think".ⁱⁱ It is important to balance the ethics of becoming close to the pupils, 'releasing' them afterwards, even publishing their confidences, with the need to

analyse and contextualise their stories. There is perhaps no easy way to handle this. I always gave the pupils the possibility of withdrawing information, not only straight after the interview, but until the time of publication. A few of them also told me to remove some of the things they had told me, which I did. I have also obscured the most sensitive information that some pupils shared with me. This means that some valuable information was lost, particularly the kind that connected certain individual experiences to their other experiences in life and their position in class. To secure the pupils' identity is all the more important when dealing with sensitive information. In a few cases, I refer to the same pupils by two different names at different points in the analysis to prevent recognition.

I did not have similar experience with any of the boys. During the interviews, the boys kept their answers short and to the point. For example, the difference between two of the pupils, Iselin and Lars, was rather representative of their genders (Cameron, 1998, Goodwin, 1990) when both described their common experience of starting Skogbyen. Both told me in different ways that they felt shocked and marginalised. Iselin told me the story with many words, dramatically and with emotion – she clearly had a genuine gift for, and was well practiced in, the re-telling of emotions. When she told me about how she had cried (a word that she repeated four times with a lively intonation and differing emphases), she also included in her narrative the whole story of where she had been and who she had been with when he learnt she had been accepted into the school. Lars, on the other hand, told me, pithily: “First it was like a shock all summer”.ⁱⁱⁱ

I found that the open-ended interview technique did not run as smoothly with the boys as with the girls. The sociologist May-Len Skilbrei (Skilbrei, 2003: 44-5) points out that it isn't coincidental who gives the 'good' formulations and the long answers. The variation speaks to social class differences, and I would add, gender. Therefore, as Skilbrei writes, it is important not to treat the well-spoken middle-class informant as spokespersons for others who are not able to formulate similarly impressive sentences.

Stages of data processing

The way I processed the data from fieldwork can be seen as a three-step process. At each step, my interpretation and choices guided what ended up in the final analysis.

1. Jottings. My own on the spot interpretation, in the form of jotted notes in a notebook while I was in school, was a first crude selection of relevant information to include, excluding what seemed to be irrelevant in that moment.

2. Full field notes. Writing full field notes from ‘jottings’ involved a further – yet also preliminary – analysis, involving the ordering of experiences, both “creating and discovering patterns of interaction” (Emerson et al., 1995: 51). I always wrote the field notes the same evening after returning home from the school. I spent hours and hours writing as many details into my field diary as I could, including my own emotions, the weather that day and sometimes my first preliminary analyses about what I had witnessed in separated sections. This means that in the field notes, there is already an analysis in the sense that a re-telling of observed reality will always be an interpretation. What I experienced in school will always be my experiences (in many cases, my experiences of the pupils’ experiences), and this, I hope, is clear in the text presented here.

3. Using the field notes in the finished thesis involved a translation from Norwegian (I sometimes tried to write the field notes in English, but I found that it was easier for me to do this in Norwegian first). I changed the text from present to past tense. As Emerson et al argue, writing field notes in the past shows that those actions as temporal and historical, while writing the analysis in the ‘ethnographic present’ makes the material more ahistorical and generalisable (Emerson et al., 1995: 184).²⁴

Interpretation

How did I then interpret my material? I read and listened to my material again and again. I wrote single analyses of each pupil, not paying particular attention to the specificities of my research question (which I modified at different stages of the research process), but rather trying to open it up. After being immersed in my material, I then put it aside and wrote in an almost ‘stream-of-consciousness’ manner about the themes that had struck me most strongly from the data gathering. I went back to the material and corrected my impressions, inserted more detailed data material, and read it in parallel with theory and other related research. I actively used

²⁴ However, I am aware of the fact that the ‘ethnographic present’ has been subject to heated debate (see Gruber, 2007: 59 for a brief summary of this debate).

both the pen portraits of the informants and a proforma I created in a protected Excel file, with important but very brief information about each pupil in a spread sheet (as suggested by Hollway and Jefferson, 2000).

My impressions and interpretations were simultaneously interpreted and put into context through what I learnt about the pupils' lives, the institution, the wider society, and in relation to other research in this field of study. Using psychosocially informed narrative theory, I analysed the material with a focus on the narratives the pupils told collectively and individually (Ricoeur, 1984, Polkinghorne, 1988, Andrews et al., 2000), investigating their biographical and emotional reasons for investing in different discourses (Henriques et al., 1998 [1984], Walkerdine et al., 2001, Chodorow, 1999). Stories are used to make sense of chaos: chaotic situations are later organised into tales (Bruner, 2002, Ricoeur, 1984, Johansson, 2005). Individuals tell narratives and groups form collective narratives. I am interested in both. By collective narratives, I mean the stories that many of the pupils told and repeatedly came back to, local discourses that were often generalisations or stories that seemed to say something general about themselves, and stories that many of the pupils seemed to buy into. Narrative analysis takes as its object of investigation the story in itself, writes sociologist Catherine Kohler Riessman (Riessman, 1993), but it is also about how people interpret things (Riessman, 1993, Bruner, 1990), and thus, narrative analysis gives prominence to human agency and imagination. It is, therefore, as Riessman suggests, well suited to the study of subjectivity and identity (Riessman, 1993: 5, see also Johansson, 2005). This means that I analyse the narrative both in terms of its context (often what I observed during the fieldwork period) and in terms of the story, which is an interpretation by the pupil herself, a reworking of events in her or his life. On another level, I use insights from narrative theories, related to hermeneutics and phenomenology, to understand peoples' sense-making of themselves. In narrative theory, having access to people's experiences is not possible. Rather, we study interpretations of interpretations (Johansson, 2005: 27).

I also traced the meanings that weren't completely rational, assuming that people generally are not always completely understandable to themselves (Layton, 2004). This entails again that I do not report absolute or objective truths, but the pupils' representations. To paraphrase Ricoeur, I have analysed the material in three distinct directions: between the pupil and herself, between the pupil and her peers, and between the pupil and the larger societal discourses (Ricoeur, 1991: 431). I try to

understand the formation of ethnicity both by focusing inwards on the pupils' biographies and emotions, as well as outwards, into the wider culture. I share glimpses of the pupils' 'inner life' in order to access the culture's underlying conditions and meanings.

An insight from literary studies is that a text can consist of several, perhaps contradictory, layers of meaning. Ruthellen Josselson shows how the so-called hermeneutics of suspicion is a less favoured method in narrative research. Here, the reader distrusts the symbols of the text, and "experience is assumed not to be transparent to itself" (Josselson, 2004: 13). Ricoeur ties this approach to the workings of Freud, Nietzsche and Marx. It is a less favoured method because the researcher has to re-author the narratives, and decode the message by using "some hypothesised codebook" (Josselson, 2004: 15). In contrast, in the hermeneutics of faith (or 'restoration'), the reader respects the texts' symbols. The researcher aims for a restoration of meaning while remaining faithful to the narrator's often multiple intentions and evaluations. This hermeneutic dualism is at the core of what often troubles narrative researchers. Josselson points to a possible combination of the two approaches, as Ricoeur does, when he "speaks of the possibility that hermeneutics can be animated by both the willingness to listen and the willingness to suspect" (Ricoeur in Josselson, 2004: 23). I find this Ricoeurian combination of the hermeneutics of faith and the hermeneutics of suspicion fruitful: it is possible to acknowledge the importance and significance of the unconscious and acknowledge the probability that all intents and actions are not clear for the individual, while at the same time respect "the symbols of the text".

Presentation

In my first drafts, each chapter contained a mass of different pupils with different in-depth analyses and portraits. It was too much to take in; it was confusing and took the focus away from the analytic points I wanted to present. I decided to cut down on the number of pupils who are drawn into focus in each chapter. Therefore, there are some pupils that I have used more than others in the final version of the thesis. These were my key informants: the pupils who helped me to see the particularities of Skogbyen in different ways. There were those pupils who had a particular way of seeing themselves and their world, either because they understood their own situation in a

particular way – for example because they came from ‘the outside’ and, therefore, saw the culture in Skogbyen with fresh eyes, such as Afsheen and Iselin. There were also those who were particularly interesting to the study because of their position in society or in the class. Some of them were also pupils who drew the most attention to themselves during the fieldwork. This was tricky, however; I saw that these pupils filled up my field notes, and my thoughts often wandered to things they said in school or in interviews. There is a risk that the attention given to extrovert pupils meant that other pupils were not as well represented, but this is somewhat counterweighed as the less extrovert pupils take up more space in the analysis of the interviews.²⁵

How is it possible to represent ethnicity at its different levels? I decided on an in-between position after testing different solutions (see Seeberg, 2003: 30 for a similar experience). In the first raw, stumbling analysis, I more or less uncritically reproduced the pupils’ own categorisations of each other, and the meanings they attached to different ethnic categories. These analyses turned out to be shallow and circular. I then tried the opposite strategy, of not writing much about ethnicity in the field notes, which was, to some extent, counterbalanced by the pupils’ own categorisations in the interviews. However, the arguments in these analyses became difficult to understand (cf. the ‘double research practice’, Gunaratnam, 2003). In the end, I chose something in between, so that the argumentation and analyses should be possible to follow. The result, which I will turn to now, is in some ways a compromise between clarity and nuance.

²⁵ As the full scope of material is only accessible to me, I think it is a matter of importance to let the reader be able to see as much as I can bring in of my field notes and interviews without crowding the pages. It will always be a case of my subjective choice in which bit I present, but including more material rather than less is a way to at least begin to check whether my analyses are sound. Another way to ensure this is to show clearly by pointing to the texts how I have formed my analyses, which I have attempted to do throughout. I have translated the field notes and interview transcripts used in the thesis, I have also sometimes included quotes from the fieldwork in Norwegian as footnotes where the English translation poorly conveys the intended meaning. For the interviews, I have kept the Norwegian quotes as endnotes. I have tried to stay as close to the way they spoke in the translation as possible, although kebab Norwegian expressions or ways of speaking were impossible to convey in a satisfactory way. In an appendix I have included a list of the kebab Norwegian expressions that are used. For example, in Norwegian, as opposed to English, we put the words in this order: “Yesterday walked I to school”. The kebab Norwegian-speakers would commonly order the words as in English. When I have omitted words or unnecessary sentences from the quotes, I have put it brackets with three dots like this: (...) in the Norwegian quotes. I haven’t included this in the English translation, so that it will be easier to read.

4. THE SPLIT

The c-class had split into their three chosen work groups and gone to different rooms. I was in the room with a large group of pupils: about fifteen girls and two boys. The young female teacher had told them off for the noise yesterday, before she handed out an assignment and told them to work on their own. Everybody was talking loudly, but nobody talked about the task they were given. The teacher left them to visit the two other groups. Afsheen, who had been away without permission, suddenly came sprinting back in to the classroom, yelling that two hip-hop artists from the local area were standing in the library! Inas and Ahlam squealed enthusiastically and rushed out to see, and when they came back laughing, Inas shouted: “He is so mwah!” She mimicked a kiss. - “Oh, *lööö!*²⁶” She gave a smile radiant with pleasure, and everybody made loud, lively comments. I found it hard to distinguish between the different voices.

I went into the small room next door to check up on another group with five girls. Here, the mood was completely different: concentration, controlled bodies, gentle conversation. When I walked in, Cathrine giggled and said that she was totally fed up. It’s so noisy! She didn’t even get a reply when she asked the teacher if she could go to the loo. Emma said drily that the teacher probably wasn’t used to being asked by the pupils for permission to use the bathroom. In this class, people just waltz in and out, they never get told off. The group worked quietly for a little while, before Cathrine pointed through the indoor window at another class: “Is that the a-class? I was supposed to be in that class, but then I came here”. Ingrid commented, keeping her eyes on the assignment: “Oh, that class is the best. It is the quietest one”. The girls sat and worked silently for a bit longer. Emma put her headphones back on. Marianne calmly said: “You hear people make noise all the way in here”. It was the noise from the room next door that crept in. Ingrid answered: “They

²⁶ *Lø*: Interjection which contains a range of meanings from *not*, *no*, *bad* and *ugly*, to *good*, *awesome* and *yes*, depending on the context, facial expression and tone of voice. Most probably it originates from the Arabic word *la*, which means no.

are everywhere!” Marianne: “And they can’t sit still, they keep running around”. Ingrid smiled crookedly. Then we heard Ahlam’s loud voice ringing loudly in the corridor. Without raising her eyes from her assignment, Ingrid exclaimed in a fed-up sing-song voice: Aaaaahlaaaam...!” (Nov 11, 2008)

Some three months into the school year, the school class had formed into social groups that seemed to be split according to an ethnic map. The first group consisted of mainly ethnic minority pupils, and the second, smaller group consisted mostly of ethnic Norwegian pupils. The question this chapter addresses is: in what ways were the racial-ethnic borders created and negotiated in the classroom setting? The pupils – for the most part – didn’t know each other before they started school. This chapter investigates what happened to the pupils’ groupings and self-narratives in the period when they first began school. How did the pupils first orientate themselves? How did they get friends, create social groups, signal belonging? By giving a detailed and close reading of the practice of groupings in class and what the groupings meant to the pupils, I offer a close analysis of ethnic group formation. Such a close-reading of the group constitution process is important to the contextualisation of the pupils’ narratives, positioning and practice. As such, this chapter is a point of reference for subsequent chapters, which to a larger extent will elaborate on the pupils’ collective narratives, self-narratives and affective practices.

There is ample evidence in research that similar ethnic splits are common in schools, especially from upper secondary school upwards. In a recent quantitative study of youths in Oslo born in the same year as my informants, Frøyland and Gjerustad find that ethnic segregation between youth seems to be increasing (Frøyland and Gjerustad, 2012). This is not a new development, however (see for example Gulbrandsen, 2002, Løvseth, 2006, for similar findings in Denmark and Sweden, see Staunæs, 2004, Mørck, 2007, and Bäckman, 2009a respectively). Tracing processes of group formation in detail from the first meeting is rare in research on ethnicity, and may prove a useful point of reference for future studies.

This chapter begins with a wide-angled view of mapping and sorting, and zooms gradually in on the meaning the social groups had for the pupils. I will argue that social categories are created because there is a social and emotional *need* for them in a given situation. The role of emotions and the imagination is, therefore, central to my discussion of the creation of collectives. I find cultural scholar Sara

Ahmed's work on emotions and the creation of collectives useful for this analysis. She suggests that emotions aren't only psychological or 'private', but that they mediate between the individual and the collective, and most particularly work to align individuals with collectives (Ahmed, 2004a), for example by making it appear as though the collective is one body.

Mapping and positioning

The approximately 120 pupils in the first grade of the programme for general studies went on several hikes together during the first fortnight, when the pupils had no real lessons, but many different social gatherings. The informal, loose structure of the first weeks gave the pupils many opportunities to get to know each other on a non-academic basis, as was the school administration's intention. A significant 'mapping' of each other took place during this period: reading and interpreting each other's signs and placing each other in a social terrain. This could take the expression it did on the second day of school, when a large group of 60 pupils went on their first hike:

The pupils and I stood waiting for the teachers; all the girls stood huddled together to the right of the entrance, and all the boys formed a group to the left. Only one boy, whom I later got to know as Lars, pale with a long black fringe, made an exception to this gendered boundary as he stood a bit to the right of the girls by himself. While we waited for the arrival of the two P.E. teachers, there were some timid attempts at a conversation across the boys to the girls; somebody amongst the boys asked, indistinctly directed towards the other group: "Where are you from?" and some of the girls replied with a giggle.

When the teachers came, we started walking away from the school and up a long slope. The sun had come out, the pupils had put their bags in their lockers, and we removed our coats as we started walking. The groups broke up into smaller units. As we walked, pupils chatted seemingly more easily with each other, and frequently bursts of laughter erupted amidst the buzz of voices. The boy who stood alone while we waited continued to walk alone, wearing large headphones, and a small girl with dark skin and wide, beige, rolled-up corduroy pants also kept to herself. I caught snippets of different

conversations, one included Malika, who said to her companion: "There's no future for those who attend the [programme for] construction. All of us" – she indicated up the hill towards all her new classmates – "we have a future!" A bit later I heard Iselin chat with Rolf. She seemed to be in the midst of a longer story: "We went out for ten months, it wasn't exactly like a primary school relationship!"

While we walked up that long slope, two boys walked in front of me. Both had black hair pointing towards the sky in trendy hairdos, baggy jeans and they had dark brown skin. One of them turned around and said loudly to his companion, while walking backwards and looking down the hill at his new classmates behind him: "Turn around and see, it looks like a refugee camp!" His companion laughed and answered: "[They] look like asylum seekers!" Several of the people around laughed. (Aug 19, 2008)

Gender was a category that had an instant influence on the pupils' self-sorting in physical positions, even before the pupils knew each other. Moreover, comments like 'there's no future in construction' and 'ten months [is not] a primary school relationship' indicate how markers of social background or anticipated education trajectory, age and sexuality could be important categories for the pupils to show similarity to or distance from each other, and that mapping and marking one's own social positioning walked hand in hand.

The *racialised* mapping was what surprised me the most, to such an extent that it is hard to evaluate whether it was more or less prominent than gendered mapping. With comments about 'refugee camp' and 'asylum seekers', the boys referred to what we saw when we looked down the hill at the pupils. What we could see was a mass of different pupils, but where the majority shared certain bodily signs with the two boys: dark skin and black hair. This was one of the first times I saw what I came to think of as a complex form of positioning, which I would come to see much more of during the course of my fieldwork. It was a double gaze: the boys who invoked the images of asylum seekers and refugee camps both shared their classmates' visible features, but as I later came to realise, those boys, like most of their classmates, were born and brought up in Norway and were Norwegian citizens. I could discern a similar doubleness in communication in Malika on the first day, when their teacher Ammar presented himself for the pupils:

Malika giggled loudly when she heard Ammar mispronouncing a Norwegian word. She hid her smile behind a form they were asked to fill out, and met her friend Adham's eyes over the edge of the piece of paper. When they filled out the forms, Malika got the giggles again because in the box for 'parents or guardians' she wrote 'dad' instead of her father's name, as she told Inas. Inas laughed with her. Malika told the same story to Ammar too, who gave a friendly chuckle, and raised his voice to tell all the pupils that they obviously had to write their parents' *names*. Malika asked what she should put under 'mother tongue': should she write the language she spoke aside from Norwegian? Or should she write the country that she was from? (Aug 18, 2008)

In both situations there was a sniggering at an assumed 'foreignness': of Ammar's accent, or in the former example, the pupils' skin colour. Yet at the same time there was in both cases an urbane way of communicating *insiderness* in that same 'foreignness', in Malika's open question about mother tongue and the 'country she is from', meaning India in her case. Likewise, the boys' joking seemed to elicit laughter perhaps precisely because of the double gaze on themselves.

It seemed as though marking people – or the school – as similar or different to themselves or to their previous experience, was an early mapping strategy for many. Some pronounced it more directly than Malika, however. On our way back, walking down the hill again, I talked with Asima, Iselin and Rolf:

I asked Asima, who was in another contact group than the one I was in, what she thought about the other pupils and her contact group: "I'm surprised that there are so many foreigners! I was the only one in my old school. In one of the groups here there is only one Norwegian girl!"

Iselin and Rolf walked nearby. Iselin joined in and said, before I had asked her anything: "Oh, I'm so disappointed to be here!" She told me that it was her last choice of school and that all her friends went to a school with a good reputation on the west side of Oslo. I asked her what she thought about the school, and she said it was different than she thought. "How", I asked? "No... just different". (Aug 19)

Iselin didn't pronounce what this difference entailed to me at this point; it might well have to do with the difference of the school to what she was used to as well as the pupils. It was clear now, however, that she had read her social environment and was disappointed, and that it was difficult for her to state *why* to me at this point.

In the beginning, marking *difference* from the school or its pupils was common among the pupils, their own background notwithstanding. For Iselin, it seemed that this marking was in some ways muted. For Malika and the two boys above, this marking was ambivalent or 'double-gazed' – simultaneously insider and outsider. I will soon come back to the significance of this.

'We'-ing and distancing

Over the next few days, the pupils learnt some important features and rules of the school: they had no specific classroom, many of the lessons would take place in large auditoriums, and much of the learning would be taking place in group rooms on their own. In the same period, they continued learning about each other. They, and I, first noted the pupils who stuck out for some reason, either because they were extrovert like Malika, or because they were different in some way. A week into school, the pupils begun to know each other enough – no matter how superficially – to assume that specific pupils had specific qualities or skills. One day in the second week, the pupils spent the whole day doing drama in the black box theatre led by some older pupils:

The last group explained a song game. The class was divided into two, they were placed facing each other on each side of the stage, Malika was in the middle. She was to be the judge. She said a letter, and the game required that they must jump up and start singing a song that begun with that letter. The first letter she said was C. After a brief quiet interval, Imad got up and sung something that to me sounded like: "Ciorna, ciorna, ciorna, ciorna" – quickly and melodically, before he sat down abruptly. People laughed, seemingly amused and baffled. Other people started participating, and one girl got up particularly many times and sung songs in what seemed to be in Somali. Somebody asked loudly: "Can't anyone sing a *Norwegian* song?" A boy

shouted: “Do you really think we know any Norwegian songs??” Sahir yelled: “ROLF! Where are you? You must sing a Norwegian song!” Rolf said with a smile that “I don’t know any Norwegian songs!” (Aug 26, 2008)

In the process of mapping and positioning, some were mapped as a large ‘we’ of ethnic minority youths, as the comment ‘do you really think we know any Norwegian songs?’ – seeming to speak for the whole group – signifies. At the same time that so many were seemingly automatically positioned inside this ‘we’, others were seen as different from the majority, as when Rolf was recognised as ethnic Norwegian, with an assumed knowledge of Norwegian songs. Rolf seemed at the same time to be bargaining for belonging to the ‘we’, claiming that he didn’t know any Norwegian songs either.

Other pupils were quickly positioned outside the ‘we’. Just saying their names could seem like a taboo. This became clear at the end of the two first weeks, when we went on the longest hike yet:

We arrived at a football pitch, and the teacher split the pupils into two teams: they were to play a game called ‘Strategy’. Imad volunteered as the strategist and I sat with him at command centre, a bench lining the field. The players ran in and out of command central and they commented continuously on the players on the pitch. Every time Iselin was mentioned, they said in a distinct slighting tone ‘the blonde one’, or ‘Blondie’, or ‘The blonde, Iselin’. Never only Iselin. (Aug 29, 2008)

Singling out Iselin might have to do with her tendency to exclaim aloud, as in the example above, that she disliked her class. The continued renaming of Iselin as ‘Blondie’ could also be a way of showing a specific racialised difference and distinction. In any case, the strategy players positioned themselves symbolically as *distant* from her. She was put on the margins of the map.

Mapping followed a model where *ethnic markers* were central in determining the pupils’ positions at Skogbyen. In what follows, I show how the model they seemed to follow was emotional and discursive, and that this model simultaneously existed before the pupils actually met in school for the first time, *and* was created in interaction.

Imagination and preconceptions

Many researchers have shown how collectives are established with different degrees of fantasy or the imaginary: at the level of the nation, this has been called *imagined communities* (Anderson, 1983). Trans-nationally, this has been discussed in terms of, for example, political communities (Andersson, 2005) and religion (Jacobsen, 2002). On a local level, communities aren't imagined in the same way: local communities can be defined by their concrete interaction between people. However, there is an element in local community construction that draws on the same dynamic of imagined communities, of anticipated likenesses and un-likenesses.

One way to empirically grasp this imaginative aspect of community orientation and construction is to consider the pupils' expectations in relation to the school and how they felt when these were confirmed, or not. I asked all of the pupils I interviewed a question along the lines of: "Can you tell me how you experienced coming to Skogbyen?" The question tended to elicit answers related to their preconceptions of Skogbyen school and what they were used to before. Many underlined that they were surprised that there were so many ethnic minority pupils in the class:

Uma: Um, heheheh, my first impression was actually "wow, many foreigners". Um, I wasn't quite used to that. So, before, in my class, we were like four foreigners and the rest were Norwegians. And that's how it was in upper sec-, primary school too. So that was something I wasn't used to.^{iv}

Uma was used to being one of few pupils in her old class who came from a non-ethnic Norwegian background. Angela, Uma's classmate, experienced a similar surprise:

Angela: It was like, when we saw the class picture, we tried to figure out who was Norwegian. There were two or three who were *half*. And then there were two who were *fully* Norwegian. Or three or something. So that was a bit surprising. Because almost all the class are foreigners.

Ingunn: Was it surprising when you first saw the picture, or was it surprising when you started school?

Angela: Yes, actually then too. When I started. Then I saw that there were unbelievably many Pakistanis here! (laughter). How can that be!? They were so many! Oh, so that was a bit surprising. I didn't know that there would be *that many*.^v

Angela says that at first she found the number of ethnic minority pupils 'a bit surprising'. Afterwards, she punctures her moderate surprise with stronger exclamations: 'How can that be!' and 'unbelievably many'. These exclamations seemed to be related to the fact that there were so many Pakistanis in class. When she returns to the second 'it was a bit surprising', this is tied specifically to the number of Pakistanis. In the fluctuation of these exclamations it seemed that Angela had some mixed emotions, which Ahlam, who was herself one of the many pupils in class from a Pakistani background, shared:

Ahlam: When I started Skogbyen, the first few days I didn't know anybody. So that was kind of like a weird feeling when I was starting school. And I had a bad feeling for a long time before. Or I didn't feel that bad, but I did think about how it would be the whole year, and how the class would be like and everything. Because I've heard so much about Skogbyen, you must have too, that there are quite a few, um, pupils that speak two languages. So, but when I started Skogbyen, the first day I was, I liked the class pretty well and felt that the class were pretty cool. And then... we had just one Norwegian girl in class. The first day. So, that was a bit strange, because in the school that I used to go to, we were only four foreigners in the class. So... that was a bit strange, but it is better and better now. So... I don't know...

I: How, what was strange?

Ahlam: That there were so many from my, or how I grew up – two parents from one country living in another country.^{vi}

Many of the pupils expressed a similar surprise. Some, like Ahlam, also had clear preconceptions about the school. Although the first part of this quote can be read as someone who was nervous about starting at a new school, she then links her bad feelings to having heard about the high numbers of bilingual pupils at Skogbyen.

Later on during the interview Ahlam said that she had heard that the school had a bad social environment (*dårlig miljø*), “lots of fights and noise and stuff”.

Around the time that I was doing fieldwork, there was an on-going debate about ‘problem schools’ in the eastern part of Oslo with a high percentage of ethnic minority pupils. There were – and are – political and media discussions about a *white flight*, of bussing pupils to other parts of Oslo, and of paying teachers in these schools ‘east side benefits’ (*østkanttillegg*) to make up for the drawbacks of teaching a group of pupils that frequently have been reported to be unruly and academically weak. One interpretation of the narratives above, and of the apparent need for marking their difference from the school or its pupils as I described initially, can be that many of the pupils bought into these existing discourses of trouble schools and troubled ‘immigrant youths’. While many described being surprised, the pupils, nevertheless, seemed to bring with them an image of the school before they had even started, which may indicate the effect of media discourses, rumours and assumptions about the number of ethnic minority pupils at Skogbyen.

Double marginalisation

When the pupils entered Skogbyen with its particular demographics, the preconceptions many had about Skogbyen manifested itself as anxiety and insecurity about going to this school. These preconceptions were often specifically about the level of noise and the lack of order. There was in general a *raised consciousness* regarding real and perceived ethnic difference that was a mixture of preconceptions and actual experiences during the first days of the school year. In my interviews with some of the ethnic Norwegian pupils, this raised consciousness became particularly clear, often entangled with poorly articulated negative feelings. In the interview with Lars, he told me about how he experienced starting at Skogbyen as “unexpected”. I asked him what he meant:

Ingunn: Earlier you said that it was a bit unexpected, unexpected to start here. How was that, what did you mean by that?

Lars: Um, I expected to be accepted by the communication and media programme at Central high. And then I just dropped down and I ended up at the programme for general studies at Skogbyen. So it was... different.

Ingunn: How did you experience that?

Lars: Um, first it was like a shock all summer. Then I didn't think that-, was completely weird. But... Yes. No. Um. Managed to get into the swing of things and get me a plan at least.

Ingunn: What is the plan?

Lars: To start at the media programme at Central high next year.

Ingunn: Yes. How is the social environment there compared to how it is here?

Lars: Um, I feel that they [the media pupils] are similar to each other. Yes. They are... usually they are, yes, like, half-nerdy Norwegians.

Ingunn: (laughs) In the media programme?

Lars: Yes.

Ingunn: So what it is like here?

Lars: Here it is, how many percent foreigners is it here? I don't know.^{vii}

When Lars said that he 'just dropped down', he didn't necessarily only refer to the place Skogbyen had on his school application; it was a social fall. At the time of applying, Central high was one of the most popular schools in Oslo, also predominantly white and middle-class. Coming to Skogbyen instead of going to Central high meant more than just losing a fine opportunity, to Lars it seemed to mean going to a school that was 'different' from Central high in some important ways. 'Different' is a description that holds some strong emotions: both his 'shock all summer' and 'completely weird'. The grades were one point of difference; Skogbyen required a low grade point average to be accepted. By assigning the ethnic minority pupils only with an 'objective identity', or *idem* identity in Paul Ricoeur's vocabulary, Lars interpreted a social difference between 'half-nerdy Norwegians' (implicitly like himself) and 'them'. This difference seemed to be at once monumental in Lars' narrative and at the same time, to go without saying. It was as though he had assumed crash position even before he had started school at all.

Iselin articulated her feelings of the transition to Skogbyen in even stronger terms than Lars' 'shock' above. When I asked her to tell me how she experienced starting Skogbyen, she said:

Iselin: Oh yes... it was horrible. It was. First I just thought, when I first applied, I thought: I won't get accepted there, I will be accepted by my first or second choice of schools, at least I hoped so.

Ingunn: Why?

Iselin: Well, I had bad grades.

Ingunn: Yes. Did the school have a bad reputation?

Iselin: Yes, or it was just that... well, I don't know about bad, but it is kind of *Skogbyen*, and it is [place] and it is [place] and it is [place],²⁷ it is – I don't fit in there, it just won't work! You see? So I remember that I got that answer, and I remember that I just sat down and cried! And I cried! And I cried and I cried and I thought that this is the end of the world!^{viii}

The horror Iselin says she felt when she was accepted only by Skogbyen was closely connected with the estrangement she felt from the places she mentioned: 'I don't fit in there!' The people there, she assumed, were so different from her that it made her think, for one moment, that it was like the end of the world. The difference between her and 'them' created a gap that felt 'horrible' to cross to Iselin.

Iselin's way of grounding these strong emotions and relating to me the problem with Skogbyen was through mentioning *place names*. The Swedish ethnographer Maria Bäckman notes a similar reaction from a Swedish girl who was accepted to a similar school to Skogbyen in terms of its demographics. "I was like completely panicked, 'No, I can't go there.' I really couldn't think of anything worse. I was completely hysterical. I was really hysterical, degrading [förnedrande], I couldn't go there" (Bäckman, 2009a: 64, my translation). This parallel and other similar findings (see for example Rosales, 2010) underline something more general, extending far beyond the borders of Oslo or other cities in Scandinavia: how enclaves with a majority of ethnic minority people have relatively lower social status. This is also a matter of place: places carry meaning and identity (Bäckman, 2009a). The British social anthropologist Les Back argues that crime, place and ethnicity are discursively connected. Crimes are 'raced' without having to name the ethnicity of the inhabitants. Invoking one element connotes the other two (Back, 1996).

²⁷ All these are places that are characterised by larger proportions of minority ethnic and working-class people.

When Iselin just mentioned place names, her connotations are not necessarily (only) ‘raced’ or ethnified. There is also a social class difference between different parts of Oslo, which can be illustrated by Iselin’s story about when she was at a party in Oslo’s west side:

During lunch, Iselin told me how she thought it was completely different there [at the party]. They sat in a nice shirt and sipped wine. They even looked at her differently too, and she sat drinking *cider*! Hahaha! But they were so *serious* and asked her where she lived, really polite, and asked ‘how are you?’ [‘Hvordan går det?’], calmly and nicely. Where Iselin is from, they would ask: (Iselin uses her own normal voice in a nice, friendly manner): ‘Hi, how’s it going?’ [‘Hei, hei, åssen går det?’] While *here*, the boys are so aggressive and rough, the girls too! Here, they just say (Iselin speaks in a rough voice): ‘hey whore, s’up?’ [‘Halla hore hva skjer’a?’] (Nov 3 2008).

The city’s west-east axis corresponded with, as Iselin saw it, a scale of roughness and implicitly, of social class. Iselin’s negative feelings toward the school didn’t only derive from the school being predominantly working-class. Iselin, and most of the other ethnic Norwegians (though not Lars) were themselves working-class. Rather, it seemed as though imagining the school, before they had even started, raised the spectre of a special segment of a racialised working-class, a spectre that filled many of the ethnic Norwegian pupils with an anxiety that was tapping into a racism almost impossible to articulate.

Oslo’s separation between the eastside and the westside has also been described in other research as a central category of identification. In Sveinung Sandberg’s study of street culture in Oslo, the separation is described as total by some of his east-side informants, with no connection between the parts, creating two different types of youths, where youths with ethnic minority background are associated with the east side (Sandberg, 2005). Although this portrayal of Oslo’s dual identity is probably stronger in Sandberg’s group of informants, it nevertheless underlines a general association of specific ethnic groups and social background to the separate city parts. In a British class context, Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis also note that ethnic minorities have a certain positioning in common “in the lower echelons of the class structure” (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1993: 95). However, their

similarity isn't necessarily a *class* positioning. Rather, what they have in common is a "positioning on the outer reaches of the British nation, as its sore spots and as its liberal conscience" (ibid.). The horror Iselin related to me was the horror and anxiety of feeling that she spiralled downwards, towards being associated with immigrants with low social class and low social status.

The ambivalence in Lars and Iselin's way of talking about their own strong emotions upon starting school, and their hesitation and indirect attention to 'race', ethnicity and social class, have to do with the 'sore spots' that Anthias and Yuval-Davis recognised in Britain. What makes the situation complicated for pupils like Iselin and Lars, however, is that they are *not* in a simple power relationship. On one hand, the quotes above illustrate a fair amount of preconceptions that the pupils had, strong emotions were evoked by the name of the school and the associations that came up, and even before they had started, some of the ethnic majority pupils were anxious. On the other hand, these are quotes taken from interviews from November the same year, which means that they most likely are also shaped by their experiences in school in the months from August to November, a period when both Iselin and Lars experienced social marginalisation. They both felt strongly about getting accepted to Skogbyen, and both had their preconceptions partly confirmed upon starting – no wonder, perhaps, as their apprehension didn't lead them to seek to overcome initially perceived borders. Their marginalisation upon starting school was in a sense pre-rehearsed through their anticipation of it.

This feeling of shock, marginalisation and anxiety wasn't as strongly felt by all of the ethnic Norwegians in c-class. When starting Skogbyen, some of the ethnic Norwegians formed isolated groups by themselves, while others like Iselin and Lars were more marginalised in the beginning. However, most of the ethnic Norwegians did not have good grades, and many of them lived elsewhere; some had to travel a relatively long way to get to school. Since they mostly hadn't chosen Skogbyen, many of them had a negative attitude towards the school from the onset. For the few Norwegians who lived nearby, the transition to school was still marked by a certain amount of surprise.

Iselin and Lars experienced a process of double marginalisation, simultaneously dealing with the school's low status and their own social marginalisation within it. The transition to a multiethnic school entailed some similar emotions and motivations to what many of the ethnic minority pupils experienced.

For example, Ahlam's anxieties seemed to mirror Lars' and Iselin's, though Ahlam didn't express them as forcefully. However, the trajectory *in* the school was different for Lars and Iselin. Being previously unmarked, they had to manage a defence against their own social and academic fall, and they had to learn to be 'Norwegian' in a multi-ethnic and low-status school environment.

As I will explore in more depth in later chapters, they were forced to (re)invent themselves as Norwegians, as white, and as part of the country's majority and the school's minority. This self-invention was for some of the ethnic Norwegians a process of shame, because being ethnic Norwegian in this context meant that they had failed or were failing in some way or other. It is possible to argue, following Ahmed, that through such intensifications of feelings, borders were exaggerated in practice (Ahmed, 2004a).

Sorting in practice by teachers and pupils

This practice is what I will move on to now: what happened when these strong emotions and preconceptions were brought into school? How did the sorting actually happen? First: did the school's teachers and administration influence the way the pupils sorted themselves into groups? In a discussion with the school's administration three years later, they told me that since my first visit, they had begun to spread the pupils across ethnic groups and where the pupils lived in Oslo, so that they would have a mix in each class, as far as possible. The administration discussed spreading pupils according to ethnic background as a tool to prevent the creation of cliques, which were viewed as potentially problematic. Some members of the administration emphasised multicultural classrooms as a resource, and argued for an ethnic balance to maximise the resources between the pupils. In this understanding, variation in background and, implicitly, perhaps values or ways of thinking, was judged to be positive.

In everyday encounters with the pupils, the administration still had an explicit policy that ethnicity shouldn't matter, that all pupils should be viewed as the same, and that the main communication from the school ought to be 'internationalisation' (as opposed to, for example, *integration*). In one sense, this can be seen as a double approach, with a conscious attitude towards how they were to achieve a 'multicultural environment' behind the scenes, coupled with the notion of 'not talking about it'

towards the pupils. Both strategies embody the ideal of similarity, so vital in the history and present of the Norwegian school system: on one hand in encouraging ‘blending’, and on the other, in de-emphasising difference. As far as I saw, this attitude – conscious of ethnic difference, but unspoken – was reflected in the teachers I met, which I return to below.

The *effect* of the school’s attitude towards its pupils was implicit, not explicit. One concrete example of this was during the first week, when the pupils’ had to go through tests to map their proficiency in mathematics, Norwegian and English. In the Norwegian test, they were given the task to write an essay on the topic:

“*Who are you? Write about yourself*”.

Underneath this there was a suggestion to include where they had grown up, where the parents were from, whether they liked school before, what they wanted to become when they grow up, and their interests. From the 38 responses I gathered, all of the pupils answered the question of where they had grown up, which in almost all cases was Norway. 31 of the pupils pinpointed where their parents were from. Of those seven who didn’t, there were four ethnic Norwegians, which was half of the ethnic Norwegians in the group of 38, and three minority ethnic pupils.

Although the numbers are too low to be statistically significant, what this indicates is that there was a tendency for parents’ background to be often excluded by pupils from a majority ethnic background, which may signify that they did not see this as relevant information. It also implies that these pupils did not think the *school* would find this information relevant, or more specifically, the teacher whom they hadn’t yet met at this point. It is possible that the request to include their parents’ background may have further induced a particular ethnic consciousness in the pupils, but only if that consciousness already was there to be raised. The administration and teachers can be said to be at best *indirect* shapers of social groups. The looseness of the organisation of the first weeks, and the stress placed at the beginning of the school year on social relations rather than academic achievement, gave the pupils almost free reins to form their own social groups.²⁸

²⁸ However, the school participated in raising a specific consciousness in terms of educational achievement that was pupils indirectly tied to ethnicity by the pupils, which I will return to in chapter 6.

“A real gender split!”

The teachers never mentioned ethnicity explicitly as a grounds for sorting or mixing the pupils, to my knowledge. *Gender* was a far more explicit category. As the American sociologist Barrie Thorne noted in *Gender Play* (Thorne, 1993: 34), gender seems to be an appealing form of address. For example, gender was from the very beginning explicitly commented on in relation to seating arrangements by the teachers with comments such as: “You boys in the back, listen up!” This attention reflected to some extent an actual gendered split in class, although there were exceptions. Some Skogbyen teachers tried at times to counteract what seemed like a centrifugal gender power. In the first Norwegian lesson of the year, one young female teacher commented on how the pupils were seated around gender homogenous tables:

“Here there’s a *real* gender split!” One girl shouted over to the next table: “Come over here, boys!” When a handful of other pupils arrived a few minutes late, two boys and two-three girls together, they sat down at a free table in the middle of the room. The teacher commented that that was “the only table that had both boys and girls – good!” At once, the two boys turned around to sit somewhere else. But the teacher protested: “It is good that it’s mixed, come on, sit where you had planned”. (Aug 27, 2008)

This was the first of many times that I heard the teacher ask the pupils to make sure they had mixed gender groups. If gender is an appealing form of address in a semi-official context, ethnicity is definitely not. Even though I never heard anyone explicitly suggest mixing according to ‘race’ or ethnicity, ‘race’ and ethnicity seemed to be the most central category shaping how the pupils formed groups, and the exceptions to the ‘ethnic’ rule were far fewer than to the gender rule.

Ethnic packages

To a large extent, then, the positioning came from the pupils themselves in a climate where the teachers seldom mentioned ethnicity at all, but there were exceptions. Ingrid had quickly established a position for herself in a small clique of girls. When

she described the entry of another girl into the clique, who started a month later than the others, she told me:

Ingrid: And then came that Marianne from [area close to the school]. Um, she came after a while. So... She came, and was placed right into our group-, group room, so that was fine.

Ingunn: She was? By the teacher?

Ingrid: Yes. So... then it wasn't a choice, so to speak. Well it was, but (laughter). I don't think I would have ended up with anybody else in the class, so to speak.

Ingunn: No, you don't think so?

Ingrid: No.

Ingunn: Why not?

Ingrid: I don't know. It's just like... I don't know... um... It's like... It has very, how, how you're like, so, yes... So, not to, to be discriminating or anything, but like, she is white (fiddling a piece of paper) in a way. And it is like, she is used to Norwegian culture. Like perhaps she doesn't speak kebab Norwegian or *walla* and that whole package, you see? So it's like, she has a whole other approach, or a different attitude. So it has been really like... It is like, she would have come straight to us, so to speak.^{ix}

It was a teacher who had introduced the two ethnic Norwegian girls to each other. The school's intention of disregarding ethnicity as difference in the classroom was, perhaps, not very easy to execute. However, Ingrid seems to think of this active sorting as almost 'naturalised'; she implies that it could hardly have been any other way. She more than implies that this was because of their shared whiteness and what Ingrid calls 'Norwegian culture'. Whiteness is thus closely associated with Norwegian culture by this pupil. Other than being white, however, Ingrid defined Marianne's similarity to herself by what it was *not*: Marianne *didn't* speak kebab Norwegian and she *didn't* have 'that whole package', as Ingrid put it.

Skin colour was potentially a part of this 'whole package' which became important for the sorting of the pupils, including when they did this sorting themselves. Skin-colour is easily used as a marker of visible similarity or difference, as was evident during the hike on the second day of school when two boys

commented on the appearance of their classmates, which brought to their mind a group of asylum seekers or a refugee camp. Skin colour certainly carried meaning by itself, because the pupils often used it as a metaphor for ethnic differences. However, in Skogbyen, skin colour was neither a sufficient nor a necessary ethnic marker. For example, the pupils from former Yugoslavian countries and other eastern European countries were white, but still most of them defined themselves, and were defined by other pupils, as ‘foreigners’ or ‘immigrants’. There was also one white, ethnic Norwegian girl, Marte, who was often called ‘foreigner’ or ‘immigrant’. Anthropologists have argued that cultural difference is only important when it makes a social difference (Bateson, 2000: 459, see also Eriksen, 2002: 138). The uses to which cultural differences are put are what give them social relevance. For skin colour to be a significant difference in Skogbyen, it needed to be accompanied by other important assets in the ‘ethnic package’.

The Norwegian anthropologist Fredrik Barth wrote that to recognise someone as ‘members of another ethnic group’, or as ‘strangers’, implies that one perceives a lack of shared understandings, judgement or value (Barth, 1998 [1969]: 15). In this case, the lack of shared values was largely *assumed*. It must have been assumed, as the sorting took place too soon for any real knowledge of the ‘real’ values of the others. Ethnic packages were real only with the help of imagination; the content of the packages was largely phantasmic. Naming the packages and trying to pinpoint their content was, therefore, an impossible task.

This became evident as soon as I began to look more closely at the social groupings in the class. For example, when the two girls Marte and Orri told me about different groupings in the c-class, there were numerous obstacles in the flow of Marte’s narrative:

Marte: There’s the Norw... - the N... - I don’t mean the Norwegians, I mean, I’m not, I’m Norwegian but...

Orri, interrupts: Just say their names!

Marte: There’s all the Norwegians that usually sit alone. Then all of us, plus me, or, not the for... (to Orri): - you’re not foreigners, (to me): they are Norwegians, but, the others, the foreigners, and me.

Ingunn: And the Norwegians, they are...?

Orri: They are: Marianne, Emma, Ingrid...

Ingunn: So Emma, you consider her Norwegian?

Orri: No... But she is part of the Norwegians.

Marte, emphatically, at the same time: YES! About how she is, how she is!
She is so completely Norwegian!

Ingunn (laughs): How?

Marte: No, it's like... I don't know, it is so typical! Norwegian!

Orri: They are very different from us, because we –

Marte (interrupts): We live at [place], and we live at [place], and we live at [place],²⁹ and [all of these places] are completely different than for example... what should I say... [place] and [place].³⁰

Orri: Yes, it's completely different.

Marte: These are other social environments [miljøer], for example in [place] it is very much like... they don't laugh about the same things and it isn't the same kind of humour and like same language.^x

Even more difficult than describing the packages' content, such as shared humour, language and place, was naming the holders of the packages. Marte stumbled, not surprisingly, when employing the names that most of the pupils used: the 'foreigners' and the 'Norwegians'. The loaded, pregnant discourse of ethnicity, suffused with potential racism and the anxiety of being thought a racist, made both groups difficult to tag. More than that, however, the tags jarred, the map didn't fit the terrain, for different reasons. Calling her best friend Orri 'foreigner' was difficult, because Orri and all of the other ethnic minority pupils in the c-class were not really foreigners; most of them were born in Norway and all were legally Norwegian citizens. Calling *herself* 'foreigner' was difficult because she was even 'more Norwegian' than them: she was white, and her parents were ethnic Norwegians. Calling the group of girls that she mentioned 'Norwegians' was also difficult, because the group consisted of a few girls who in other contexts in Skogbyen clearly would be recognised as 'foreigners'. Emma was one who Marte could clearly identify as 'Norwegian'.

The way Marte discusses Emma's Norwegianness is an illustration of the *fluidity* and *constructedness* of the ethnic packages: it becomes clear that being called

²⁹ These are places that she and her friends are from, places with a high concentration of working-class people and ethnic minorities.

³⁰ This placed is mixed but more middle-class, and with 'white' neighbourhoods nearby.

‘Norwegian’ or ‘foreigner’ wasn’t necessarily about ethnicity in the sense of a background culture. For Marte, Emma was ‘typically Norwegian’ even without Norwegian parents (as opposed to the other pupils with parents from other countries) because she acted in a specific, ‘typical Norwegian’ way. In that sense, ‘Norwegian’ (with inverted commas) can be seen as different from Norwegian (without inverted commas). Being ‘Norwegian’ or ‘foreigner’ both stretch beyond ‘real’ ethnic groups and national background. The bond that was in the process of being established between the pupils was similar to what anthropologists have called *fictive kinship*, in the sense that American anthropologists Signithia Fordham and John Ogbu understood it – as the process in which a heterogeneous crowd makes strong social bonds (Fordham and Ogbu, 1986, see also Bäckman, 2009b).

Angela was another pupil who was frequently tagged as a ‘Norwegian’ although her parents were from Eastern Europe. Just like being ‘foreigner’, being ‘Norwegian’ conveyed another ‘package’; it is something enacted, but simultaneously, in most cases, something bodily that cannot easily be shaken. As Elif in Angela’s class said: “Angela *plays* Norwegian. She is only with Norwegians. She is like a wannabe-Norwegian”.^{xi} In Angela’s case, it was particularly her sexuality that seemed ‘Norwegian’ to her classmates. Angela was, like Emma, a pupil who behaved according to norms associated with the ‘Norwegian ethnic package’. I will return to Angela’s particular position in the class in chapter 7.

Although naming the groups was more difficult the closer one looked, Marte and Orri nevertheless mentioned some of the most important ethnic markers to determine local ethnic belonging. They were fluid in the sense that they could be detached from country of origin or descent, but the connotations had rather stable meanings shared by most of the pupils, for example the connotations to the place-names Marte mentioned. The places she said that she (‘we’) lived in were the same places that Iselin mentioned, and both mentioned these place-names in a matter-of-fact manner, which showed that to them, these connotations seemed obvious.

Marte explained why she (and many others) thought of the two minority pupils amongst the ethnic Norwegians as ‘Norwegians:’ it was because they shared central markers of ethnicity, like coming from the same part of Oslo, their sense of humour, language and taste. I came to think of these as ethnic markers, or what Anthias and Yuval-Davis call *ethnic resources* (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1993), which formed the content of the ethnic packages that were important in deciding

membership in the c-class ethnic groups. Together, the ethnic packages consisted of different symbols of ethnic belonging that also included attitudes, norms and mores, most saliently in relation to religion, sexuality and being ‘good’ or ‘bad’ school pupils, as I will discuss in later chapters.

The pupils knew how to read the packages with a ‘racial common sense’, as Omi and Winant term the body of knowledge of racialised inflections (Omi and Winant, 1994). The term ‘racial common sense’ slightly masquerades the role that preconceptions play in the interpretation of bodily markers, but it nevertheless catches something central: that this ‘common sense’ - whether the content is imagined or not - is a shared stock of discourses that links certain markers into seemingly coherent racialised ethnic packages. When these markers were shared, the groups were created and validated, and mostly given the names ‘*foreigners*’ and ‘*Norwegians*’. The formation of groups was quick, to a large extent pupil-driven, and often based on interpretations of signs on the others pupils’ bodies and other immediate signs as ‘like me’ or ‘not like me’.

Experienced collectives

Most of the pupils experienced coming to school differently than Lars and Iselin did. When I asked Latif about how he experienced starting at Skogbyen, he answered:

Latif: Coming to school was pretty alright. To meet new people. Actually, I got to know that whole gang, Uma, Hadi and Aida, like that whole group. It was pretty, ehm...

Ingunn: You didn’t know any of them?

Latif: No, I didn’ know any of them. And I just got to know them after the first day, I think. It was like – just knew the whole class then. Perhaps it has to do with culture. That... Or, people from different cultures are used to just starting to talk with each other immediately.^{xiii}

People from ‘different cultures’ are used to just starting to talk with each other immediately, Latif states. By ‘different cultures’ he might mean different from each other, but also different from Norwegian culture, and that people from these ‘different cultures’ are more open to meet different people. The openness that Latif points to,

and a sense of *community*, was something that most of the ethnic minority pupils seemed to recognise, but not many of the ethnic Norwegians. This sense of a comparatively more inclusive ethnic minority community is also commented on by other researchers. In a study of white ethnic Norwegians living in multi-ethnic suburbs, The Norwegian sociologist Anders Vassenden discusses the example of an informant who celebrates the community in ethnic minority milieus. He said he felt that there was more depth to the Pakistani-Norwegian milieu and a greater feeling of community there (Vassenden, 2010: 745). Ahlam, who reflected above on how the number of ethnic minority pupils filled her with ‘a bad feeling’ a long time before she started school, told me that she nevertheless felt this openness and inclusiveness, and related this to language and to shared understandings:

Ahlam: I felt that it was a much more open class environment that what it was in my old school. That we could talk – most of the pupils in class are Pakistanis. Somebody just started talking in Urdu the first day, and everybody laughed, so it is like, I like it here quite a lot.

Ingunn: Do you mean open in that you can speak in Urdu?

Ahlam: No, not Urdu, but like, one understands each other so much better, I feel. Because we... It is, like when you talk to someone from another country than you, then you might feel that that person thinks in a similar way, than a person who is from another country.

Ingunn: But, that community feeling that you kind of described, did you feel that with those who were for example from India, too?

Ahlam: Yes yes, I did because – I felt that with those who was from Norway too. And, those who are from, for example – we have people from Somalia in class too. So, I could just talk with them after like a week, yes, after a week, then we became quite good friends, the whole class. Then I didn’t think about them being from another country to me. I didn’t in my old school either, where there weren’t so many foreigners, but, yeah.^{xiii}

Ahlam suggests first that the sense of communal understanding did not limit itself to people sharing the same country background. In her opinion, it was extended to all the pupils in class, including the Norwegians. There is, however, something in her presentation of this community that leaves the ethnic Norwegians’ inclusion a little

unclear. She starts by emphasising how the community feeling grew out of a shared *different* background than a Norwegian one, and points out how speaking Urdu, for example, contributed to the sense of an open class environment – something that the ethnic Norwegian pupils didn't participate in.

Sharing a language aside from Norwegian weren't enough by itself to establish a community, however, as Malika pointed out when we waited for the bus at the end of a school day during the second week of school:

I asked Malika how she thinks that the pupils had formed groups, and she answered: "It is the paki... the Pakistanis [who are together], because they know each other already". She told me that she hangs out with some boys she had grown up with, but all of the *desis*³¹ are together. Who are the desis, I asked, and she answered that it was really all of the Pakistanis and Indians. When I ask why she didn't consider herself a desi, even though she considered herself Indian, she said that she talked with everybody. The desis, she said, are by themselves and listen to Bollywood music. (Aug 25 2008)

My first meeting with the group that Malika perhaps referred to, may serve as a good example of rapid forming social groups:

Sahir, Saima and Afsheen asked me whether I had ever written a book before and what it was about. I told them it was about friendship. They responded at once: "Oooh, we have only known each other for two weeks, and now we are best friends!" All three held their arms around each other and smiled. Afsheen told me how they had met: Saima had just gone over to Afsheen and knocked her on the head and said "hi, my name is Saima!" They laughed and Saima said: "Yes, I'm like completely crazy!" (Aug 29, 2008).

When a couple of months later I asked this particular group of four friends how the class formed socially, they answered:

³¹ An international slang term for people and culture originating from South Asia.

Sahir: In the beginning of the year, everybody was suddenly kind of by accident, everybody, everybody, in the whole class. There were never any fights, and nothing. Everybody used to sit together after school and stuff. After school, sat talking and then... yes.

Saima: Uma and everybody.

Sahir: Everybody, Uma and their gang, and we too. All together.

Ingunn: All together? The whole class?

Saima: The whole class used to be together, you know.

Ingunn: And was it absolutely all in-

Sahir: A whole, almost all.

Saima: Like almost all.

Sahir: Most.^{xiv}

Sahir's words: suddenly (*plutselig*) and by accident (*tilfeldig*) are quite apt for catching some of the dynamics of how most of the ethnic minority pupils in the class established themselves as a social group. It happened quickly, and it seemed to be a sorting based on primary markers. These primary markers were later discovered to be rather accidental. Other things came to matter more; the grounds of sorting shifted over time, and when time made this clear, the pupils split more firmly up into subgroups. For this particularly close group of four friends, who were from a Pakistani and Indian background and shared a knowledge of Urdu, the repeated insistence on the school class' unity faltered only as an added afterthought. Only after I probed deeper, did I find out that by the word 'most', Sahir meant everybody except most of the ethnic Norwegians. Creating communities for some also meant marginalisation for others.

For some of the pupils, even though they were not alone, their sense of isolation was palpable. That this isolation was intertwined with the difficulty of interaction became clear during one of the hikes at the beginning of the school year:

We arrived at the pond. The goal of this part of the hike was to gather material for a science assignment, and by the water, landing nets and empty jar bottles were awaiting us, ready to catch water insects. I accompanied a group of about 30 pupils, where there were four ethnic Norwegians, all of them boys. The

teacher raised his voice to give all the pupils by the waterfront the message to separate into groups of *five*, and to make sure that all groups contained both girls and boys. I looked at the group of four boys, thinking to myself that I had never seen them mixing with either girls or ethnic minority pupils. There were no other ethnic Norwegian boys around. How were they going to solve this? Then I overheard, from my place a few metres down the pier, Steinar dryly suggest to the three others that he should maybe duplicate himself. (Aug 29 2008)

For these boys, their lack of identification (gendered and/or racialised) felt so complete that, in this situation, self-duplication was the only solution. Although it was said partly in jest, the boys' general separation and isolation from the others stemmed from a lack of points of identification that was real in the sense that it created the other students as seemingly 'one body', as Ahmed would have put it (Ahmed, 2004a). In this moment on the pier, it seemed to be impossible for Steinar and his friends to (try to) get through to this other 'body' of other students. In such instances, borders materialised by the intensified emotions.

Academic suitability

For some, the reasoning behind their choice of school friends was articulated as a question of whom they *worked* with best. Three months into the school year, Ingrid told me in an interview that she had finally found her place in class. She said that the pupils now had found out "where they belong, which groups, people one is with. Who does any work, and who doesn't. That is really connected, who one is with and who one works the best with. Yes. So... It is easier, it is, now that we are free to choose [the work groups]".^{xv} I asked how she chose the ones that she works with now:

For starters, I was the first Norwegian. Like, it is of course rather different, to be the first one that comes into a class. And, I knew nobody, and it was kind of, pretty many who knew each other. So, Nabika just like... In hindsight she has kind of like, yeeees, because in a way I was an outsider.^{xvi}

Nabika, Ingrid and a handful of other girls – the girls we met in the entry to this chapter in the group room, cherishing quietness – soon became a tight-knit group who worked together whenever it was possible, sat together in the lunch break and, as the months went by, started to spend time together outside of school too. During my fieldwork as well as in my continued visits to the school during the following years, I saw that this group remained remarkably stable, and they spoke of little internal conflicts. The feeling of being an outsider is nevertheless what stands out in the quote above. This feeling manifests itself, for example, in that Ingrid misinterpreted the others' fast forming group as 'pretty many who knew each other', although in fact, very few of the others knew anybody before, just like her. Ingrid begins by stating that she was the first Norwegian. It is different to be the first that comes into a class, she says. Whether coming first made her different from the other pupils in her class or from other ethnic Norwegians who didn't experience what she did, she states that her *Norwegianness* is what made her different. With her Norwegianness as a premise, she explains her outsidership and consequently, her friendship with Nabika. Paradoxically, however, Nabika was *not* ethnic Norwegian. Her parents were from Sri Lanka. In a sense, being ethnic Norwegian translates for Ingrid into a generic outsidership that hasn't so much to do with ethnicity as with a marginalised social position.

This was one of many instances where experiences of difference were articulated as 'race' or ethnicity. The way I understand this is that it was through a racialised lens that the pupils mainly understood and experienced their social world at this particular point in time and in this context. That 'race' and ethnicity often gained prevalence in the pupils' narratives is also important for considering the pupils' interpretation of the consolidation of social groups.

Breaking it up

Revisiting the school at the end of their third year, just before the pupils were about to graduate, I had a chat with Afsheen and Husna. They thought back to the first year with a more mature gaze, and could tell me that things had changed:

At lunch, Afsheen and Husna talked about how the school used to be split in two groups - the foreigners and the Norwegians, at first. "Is it still like that?" I

asked. Afsheen said “Yes, it really is – or no, actually, it’s kind of not so bad anymore, but still a bit. In the beginning, everybody just stuck to what they knew and who they knew, and the people they first hung with were the ones they stuck with, for the first period at least”. -“There are smaller groups now, and nobody is alone”, they told me. “The foreigners had a lot of prejudice at first, against the Norwegians”. “What kind of prejudice?” I asked. Afsheen said that “Well, it was mostly about like we are us and they are them – like it was two different groups”. (Jan 13, 2011)

The American psychoanalyst Erik Erikson (Erikson, 1968 [1994]) wrote about how youth is a time in life that is especially shaped by quick-shifting searching and temporary establishing of identity and belonging. The way that many of the youths in Skogbyen so quickly ‘latched on to’ established social groups is in that respect typical youth behaviour; so was the way these groups gradually dissolved into smaller units as the years went by (though they rarely crossed the ethnic Norwegian/ethnic minority boundary). The ethnic split in Skogbyen loosened over time, as the pupils got to know each other as individuals, and, importantly, as the large group of ethnic minority pupils broke up into smaller groups.

In my material, what is most evident is the *doubleness*: the narratives of ethnic difference on one hand, combined with many examples of constructions of difference, and the de facto multitude of friendships and alliances. Hence, for example, Marte was commonly narrated as a ‘foreigner’, and Nabika, Angela and Emma were often narrated as ‘Norwegian’. Between the ethnic minority peer group and the ethnic Norwegians, there were many others instances of interaction. There weren’t many instances of crossing memberships and friendships inside school, but several of the ethnic minority pupils had close friendships with ethnic Norwegians *outside* school and vice versa. It seemed that social/ethnic groupings became more rigid *within* Skogbyen, and this happened mainly in the beginning.

Like me and not like me

This chapter has described an extensive separation between the students at Skogbyen. The process of splitting began immediately, separating between social groups that partly was and partly became ethnically labelled groups. Although the ethnic labelling

came uneasily and differently for different groups, the process of ethnic labelling and ‘mapping’ nevertheless shows a raised ethnic consciousness. This raised ethnic consciousness may have exaggerated the process of ethnic splitting. The pupils read, mapped and positioned each other and themselves with certain markers that fit into ethnic packages: skin colour, sociolect, humour, place, interpreted through ‘racial common sense’.

The constellations of these ethnically labelled collectives were, in some cases, brought forth by a shared background culture and a language other than Norwegian. These groupings notwithstanding, a main point in this chapter has been to show a substantial release from the meaning of ethnicity in local terms (‘Norwegian’ and ‘foreigner’) and *actual* background country. The content of the ethnic packages was fluid. By fluid I mean that what gave them social relevance was the use to which the markers were put and the combination with other central markers. ‘Norwegian’ and ‘foreign’ in the context of c-class are, therefore, tags that say more about a contextual and possibly temporary individual and group identity than they do about the formal meaning of Norwegian as *ethnic* Norwegian, and certainly more than the person’s legal citizenship status.

The mapping at the beginning of the school year was based on assumptions arising from the pupils taking on board (and reproducing) certain discourses about Skogbyen high school and the pupils who attended the school. The interpretation of oneself and others in terms of ethnic markers means imagining them within a category (or map, to continue with the analogy) that is simultaneously known and unknown, imagined and pre-defined. The use of the word *imagined* doesn’t mean that it is the opposite of factual, but the imagination of similarity or dissimilarity implies a sense of *emotional* belonging that stretches beyond the local towards the national and global, which I will come back to in the next chapter. A central suggestion in this chapter has been that emotions do much of the work of aligning individuals with collectives. I have stressed the pupils’ anticipation and preconceptions, as well as their feelings of experiencing a social ‘fall’ or of coming ‘home’ when they started at Skogbyen. Their varying feelings on realising that they had been accepted at Skogbyen high school “rehearsed feelings already in place”, to cite Sara Ahmed (Ahmed, 2004a: 39). Ahmed argues that emotions make it appear as if a collective were one *body*. The way I interpret Ahmed, this is because emotions are central to the

reading-process of determining 'like me' or 'not-like me', and because the borders between groups are intensified when bodies are read and interpreted.

In this chapter, I have discussed an ethnic split that was partly discursive and partly real. The categories were created because there was a social and emotional need for them; but what did this need really consist of? *Why* and *how* these strong feelings of belonging or difference were evoked is the topic addressed in the next chapter.

5. BELONGING AND BECOMING

When the teacher Ammar entered the group room where Ahlam, Hadi and Marte were sitting, supposed to be doing their maths assignment, Ahlam said to him: “I don’t feel well! And my dad is leaving for Pakistan tomorrow, I don’t want him to go!” She put her head on the desk. “I want new shoes! Dad was going to buy me new shoes!” Ammar responded calmly that there are winter shoes in Pakistan, there is snow there too. Ahlam seemed to forget about the shoe drama and asked Ammar where in Pakistan he is from. Ammar wouldn’t say, he blushed a bit and said that it is such a small place: “You will laugh, it is so tiny! It is only a village”. He abruptly changed the topic to maths, but Ahlam didn’t allow herself to be distracted. She said where in Pakistan she is from, though she corrected herself by saying: “or my dad is from there”. Hadi chimed in: “I am from Islamabad. Well my dad is”, she also corrected herself.

Ahlam joked with Ammar: “So you probably drove a taxi before?” Marte exclaimed that she has to get a taxi home with all the books that she wouldn’t dare to leave in the locker after the break-ins. She pronounced ‘taxi’ with a long ‘aaah’, instead of an ‘æ’. Ahlam laughed surprised: “TAXI?!” She imitated the pronunciation. – “You’re such a foreigner!” Marte laughed and said that “Actually, my dad used to drive a taxi”. Ahlam laughed in a friendly way and said smilingly: “Bloody foreigner family!” (Oct 31 2008)

This chapter is about belonging, and in particular, different *articulations* and *levels* of belonging. Belonging is a central theme in research on migration and transnationalism. The feeling of belonging pertains to a sense of security, attachment, kinship and affinity (Bal and Sinha-Kerkhoff, 2010), and it is intrinsically connected to identity. Sociologist Nira Yuval-Davis (Yuval-Davis, 2007) has developed the term ‘multi-layered citizen’. She states that people have simultaneous citizenships in a number of different communities, for example at the local, ethnic, political, religious,

national or transnational levels. Yuval-Davis suggests that an expanded notion of belonging may illuminate the concept of the multi-layered citizen further.

Aside from these main levels, I suggest here that it is useful when analysing belonging to add another dimension: we need also ask *how* a sense of belonging operates in peoples' lives. Why does Marte so happily identify as 'foreigner', even though she is not – at least not in any juridical sense of the word? What does calling oneself 'foreigner' mean and do to different people in Skogbyen? I propose a theoretical analysis that encompasses different levels and articulations of belonging, in order to grasp better complexities of ethnified and racialised identities and processes. Belonging must be understood both in terms of levels in Yuval-Davis' terms (where, what or whom you feel that you belong to) and in terms of the emotional investments and articulations belonging has in individual lives, for example through articulations such as difference, power, resistance, reluctance, sense of entitlement and longing. In the first part of the chapter, I discuss individual change in relation to skills and qualifications and inner and outer processes at the local peer group level. In the second part, I will turn to belonging at the national level and investigate ambiguities of power, belonging and identities in the relation between the first level (the local peer group) and the second level (the national).

Becoming 'more foreign'

One of the most conspicuous observations that arose from my interviews with the pupils was that many of the pupils experienced a change in themselves when they started Skogbyen. This change was in most cases tied to the social and/or numerical dominance of ethnic minority pupils. Afsheen, a girl with Indian parents, told me about a gradual process that culminated with coming to Skogbyen:

Afsheen: I used to live in [small place outside Oslo]. And there I only had Norwegian friends, I didn't have any foreign ones. And when I moved to Oslo in the sixth grade, I came into the foreign environment here. And it was really weird to see an Indian, because they had a completely different way of thinking. And then everything changed a lot, I really became a foreign girl. Like really really. And the language changed and everything. But now that I have come here, it is even worse!

Ingunn: Yes, have you become more and more?

Afsheen: There are *only* foreigners here!^{xvii}

In Afsheen's description, the process of becoming what she calls 'a foreign girl' was one that was intensified in two stages: first when moving to Oslo and 'coming to the foreign environment' there, and later, when she started Skogbyen high school. In the quote above, Afsheen uses the word *foreigner* as measurement. Many other pupils did this, as though *foreigner* was something that one could become more or less of.

I will take my departure from this to discuss four individual stories of change below. I will, however, first note a more general change that many of the pupils went through, that Afsheen also mentioned above: they changed the way they spoke to include more kebab Norwegian or spoke kebab Norwegian in a more pronounced manner. Many pupils told me that they changed how they spoke according to the context. My field notes reflect this: not until the fourth day at school did I record hearing kebab Norwegian spoken by the pupils. Although this might have been caused by a lapse of attention on my part, it was apparent that at the end of the first weeks, many pupils spoke markedly more kebab Norwegian, particularly during breaks and between themselves. Some pupils became known for speaking kebab Norwegian particularly broadly, as became clear in an auditorium gathering where Abdul was especially talkative. Jamal commented under his breath partly to me and partly into thin air that "Abdul says *walla*³² for each word!" (Aug 22, 2008). Coming back after a break in the fieldwork a couple of months later, I was amazed at the level of kebab Norwegian that the pupils were speaking, even in class. After some months, the following incident happened when the two female pupils, Elif and Inas, were to lead the class in a math lesson. When they were teaching, they included words that were unusual in a teaching context, which every time released a titter of laughter in class when it happened, and a whispering flutter repeating the conspicuous word:

"*Walla*, you must pay attention!" (The class: hehehe, walla!); "Now you have to concentrate, because this one might *jinn*³³ you!" (The class: hehehe, jinn!);

³² *Walla* (k): From Arabic: I swear by Allah.

³³ To jinn (k): from the genie in Arabic folklore: to trick, fool.

“*Masha’Allah*,³⁴ this line is identical to that one!” (the class: *masha’Allah!* Hehehe!) (Nov 6)

Kebab Norwegian contains a mixture of elements from a number of languages and is described within research as a ‘hybrid language’ (Vassenden, 2010, for a study of the Swedish equivalent in a school context, see Jonsson, 2007), following literary scholar Homi Bhabha’s term (Bhabha, 2002). Kebab Norwegian is also hybrid in Bhabha’s sense because it is creative and has aspects of playfulness and in-betweenness (see also Noble et al., 1999, Rosales, 2010). Therefore, while many can recognise elements from their own or their parents’ mother tongue in the mixture, the slang simultaneously gives *no one* a particular ownership. The sociolect thus functioned to construct the ethnic minority pupils as a group across other countless dissimilarities and was perhaps a particularly important identity marker and a marker of belonging to the peer group. This openness meant that ethnic Norwegians could speak it too, under certain conditions that I will come back to below.

However, kebab Norwegian was also inflected with different power-relations. This can be seen in the way the pupils held back from using slang right away at the beginning of the school year. Perhaps they did this so they could establish how socially accepted it was both in front of each other, and in class? If that was the case, this suggests that firstly, they suspected that kebab Norwegian wasn’t appropriate in school before they realised that it was alright to speak it between themselves and to some of the teachers (Ammar in particular). The discrepancy between their usual teachers and Elif and Inas’ teaching language above was what made it funny for the pupils. Secondly, it illustrates that the pupils went through a gradual ‘testing the waters’ in the process of establishing a community. Later in this chapter, I will return to other power aspects of speaking kebab Norwegian.

The change to becoming ‘a foreign girl’, as Afsheen put it, wasn’t necessarily sub-conscious, nor was it only in relation to language. Afsheen’s classmate Uma told me that she switched consciously to make people understand that she understood the people she talked with, and that she also would change her body language and the way she *sat*:

³⁴ *Masha’Allah* (k): From Arabic, expresses thankfulness or joy.

Uma: For example when I speak with foreigners, I change the way I speak a bit, to make them feel that I have more understanding, if you see what I mean. Because if I had spoken like this, then they might feel that I'm on a different level than them. So I sit a bit differently, I word myself differently, just to get them to understand that they are talking to someone who understands them and is similar to them.^{xviii}

Angela, who had two separate groups of friends outside of school that she dubbed 'the Norwegian group' and 'the foreigners', went further; she not only changed the way her spoke, but also her *personality* changed according to whom she was with:

Angela: When I'm with the Norwegians, it is like, my personality kind of changes. The way I talk. Yes. When I'm with the Norwegians, I'm more like... the way *they* are, and then suddenly I'm like that in a way. And then when I'm with the foreigners, I'm like them.^{xix}

Becoming 'more foreign' was, as Afsheen also indicated above, related to values and ways of thinking.

In a study on African Americans from 1978, sociologist William Wilson argued that 'race' and ethnic belonging means less in the long run than does social class, although ethnicity will *feel* more important (Wilson, 1978). To investigate the experience and desire to belong to a community, it is important to ask what being an ethnic minority means in this context. What can actually be traced back to having a different ethnic background from majority Norwegians? Or a different skin colour? What role is played by culture – indeed, what does culture mean in this context? It is also important to consider what could be brought from home. Different experiences, interpretations and meaning frames are genuinely different for different youths, but they, nevertheless, may become important markers in the ethnic packages.

In what follows, I attempt to break belonging up. Through the interviews with the pupils, I realised how belonging operates differently in people's lives, and may be tainted by a range of different emotions, ranging from reluctance to longing. The emotional investments in belonging to certain levels or social locations are good places to start an investigation on the central aspects of belonging. In the section that follows, I will consider the process of changing to become 'more foreign' for some of

the pupils, in terms of how belonging to the peer group could be experienced or articulated in different ways.

Longing to belong

Uma was half Norwegian, half South Asian, and a practicing Muslim. She told me in an interview that she had ‘built herself up as a foreigner’ over time:

Uma: I have in a way built myself up to become more of the... foreigner, in a way. I think I maybe made an unconscious choice once, that I wanted to go in the foreign direction rather than the Norwegian. It may sound rude. It isn’t rudely meant, but I think that... ehm... (quiet). Like it is more *colourful* to be a foreigner. Of course I like the Norwegian culture, and I’m happy that I have a Norwegian mother, because I get to experience a whole lot of the positive Norwegian culture that many foreigners perhaps don’t get the chance to, because they only are, they are only foreigners. They don’t have a Norwegian mother or Norwegian father or anything.^{xx}

Although Uma uses the word *unconscious* to describe her choice of becoming ‘more foreign’, as it might well have been, the process she described is also a self-reflexive one, especially the reasoning behind this change: she values more highly ‘being a foreigner’. Her ethnic Norwegian mother supported this choice:

Uma: I’m like a culture person, kind of. I love different cultures, and if you’d seen my group of friends, you’d see that the people – I know people from Bosnia, Turkey, Vietnam... People from many countries in Africa. And my mother actually wanted me to go in the class with many foreigners. Because in that way I can kind of relate – or then it is easier to find someone to relate to.

Ingunn: How?

Uma: Well, like with, only with cultural understanding, and perhaps understanding religions and things like that. I was happy for it. And in a way... I feel as I can be a bit more *me*, in the sense that I can manage to be a bit more of the foreign side of me. Because I wouldn’t make that side very big if I’m surrounded by very many Norwegians.^{xxi}

Being a ‘culture person’ is related to not only being an ethnic minority, but also seeking out the ‘foreign’ part of herself. The process of becoming ‘more foreigner’ was a contextual one, dependent on others to be elicited, as for Afsheen and Angela.

Uma’s story can give central insights into *internal* reasons to wish for such a change. She told me that her father had had a difficult time in Norway. She also told me about problems she had previously had with her parents, which resulted in her seeking out and avoiding her home a lot when she was a few years younger. She thought that it was her father’s difficulties in being accepted in Norway that were the indirect causes of her problems with her parents; his painful experiences were, she thought, the reasons why the conflict level was often high within her family.

Uma: The problem I think has been that dad really has had a pretty bad time in Norway. Like he hasn’t been accepted by my mother’s family for example, because his skin is darker, and he is a Muslim, and things like that. And my mother’s family are Christians. And I think they had imagined mum would marry a Norwegian.^{xxii}

That she experienced problems which arose from a lack of acceptance of other cultures is likely to have led her accentuate herself as a ‘culture person’, tolerant and ‘colourful’. Moreover, the fact that she was half Norwegian made her perhaps more conscious about the process of becoming ‘more foreign’ than other pupils in her class, as she experienced the ethnic split (in class and beyond) strongly and saw herself as having a foot in each camp. In her narrative, she presents it as though she had made a *choice of sides*. Experiences with racism were conspicuously brought into her own family, and this gave her some paradoxical and demanding challenges: did the racism that she experienced through her father, make her perhaps – consciously or unconsciously – more adamant to become more like ‘a foreigner’ like him? She already shared with him some of the central characteristics that she named, darker skin and being a Muslim, what Paul Ricoeur would call parts of her *idem* identity. Desires and emotions are important aspects of identity narratives, perhaps especially when they are about belonging (Ricoeur, 1992). In other words, identity narratives may reflect emotional investments and the desire to belong (Yuval-Davis, 2006: 202). As I discussed in chapter 2, Ricoeur suggested analytically separating identity into

two aspects: the first answers the question *what are you* – which he called *idem identity*, and may have answers like: a fifteen year old girl, born in Norway, who looks this-and-that way. *Idem* means *sameness*; it may change, but this aspect of our identity is what makes it possible to recognise us. Our narrative identity takes into account not only *idem identity* – national identity, our biology and how we look, for example – but also how others interpret us on the basis of *idem*. As Nira Yuval-Davis states, identities are narratives that tell stories of who we are and aren't, who we were and perhaps most of all, who we may become (Yuval-Davis, 2006: 202). Uma's self-narrative of being or becoming a 'foreigner' encompasses past, present and future. The positive connotations of belonging to the ethnic minority peer group were founded in her personal history, and her *idem identity* conditioned it. She drew on available discourses in the present; the open and tolerant nature of this group was also the first thing that many of the other Skogbyen pupils remarked on, as we saw in the previous chapter.

Reluctant belonging

Being part of Uma's peer group had different connotations and articulations. For Afsheen, the positive discourses that seemed most important to Uma carried less weight, and belonging to an ethnic minority community wasn't entirely unproblematic. In the quote at the beginning of this chapter, Afsheen used the word *worse* when she referred to how she had become 'more foreign' by the influence of Skogbyen where there are 'only foreigners'. She mentioned that she changed some values and opinions, and that she disliked this change in her.

Afsheen's parents were from India. She turned out to be one of the most articulate on the way that her background from India shaped her, perhaps because she had moved to Oslo and into the presence of what she called 'the Indian culture' later in life. In the interview with me, her cultural consciousness may have been exaggerated by my whiteness and Norwegianness – she seemed to take it for granted that her notion of culture(s) was new to me, judging by the pedagogic way in which she explained it. Therefore, I will follow discuss Afsheen in some detail, in order to gain some insights into the local culture and the 'background culture', which were so central to her personal narrative. She had just told me how she felt as though she had

become ‘more foreign girl’, as seen in the quote from the beginning of this chapter, before she elaborated further:

Afsheen: Because you live in a country like Norway, you learn what there is about your culture, you know everything. You know, from childhood, not because your parents talk about it, but you have Indian channels at home. Parents speaking Indian. You will learn everything. You will catch it in school, too. But from foreigners, you only hear the same again and again. “Yes, mum said I wasn’t allowed to do this. I can’t do that. Dad said this and that”. And you don’t learn anything from *that*. And when you’re in a country like Norway, you *have* to learn something. Plus, most people speak – they can’t even speak the language properly.^{xxiii}

Afsheen presents Norway’s *culture* as something that one continuously had to learn and to work at, it wasn’t something that came easily. In her opinion, immigrants and their children didn’t do well enough – *they can’t even speak the language properly*, as she puts it. On the other hand, she saw the *Indian* culture as easily accessible; *you know everything about this culture*, Afsheen said, as though its reservoir had been empty, as a well that was drained. The Indian culture she describes as her parents’, and not wholly hers. Afsheen might learn her parents’ culture, but she didn’t gain anything new from it. The culture of her peers is presented as though it stems from a static *idea* of culture, something which they can move closer or further away from, becoming more or less ‘foreigner’. Conversely, it is as though the culture transmitted to Afsheen by her parents is a ‘culture gone stale’. She implied a certain type of strictness in (her) parents that is further increased by the meeting with the immigrant community – what she calls culture – in Oslo:

Afsheen: If I still had lived [outside Oslo], I don’t think dad would... he isn’t, not that he is that strict now, but he wouldn’t have been strict in exactly the same way.

Ingunn: No?

Afsheen: You see? Because then the Indian culture wasn’t there! You see? Then he wouldn’t have thought so far.^{xxiv}

Afsheen recognised that her parents' culture was, on one hand, something remote: something from another country and from the past. On the other hand, she also recognised that it was present and augmented at the same time; it was both selectively strengthened and frozen in time.

In the quote above, Afsheen indicated the importance of what the parents, family and 'the others' think in the local Indian-Norwegian culture. Norms could notably be broken by drinking alcohol and smoking, but the most important set of rules pertained to sexuality. She told me how she wouldn't 'make out' (*rote*) with boys, because she would immediately get marked as 'a whore' by her peers, including those she considered close friends. From Afsheen's point of view, religion served as a blanket to cover over misdeeds against the parents' and local culture's norms. Those who *seem to be* the most religious are those who most frequently break the rules, Afsheen said: "Because they lie so much! It is only to play angels for the grown-ups, it is... the whole thing is just to create an image that says that this person is really good, to the adults".^{xxv} Appearing to be or being religious could serve as a form of subterfuge against control in the immigrant community.

The children must worry about what the parents think, because they in their turn worry about what other Indians in Norway think:

Afhsheen: You know, it is other people, like it is respect, right. That your father or mother has respect in the Indian community, Pakistani community. So it's like: "Yes, your daughter or your son did this and that". It is mostly when it's the daughter. The son too, but it is a lot more if it is the daughter. You have probably read books about it.^{xxvi}

She was right; many books have been written on this subject. Authors have mostly found that girls are treated more strictly by their families than boys, and this is often explained through religion (see for example Prieur, 2004, Øia and Vestel, 2007, Jacobsen, 2002). Afhsheen's reluctance towards the staleness of her parents' and the Indian community's culture and strict rules, especially in relation to girls, was partly also conferred on to the peer community, whom she perceived as too watchful and punishing. However, the peer community was something she participated in to a large extent. The peer community resembles more the current view of *living culture* in culture studies: it is continually in change, dynamic and will change according to the

participants and contexts (see for example Gulbrandsen, 2002). Living culture is created in interaction in everyday situations like in Skogbyen, and must be understood in relation to the past, to the present and future as also *about to be* created on this basis (Andersson et al., 2005: 19).

The American sociologist Yen Le Espiritu writes about both first and second-generation American-Filipinos. She calls immigrant parents “self-appointed guardians of ‘authentic’ cultural memory”, who attempt to regulate their daughters behaviour (Espiritu, 2001: 433). She concludes that the rhetoric of moral superiority is “enforced by powers of memory and nostalgia” and leads to “patriarchal calls for a cultural ‘authenticity’ that locates family honor and national integrity in the group’s female members” (Espiritu, 2001: 435). In Afsheen’s case, parents weren’t the only ‘self-appointed guardians.’ In her opinion, extended networks including peer groups and friends in the Indian community *all* served as guardians. This might make *her* a possible guardian too, as her ‘outing’ of her seemingly pious friends may indicate, but also simultaneously a conciliator, negotiator and referee, sometimes refereeing from the side, sometimes being in the middle of the game.

Afsheen’s last sentence implies knowledge of the image of ethnic minority girls in Norway, and shows the kind of discourses that *she* bought into most readily. That the daughter often must bear the weight of the family’s respectability is a part of the big story that they might tell and be told about themselves, reflected in the media and in academic literature, and that was prevalent in the peer group. Most ethnic minority pupils would probably have to grapple with stereotypes and negative discourses about ethnic minorities on some level. As Howard Winant argues, individuals are placed into a wider racial order in which they are cast (Winant in Knowles, 1999: 110).

A working-class trajectory

To have a non-Western background could be an important cultural marker in the ethnic package that signified one as ‘foreigner’, but as we now shall see in the case of Marte, it was not essential. Marte’s trajectory was a more radical self-narration than that of Afsheen and Uma. To understand this, her class background is central.

Marte was an ethnic Norwegian girl, but she identified as a ‘foreigner.’ The ethnic minority pupils also recognised this, calling her alternately Somali, Pakistani,

Moroccan and a number of other nationalities, in a fond or jokey manner. She wore black and white clothes like many of the other ethnic minority girls, a ‘Palestine scarf’, baggy, hooded jumpers, and her bodily contours were hard to discern behind the layers of clothing. She had converted to Islam a year before starting Skogbyen, she had grown up in the local area, all her best friends were Muslim, and she spoke a broad kebab Norwegian. In the field note that opened this chapter, it became clear that Marte’s dad used to drive a taxi, which often is stereotyped as an ‘immigrant’ male occupation, and was quickly labelled as such by Ahlam in the situation described above. Marte recognised that people identified her as ‘not Norwegian’ because of her way of speaking. In the interview with Marte and her best friend Orri, a girl with parents from Northern Africa, they told me:

Marte: When I meet people, they say: “I don’t think, I don’t think that you are Norwegian”. Then I think: “Why not!” (laughter). It is probably because of the way I speak. I speak Norwegian, but the thing is that if you go to a [nearby place] and hear how youths speak there, they speak just the same as I do.

Orri: While I, I speak pretty much like – I speak very Norwegian. Because you can’t speak like we do when you’re grown-up. So then I’ll learn words like that.^{xxvii}

Marte’s story may help bring out another emotional meaning of belonging to a group such as the ethnic minority pupils, as well as emotional and personal meanings of social background. Marte was very conscious about her family’s social position in the interview with me. When I asked about whether Marte got any help at home with schoolwork, she blushed, pulled the hood of her college jumper over her head and slumped down on her chair, arms folded in front of her chest, eyes averted. It could not be clearer that she found the question difficult. While Marte hesitated to answer, Orri said tentatively: “She’s... ill, isn’t she?” She looked at Marte. Marte answered slowly: “She is... ill...”. “I don’t think they know very much”, Marte exclaimed eventually.

Moments before, Orri had told me happily about her good grades and the valuable help and encouragement she received at home from her parents. Orri was clearly conscious of the difference between Marte and herself, as she was aware of the fact that kebab Norwegian wasn’t a valuable asset for when they are ‘grown-ups’, yet

acknowledges that she speaks in a very ‘Norwegian way’. At the same time, she toned the difference between her and Marte down by saying using the word ‘we’ – ‘speak the way *we* do’. Orri explained to me, when I asked, whether it mattered that they received different amounts of help from home, that they helped each other out: sometimes Marte helped her, sometimes she helped Marte. Orri struck me as empathetically fine-tuned to her friend’s needs. Her friendship seemed to create emotional stability and a safe haven for Marte.

In the interview, Marte told me that she sometimes had trouble understanding ‘very Norwegian words’. After some confusion, it turned out that what she meant by ‘Norwegian words’ were loanwords and more complicated words, which she said she didn’t understand, and she laughingly told me: “I have tried to say some Norwegian words, but then she [Orri] tells me [laughter] that they are wrong!” At this point, the feel of the interview is light and full of laughter – in stark contrast to the tense atmosphere when we talked about Marte’s home situation and the perceived lack of knowledge Marte found there. Marte and Orri laughed about the fact that Marte is so ‘un-Norwegian’. Implicitly, Norwegian was connected with knowing difficult words. Orri both knew and used those difficult words.

This little passage serves as a profound metaphor for the aspects of Marte’s situation that I want to illuminate. Here, she is re-narrating her own lack of understanding and relating that to being as a *foreigner*, which is the way her classmates willingly interpret her. However, this lack was not about being an ethnic minority, nor is it really about being ‘foreigner’, or adopting that ethnic package. This becomes especially clear in juxtaposition with Orri, who had a ‘real’ ethnic minority background; Orri not only knows the difficult words and helps explain them to Marte, but consoles her and helps save Marte’s face by telling me that “but sometimes she helps me, too”. Being a poor, un-knowledgeable Norwegian was an unsuitable identity. What we may think of as characteristics of certain segments of Norwegian working class evoked for Marte, it seemed, traces of shame. Acting and being interpreted as ‘foreign’, however, was an identity that was filled with pride; in the context of Skogbyen, some words or labels like Pakistani evoked a secure sense of community, of culture and history. Marte was visibly relieved when her ‘being foreign’ was the topic of conversation. Marte’s story indicates that at Skogbyen school, most particularly within the c-class, this may be a far more dignified identity category than being white working-class. Marte’s story also suggests that the un-

markedness of whiteness as a racial and ethnic characteristic may obscure the white working class experiences.

In a study of whiteness in American high schools, the American sociologist Pamela Perry suggests that both social background and gender gave authenticity to a similar informant in her material, what Perry calls ‘cross-over’. In her material, the white youths who cross-identified with African Americans were working-class youth, mostly girls. Perry goes on to suggest that what the pupils in her material share is a similar experience of growing up as poor or working-class in the same neighbourhoods as African Americans, which “resulted in similar styles and ways of being” (Perry, 2002: 51-2). Perry’s finding is interesting: why mostly girls? Might it have something to do with girls’ sexuality and the treatment of Norwegian girls? I will consider this in more detail in chapter 8.

However, boys could also be ‘cross-overs’: in Maria Bäckman’s study *Miljonsvennar* she presents one informant, a white Swedish boy she calls André, who like Marte considers himself a ‘foreigner’. In a poignant passage, Bäckman shows how André struggles with what I would term a lack of multicultural *qualifications*: he lacked a set of knowledge and ‘authentic’ belonging to foreign countries or cultures. He tells Bäckman how each boy in the group of friends would tell how it is in *his* country, and whenever it is his turn, he sits completely quiet and can’t think of a word to say (Bäckman, 2009a: 230-1). As he was highly invested in belonging to this group, André experienced this lack of ‘qualifications’ as a real problem, perhaps because his friends teased him about his ‘un-foreignness’. Marte, too, lacked the same qualification, the same part of her *idem* identity that would make her fit more easily into her friendship group – but in contrast with André, she didn’t present this as a problem. Rather, she re-narrated herself as ‘foreigner’ without dwelling on what could possibly make her not fit in, focussing instead on what made her not fit in as a ‘typical Norwegian’, namely speaking ‘Norwegian’, as we saw above, as well as her religion, values and habits.

It is useful, I suggest, to separate between multicultural qualifications and multicultural *competence*. Despite successfully re-narrating herself as ‘foreigner’, Marte had a limited *multicultural competence*, especially with regards to language: she didn’t act according to central codes from Norwegian official or semi-official sites (like the school as pedagogic institution). Although she shared many of the markers in the ‘foreign’ ethnic package of the peer group, her competence was more

limited than Orris, Afsheen or Uma's, who in different ways showed that they could change and handle different contexts that demanded a more 'Norwegian' language. Marte could not code-switch at will.

"I wish I was a foreigner here"

Iselin went through a different trajectory to become a 'culture person', to use Uma's words. In the interview some months after school started, Iselin told me how she felt the start of school as 'terrible':

Iselin: The main problem is, well, it isn't that bad, but the main problem is perhaps that, ehm, I w..., do you see, I wish I had, I wish I was a foreigner here! I wish I was from Pakistan or... India or someplace, it would have been so much better. People would have taken you in at once, you are 'G', you are 'gangster', you are, you live here and... If I had lived here at [local area around the school], came from Pakistan, being a girl, then I wouldn't have any problems. At least that's what I think. As soon as they see: Girl, from the city centre, and blonde, ... you know, like white, it's "we'll have a bit of, she will, she will, we'll show her who's in charge around here! – you see?"^{xxviii}

From the beginning, Iselin's experience of marginalisation is shaped by a combination of cultural, gendered and racialised signs, specifically, she thinks it is her skin colour and where she is from that marks her as different. This illuminates how the reading of bodily and material signs may be interpreted and gain immediate social meaning, read with a 'racial common-sense' (cf. Omi and Winant, 1994) that also is gendered and sexualised. Iselin lacked both a multicultural competence to fit in with the ethnic minority peer group, and she lacked specific qualifications that she presents as crucial to be included, like skin colour and where she was from. What she presents as a material and symbolic contextual lack in her idem identity led to a physical, social and symbolic marginalisation. After only a few days, Iselin changed class to a class with more ethnic Norwegians in it, and she told me that she gradually became more involved with her new class-mates. In October, she announced happily that she had now had made friends in class, but that others still harassed her and called her a whore:

"I'm in hell every day here!", she exclaimed after she told me this. Then she went on to tell me that she wanted to switch school next year, but she was guaranteed a place at Skogbyen next year so she didn't know. "I learn so much here that I wouldn't have elsewhere, and meet lots of different people! My girlfriends have caught me speaking kebab Norwegian several times, they're like "Oooh, Iselin, you have to take care so that you don't become completely 'paki!'", Iselin mimicked her friends (Oct 31, 2008).

In November, she told me that she consciously tried to mix with the pupils who had harassed her:

Iselin: First it was like, the foreigners were like "Oh, Iselin, you're so blonde" or "you're such a bimbo" or... They said stuff like that is kind of rude, and they thought "Oh my God, why is she in this class, she is so stuck-up [soss]" or something. But now, I actually sit with them in the cafeteria, I sat with them, and so it is... a lot of drama. The other girls, the ones I'm *with*, Nina, Hanne and Heidi, who are the ones that I kind of *have*, who are Norwegian, they won't, they, they, they won't... they want me to stick to them only! I think that when I'm starting here at this school, everybody ought to be together, because I too have to have a network! But they are like: "no, we want to be only us!" All the girls are in the same class. I am alone. That's why I need my own network. So I remember that I got a lot of stick because of that.^{xxix}

She acknowledged a need to fend for herself and establish social ties, and she consciously worked on bridging the racial-ethnic borders. To do this, she had to overcome the obstacles put in her way by her ethnic Norwegian acquaintances, who openly wanted to refrain from mixing. This was especially difficult as these were 'the ones she *had*, who were Norwegian', as she said, blurring the lines between ethnic markers and who may or may not be allies or friends.

Gradually, Iselin managed to get some friends in class. In December, about a month after the interview with Iselin quoted above, I spoke with her during lunch one day:

I asked if she had had a nice weekend, and she responded: “No, not particularly!” She told me that she was at a ‘stuck-up party’ on the west-side and that she had invited Jamal from class, and then they hadn’t been let in! Iselin said that they were only racist. They said that Jamal and his mates had stolen from a friend’s party another time, but Iselin couldn’t believe that this was true. Iselin said: “Only a few months ago, *I* would probably have denied him entrance! Oh, I’m so happy that I go here! *There*, they are so narrow-minded, and, yes, racist!” (Dec 12, 2008).

Iselin went through an actual path of change in her actions and in her values. Her identity narrative as more anti-racist now than before Skogbyen fit well into both her identity as an equality-oriented Norwegian, and into the ‘colourful community’-maxim at Skogbyen. This also marked a separation from old friends in a narrative strategy characterised by a shifting around what Sara Ahmed has referred to as *sticky* categories (Ahmed, 2004b), categories such as ‘racist’ and ‘stuck-up’ – labels that had been used to describe Iselin herself in several instances previously.

Identity, belonging and culture

Drawing on these four stories, I wish to highlight some central themes in the processes discussed above. Firstly, these girls indicated a path to becoming ‘more foreign’, which was more pronounced for some than for others. This was a change in aspects of their identity that was strongly entwined with their sense of *belonging* to the ethnic minority group. Identity formation is especially tied to group belonging in youth, indeed, psychoanalyst Erik Erikson (Erikson, 1968 [1994]) has argued that it is not possible to separate personal growth from change within groups. According to Erikson, the way that teens understand themselves and form their identity is particularly active, vulnerable and formative during youth. They experiment with roles, groups and niches, and try out value systems, but these roles and value systems are limited. My point here is that the signalled group belonging and the way identity is changing may look as though they tell similar tales on the surface, but they might nevertheless hide different trajectories. On the surface, it appears that these girls all wish to belong to the same extended ethnic minority peer group, to varying extents.

Nevertheless, they have widely different reasons for wishing to do so, and they attribute different values to the same culture. Uma longs to belong to something different than what Afsheen does, for example. Uma is propelled forth by a driving force in her personal life and what she articulates as the welcoming tolerance and acceptance of this group. Afsheen's reluctance to belong to the same group is brought forth by her more negative associations. Perhaps this is because she is also dealing with a perceived lack of choice in whether she was to belong to this particular group or not.

Secondly, their reasons for belonging notwithstanding, the pupils' feelings of belonging seemed to change certain of their practices and values, especially language, and certain personal ideas and values. Their sense of belonging and identity *shaped their practice*. At the same time, their practice could influence their degree of belonging to the 'new' group, like Iselin who gradually tried to act in a more tolerant way with the specific goal of establishing a 'network'.

The possibilities of belonging, however, were limited and conditioned by other intersecting categories. Marte could belong more easily than Iselin perhaps because of their different resources and where they had grown up, but also, as I shall come back to in the two next chapters, in terms of school performance and sexuality. The third point is, therefore, that although there were different possibilities and paths that the pupils could take, *expressions of ethnicity were still limited*. "Self-understanding", Ricoeur wrote, "passes through the detours of understanding the cultural signs in which the self documents and forms itself" (Ricoeur, 2006 [1981]: 158). The realisation of this self-understanding works in the present. The pupils who, for instance, spoke broader and broader kebab Norwegian were enacting this self-realisation, like playing the score of music is enacting the music (cf. Ricoeur, 2006 [1981]: 159). However, like a score of music, or a text, the number of interpretations is limited: despite the pupils' creative re-narration, ethnicity is clearly not a matter of free choice.

Fourth, the question of possible expressions of ethnicity also concerns which elements of ethnicity are changeable and which are less changeable. There are different views on this. For example, the Norwegian anthropologist Fredrik Barth (Barth, 1998 [1969]) contended that boundaries and identities mostly stay the same, while their content might change. Many current researchers follow Barth (see for example Fangen, 2007, Vassenden, 2010) in that ethnic boundaries and ethnic

identities are viewed as more durable than ethnic practice and culture. As Barth writes (Barth, 1998 [1969]: 9-10), despite a flow of persons across boundaries, the boundary will stay the same, and people will be reluctant to change in ways that jar with the value system of their main group. Thus, Barth's focus was on the stability of both identities and boundaries. I agree that identity is more durable than culture on the level that Barth discussed it, that is, if we are talking about idem identity ('what you are'), and if by culture we mean practice and traditions. However, I want to leave these aspects of identity and culture aside for the moment, and focus only on the aspects of identity and culture that the Skogbyen girls emphasised above.

With the help of Ricoeur's dual notion of identity, Barth's position may be qualified somewhat, and in this specific context turned on its head. Identity as *ipse* (narrative identity, 'who you are'), and culture as *ideas* of culture is precisely the way the girls above talk about these issues. Culture is mostly discussed on a stable, idea-like level, sometimes a stereotypical level: 'foreigners' speak kebab Norwegian, live in certain parts of Oslo, are noisy, believe that girls should be restricted in terms of dating and sex, and are more open and tolerant than ethnic Norwegians. These are some of the most common collective narratives I found circulating in Skogbyen high school. When some of the girls above talk about 'becoming more foreign', it is these fastened ideas that they perceive themselves as moving closer to. My point is that their idea of ethnic minority culture in Norway, however varied, is still more durable than their ipse identity (though not more durable than their idem identity). It is difficult to deal with identity/practice dichotomously in the way that follows from Barth precisely because ipse identity is closely entwined with practice. In the cases of these four girls, ipse identities were fluid and changeable, but with clear limitations. Values and practices like language were, on the other hand, what all of them saw as more stable entities, something that they might change towards. Who they *could* be was re-narrated and re-interpreted as they seemed to move toward more stable collective narratives.

Box in a box

There are two important analytical distinctions I would like to highlight in relation to levels of belonging in Skogbyen. On one side, there was belonging to the 'small we': to the peer group, for example calling oneself 'foreigner' so as to *belong* to the group

of ‘foreigners’. This first belonging I have viewed above in relation to the relative power the pupils had locally and the dignity that was derived from belonging to this group. On the other side, there is belonging to the ‘big we’: to Norway. For example *feeling* like a foreigner, like an outsider in Norway. A common theme in the interviews with the minority ethnic pupils was that they didn’t feel that they were ‘real’ Norwegian citizens; they did not *really* belong. These instances of ‘falling between two chairs’ are commonly noted in other studies (see for example Walle, 2010, Prieur, 2004). Cultural, social and/or religious differences were one side of this. Another side was skin colour.

To Yalda, whose parents were from India, the experience of difference was external: it was her skin colour that could hypothetically make her a Norwegian. When I asked what constitutes a Norwegian person for her, she answered: “That person is completely like other people, only that it is, well, white. The skin. It is really the skin colour that makes them [Norwegian]”.^{xxx} The identity of ‘foreigner’ was often separated into a *positive* belonging to the peer group as I have discussed above, and a *negative* or at least troubled belonging to Norway. Yalda told me that she “started to think about this now, in the first grade [of high school], that we are foreigners wherever we go. I just think it is funny. (laughs) It is funny!”^{xxxi} Both sides of feeling like a foreigner – belonging to the ethnic minority community, and not belonging to a shared Norwegianness, which Yalda defined here as being *white* – became accentuated when she started at Skogbyen. There was, in short, an intensification of the *meaning* of ethnicity that went hand in hand with the intensification of ethnic borders that I discussed in chapter 4. She laughed when she told me this and said that it is funny. However, what was funny about this subject was not so obvious to me. One interpretation could be that the laughter was to cover up uncomfortable emotions of un-belonging and perhaps experiences of racism, or just because talking about this to me could have been felt awkward. Another interpretation could be that her laughter when talking about the fact that ‘they’ are perpetual foreigners isn’t only bad. Because what she communicated is already double: there is the ‘they’ that experience this feeling otherness *together*. Emotions of difference and belonging are thereby intertwined, augmented perhaps by the fact that the experienced ‘foreignness’ that Yalda indicates was something that pupils might have discussed between themselves when they met at Skogbyen school. As a ‘box in a box’, these two levels, that of Norway as an imagined community and that of the local ethnic

minority peer group, turned out to be the most salient in understanding belonging in the c-class.

There was a strong tendency for the pupils to view a sense of belonging to one group in ‘the inner box’ as simultaneously reducing the probability of belonging to the opposite group in ‘the outer box’. For example, belonging to the ethnic minority peer group in school seemed to encourage (at least the expression of) un-belonging to being Norwegian on the national level (and also vice versa, as I will show below). However, the relationship between the layers of belonging was complex and ambiguous. There were also instances where ethnic minority pupils expressed affinity with practices or items invested with national meaning that crossed these lines. Imran expressed a reflexive articulation of his relationship to national symbols one day we went on a hike into the woods:

We walked to a pond in the woods. The pupils were told to light a fire. The teachers told them to make four groups, and each group must contain both girls and boys. Imran’s group managed to light a fire quickly, while a group with Mohammad and three others I didn’t know seemed to have a hard time doing the assigned task. Imran came over to Mohammad and said: “You have to do it Norwegian style, you know!” He laughed. Mohammad replied by way of throwing himself around a boy in his group’s neck while pretending to sob violently: “We just can’t do it!” The teacher came over to help, and finally they got the fire going. (Aug 29 2008)

Getting the fire going is labeled here as Norwegian. Making fires in the woods or other settings ‘in nature’, and hiking are common symbols of Norwegian national identity (Eriksen, 1993, Jacobsen, 2002). However, the boy who managed the task first rewrote it as an act of a particular *Norwegian style*, and it became a matter of playful pride in this context to be able to achieve this style. Imran apparently had a clear notion of what was entailed in starting a fire *in Norwegian style*, and he was confident that he was doing it correctly. His tongue-in-cheek joke also showed a humoristic distance from this ‘style’. Perhaps his laughter was similar to Yalda’s ambiguous laughter when she said that she thought it was funny that they were always considered foreign.

The Norwegian sociologists Tormod Øia and Viggo Vestel found that an increased amount of second-generation immigrants to Norway see themselves as Norwegian as opposed to ‘foreign.’ In the report that reflects on a large statistical data sample from 2006, they found the numbers had increased from 46,3% in 1996 to 70,5% in 2006 (Øia and Vestel, 2007). Although not a representative sample, many of the ethnic minority pupils in my study reported that they felt ‘foreign’, but not all the time, and it was something that could increase and diminish in intensity. In other words, feelings of belonging are highly contextual. In other contexts than the school with its special subgroups, it is possible that they would have felt and called themselves Norwegians. I think there is a discrepancy between Øia and Vestel’s findings and my findings here for two reasons: firstly, because of the different methods used in each study, and secondly because of the particular local balance of power at Skogbyen school. With regard to methods, perhaps the pupils used the word ‘foreigner’ in relation to themselves with different layers of meaning, compared to how people might do so when answering questions in a survey like the *Ung i Oslo* survey. Using the word itself in a social context could be done in jest or seriously, and mean difference, as in Yalda’s apparent meaning above, or as I will propose below, using the word may in itself be a mark of belonging. I saw my respondents as they used the word ‘foreigner’ *in context*, which enables me to analyse “what people do with words to create and structure meaning” (Gubrium and Holstein, 2009: 25). The second point is closely related to this: in Skogbyen, being a ‘foreigner’ lent some local power, therefore, calling oneself ‘foreigner’ in that context was perhaps more likely there than in a survey. My contention is that the word ‘foreigner’ is used significantly differently in relation to different levels of belonging. It is a word with many inflections, many personal interpretations and many small stories interweaved into it.

Talking about difference

I will end this chapter with an analysis of the work that words like *foreigner* may do in practice. The Russian philosopher and literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin highlighted how language contains not only syntax and grammar, but also knowledge of genres or discourses prevalent at a given time; he also suggested that language always is a site of struggle (Bakhtin, 1981). Words convey an *evaluative accent*, a kind of judgement

(Wetherell et al., 2001: 65). Words like ‘foreigner’ or even naming ‘background countries’ are potent examples of conflicting judgments between local and historical evaluations of a word. One side of this was the local belonging signalled by being able to use such words. During the first days in school, I saw how differently the ethnic minority pupils talked about ethnic and racial difference, compared to the way I was used to talking about it. Their manner was much more direct. I overheard many conversations like this one, between a boy and a girl meeting each other for the first time: “Where are you from?” asked the girl. “Kurdistan. Are you too?” the boy answered. Whenever it was clear that ethnicity would be a relevant identity marker, ethnicity was commonly made explicit, as when Malika asked me: “Do you have a boyfriend? Is he Norwegian?” Another aspect of this directness was the friendly joking related to country backgrounds, often tied to stereotypes, such as: “you stupid Turk”, “Did you get 5 on the test, whaaat, Paki?!”.

On the other hand, there were many pupils who weren’t really sure about the meaning of ‘foreigner’ and related words in the local Skogbyen ‘genre’. This was particularly the case for ethnic Norwegians. As Uma put it:

Uma: What I don’t like is that many foreigners have that ‘fuck the Norwegians’ attitude. Like “they are racists” blah blah blah. But saying *that* is racist! And now, the Norwegians are actually incredibly afraid of saying the wrong thing. Especially when it is about explain-, talking about foreigners.^{xxxii}

For many of the ethnic Norwegians in c-class, especially the ones who hadn’t grown up in the area around the school, the historical and the institutional use of words denoting difference was infused with cultural requirements of tolerance and equity. Norwegians in general are noted to be ‘tactful’ when in contact with others who are perceived as ‘different’ in obvious ways, if this difference implies also a stigma or taboo - for example in terms of ethnicity and ‘race’, sexual orientation or handicap.³⁵ As Harald Eidheim (Eidheim, 1998 [1969]) notes when analysing Norwegian and Sami contact, the Norwegians – only in ethnically homogenous settings – discussed ‘the Lappish syndrome’ to contrast it to what they considered to be the Norwegian

³⁵ In a comment on the “Year of diversity 2008” in Norway (“Mangfoldsåret 2008”) Borchgrevink and Brochmann comment that it is difficult to talk about the problematic aspects of the so-called *diversity* (Borchgrevink and Brochmann, 2008).

character. He mentions in a footnote how a teacher in his study said: “I know that many of my pupils are Lapps, of course, I have the tact not to take notice of the fact” (Eidheim, 1998 [1969]: 57).

A typical struggle between tact and the need to communicate occurred in the interview with Ingrid, when she told me about Malika, a girl in another class whom Ingrid felt had a grudge against her:

Ingunn: What is it with Malika? Why is it...

Ingrid: She just has some bee or other in her bonnet when it comes to me. And it is *not* me being prejudiced when I say that she is a bit... nuts, and, ehm, a terrible person. Because I know that she really portrays herself that way. She *wants* me to think that. I don't know why she doesn't like me. If it is because... I don't know. If it is the fact that she is... No, I really have no idea.^{xxxiii}

Ingrid's narrative stumbling suggests that she has more than an inkling about why Malika dislikes her, but she stops herself from articulating it. This also comes across in her need to convince me that it's not about her *own* prejudice, even before she has said anything other than that Malika dislikes her. She then stumbles for a language to talk about *Malika's* prejudice. That she introduces the idea of prejudice before she comes this far is an indication that the difficult issue here may be ethnicity or religion, as those are the sites that were most commonly linked to prejudice in Skogbyen. This anxious political correctness had a related, but almost opposite expression when the ethnic Norwegians discussed female sexuality and gender equality, which I come back to in chapter 7. When discussing Muslim girls' oppression, judging seemed to be acceptable. When discussing their own marginalisation, words failed most of them.

My point here is that the ethnic Norwegians in c-class were hindered by the demands of an anti-racism they didn't quite know how to enact, since the presumed victims themselves used a type of language to talk about difference that the ethnic Norwegian pupils related to the ethnic minority pupils' oppression. This difficulty contributed to the marginalisation of the ethnic Norwegians pupils, firstly because they often lacked, like Ingrid above, the vocabulary to articulate their feelings of marginalisation. Secondly, because using this vocabulary in itself was a token of belonging, *not* using it could be a token of un-belonging. Pamela Perry uses the term

‘cognitive gap’ to explain the problems many white American people have in defining ‘white’ in America (Perry, 2002: 77). In Norway, the cognitive gap may be in relation to talking about difference. As anthropologist Marianne Gullestad pointed out in her research on Norwegian integration debates (Gullestad, 2002) and Norwegian everyday society (Gullestad, 2001 [1984], Gullestad, 1989), people in Norway often must feel similar to feel equally worthy. Differences are under-communicated to be polite (Gullestad, 2002: 82), but notions of similarity are also inherently related to *power*, exclusion and inclusion.

There were exceptions; some ethnic Norwegians had little trouble talking about their feelings of marginalisation. Anna, an ethnic Norwegian girl in another class, exclaimed to me: “I feel racism here! You see? And I, I think it is really strange: racism! I have never experienced racism. And certainly not against a white person! Like, I’m in my country, I’m in Norway!” Entitlement – not only to be protected from marginalisation, but a previously unarticulated and unchallenged entitlement to *belonging* to Norway, is communicated directly here. This entitlement to belonging became manifest and realised for the first time at the moment it was rejected. The same girl also tried to joke the way her classmates joked. This wasn’t always easy, however, without knowing the codes:

Eight or nine pupils and I stood together waiting for the lift to take us to class. A girl and a boy told each other jokes. The jokes followed the pattern of a well-known set of jokes, known in Norway as ‘svensken, dansken og nordmannen’ (the Swede, the Dane and the Norwegian). Here, it was ‘the Paki’, the Indian and the Norwegian. One joke involved cricket, football, and a misunderstanding about a red card; I didn’t catch the punch line, probably because I don’t know the rules of cricket.

The lift arrived, and when we entered, it got almost too crowded for comfort. The joking continued quite loudly, however, and someone laughed: “Imagine if the lift stops now!” We laughed and chattered on. I realised that I’d missed something when a boy suddenly broke through the chatter and asked Anna angrily: Did you really just call him a Jew? At once, the jokes and the lively talk stopped. The tall boy in question looked down at Anna’s head. In the crowded space, she was squeezed in right next to him. I felt instantly tense. Anna answered into the now silent lift with a voice coloured by the

joking mode we just left, saying with her high-pitched voice: It's okay to be Jewish, like, *I believe in Buddha!*³⁶ Her little laugh died all alone. The few seconds before the lift stopped and the doors opened felt excruciatingly long in the dead silence after Anna's joke. When we all poured out into the hallway, Anna in front, alone, I heard a boy at the back of the group exclaim loudly: "Oh, for fuck's sake, Buddha, what a bad joke!"³⁷ (Aug 28 2008).

Many writers in a Nordic and Anglo-American context point out that 'whites', who are numerically the majority and economically and socially more privileged as a group, have the luxury of being the norm; unmarked, whites normally never need to explain themselves or understand themselves as having a skin colour or having an ethnicity (Eriksen, 2002, Reay et al., 2007, Fordham, 1996, Lareau, 2003). Most of the ethnic Norwegians in Skogbyen hadn't been used to seeing themselves as having a 'race' and an 'ethnicity.' Now, they were constantly marked as white and as Norwegians, or sometimes as 'potatoes', slang for 'white Norwegian'. In Ricoeur's terms, that their idem identity was 'out of place' made others' perception of them, and therefore their own ipse identity, change. 60 years ago, Franz Fanon wrote in *Black Skin, White Masks*:

A normal child that has grown up in a normal family will be a normal man. There is no disproportion between the life of the family and the life of the nation. But – and this is a most important point – we observe the opposite in the man of color. A normal Negro child, having grown up within a normal family, will become abnormal on the slightest contact with the white world. (Fanon, 2008 [1952]: 109-111)

In Skogbyen, the mechanics were the other way around: many of the ethnic Norwegians *lived the life of the nation* but were *abnormal* at school. By this I mean that their speech genre knowledge, to use Bakhtin's term, mirrored an equality discourse. This is an 'upperdog language' which did not give these students any 'cred' amongst the ethnic minority pupils. The ethnic Norwegian pupils' knowledge that 'race' and ethnicity were infested discursive areas of taboos and stigmas created

³⁶ "Det er vel greit å være jøde vel, jeg tror jo på Buddha, lissom!"

³⁷ "Åh, fy faen, Buddha, for en dårlig kødd!"

an uncertainty about how best to approach difference. As Mica Pollock has argued in a study of how pupils and teachers talked about ‘race’ in an American high school (Pollock, 2004), talking about ‘race’ and ethnicity is fraught with dilemmas. The biggest paradox, she states, is that we know that racialised groups are genetic fictions, but they are nonetheless social realities.

In practice, this dilemma could result in situations like this:

Inas told Marte and Orri that she got a grade 3 in a test. They sat in a half-empty classroom where they were supposed to work on a science assignment. The teacher wasn’t there, and the only other pupils present were the ethnic Norwegian girls, who quietly sat and worked. Inas stumbled over the words when she said 3, but she wasn’t put out by this instance of clumsiness: “I can’t say the word ‘3’ because it pierced my heart, walla!” she yelled theatrically. She asked what grade Orri got. Orri said that she got 3-4, and added happily: “Moroccans are rotten!” Marte butted in: “Oh, Norwegians aren’t much better”. The conversation developed into a parody of racism. Inas said in a high voice: “All these immigrants just pour into the country, they are like rats!” Marte and Orri followed, and all three of them seemed to try to get one better than the last parody of racist Norwegians. Marte: “They take over the country!”, giggling, and she and Orri soon ventured into a play-fight on the classroom floor, they yelled: “Raaacist, raaaacist!”, laughed and giggled; Inas laughed along, and said cheerfully to Marte: “You’re a real blacky, you know that?” The other group of girls kept still and passive, casting furtive glances at the girls on the floor. They soon disappeared into the corridor, looks of annoyance on their faces. (Nov 3 2008)

Many of the ethnic Norwegians seemed painfully knowledgeable about the way their words – if they dared speak – could be interpreted: both in terms of being seen as racists, or as ignorant, ‘out of the loop’, and lacking ‘street cred’ by those in the ethnic minority peer group. Kebab Norwegian can be seen as what the sociologist and linguist Basil Bernstein would call a ‘restricted code’, to which most of the ethnic Norwegians didn’t have complete access (Bernstein, 2003 [1990]). To make the situation even more problematic, they *lacked* the dominant position that their polite language would usually afford them in settings outside of the c-class, outside of Skogbyen school.

In a comparative study of two primary schools in Norway and Holland, anthropologist Marie Louise Seeberg showed how Norwegian schools communicate difference through a basic ideology of similarity, while in Dutch schools, there is more openness about differences relating to ethnicity and ‘race’. The result, Seeberg argues, is that Norwegian schools pupils feel that difference is dangerous, and they are taught to play differences down (Seeberg, 2003). The Danish psychologist Dorthe Staunæs (Staunæs, 2004) did a similar comparative fieldwork in two Danish schools in the 7th grade that may indicate some unintended effects of such different strategies. She found that one school’s institutional practice played down ethnic diversity and difference. In this school, the pupils played *up* the meaning of ethnicity in their daily lives. In the other school, she found that the school under-communicated sexuality and gender, and in this school, sexuality and gender became especially central to the pupils’ lives. Despite the age difference of its pupils, Skogbyen high school was similar to the first of Staunæs’ schools both in respect to the way the teachers played down difference, and the way the pupils exaggerated it. What my fieldwork at Skogbyen suggests is that the pupils’ exaggeration of ethnic difference might stem from an increasingly meaningful insider code that symbolised belonging, togetherness and power, which was increased further by the teachers’ downplaying of differences, especially the differences between pupils’ in terms of their ability to do schoolwork and in relation to differences in values between pupils. These two aspects are what the next two chapters will discuss.

Levels and articulations of belonging

Meanings of ethnicity are fleeting, diverse and cannot be frozen, but, as I have argued in this chapter, both stability and fleetingness are inherent in culture and identity. I have described an intensification of the meaning of ethnicity, a process that capitalised on particular markers and that strengthened certain practices and values. I have suggested that the pupils re-narrated themselves in the direction of some rather stable collective narratives of a particular local pan-ethnic identity, the fleeting character of ethnicity notwithstanding.

In order to understand better the meaning of ethnification and racialisation in individual lives and groups, I have argued here that it is useful to pay attention to how belonging is articulated, for example through a sense of difference and entitlement in

combination with the levels at which one experiences a sense of belonging. If we accept that there are several relevant levels of belonging, it is possible to analyse complexities of power and belonging that are intertwined with aspects of identity and culture. There were two central levels in particular that were brought into sharp relief for the Skogbyen pupils, namely the local community and the national community. Like a box in a box, many of the pupils in Skogbyen experienced an attachment to the local collective and pride in an ethnic minority identity, but at the same time feelings of ‘un-belonging’ to Norway, as Yalda described.

Everybody carries with them a particular cultural inheritance that both restricts and shapes them. For the ethnic minority pupils discussed in this chapter, having multicultural qualification gives potential competencies and increased possibility for belonging to the peer group. As I have indicated in this chapter, the movement of belonging was the opposite for many of the ethnic Norwegians, who lacked a matter-of-fact belonging to the ethnic minority peer group, but – as I will discuss more in the following chapters – they were allowed an easier acceptance in the school as an institution. A strong sense of belonging to either level may become problematic if that is simultaneously an exclusion from the other group.

In the following chapters, I will continue to argue that different markers – of sexuality and of school attitude – in different ways criss-crossed over and overlapped with ethnic borders.

6. THE MEANINGS OF NOISE

“Oh no, have you finished already? I overslept!” Twenty minutes late for class, I rushed into the bright, open entrance hall in Skogbyen high school, where Ahlam, Inas and Elif and four other pupils stood, looking agitated. They scampered towards me and started talking rapidly: “Oh Author, where were you?! It was *chaos* in the lecture, more than ever!” The pupils told me staccato tales of what had happened: I noted that they had to read a text aloud with only “dick and fuck” in it. Many refused to read, and chaos erupted. Seeing that I looked confused, Inas told me: “Come on, let’s sit” in a confiding tone, and nodded towards the sofa. We sat while Elif eagerly gesticulated about how the young, female teacher got really mad when many of them were late. But then the teacher pronounced so many of their names wrongly. She mispronounced Elif, Ramin, Ahlam and Sahir, and when she said Sahir, she said another name that sounded so silly that all hell broke loose. Nothing else was heard! “And that was when she started her *speech*”, Elif said. ”It’s the one with *You’re here to learn and I don’t care if you all fail* and *It is your own choice that you are here*. This went on for ages; she almost started crying. And when she had finished her speech, Uma started yelling *her* speech! She told them to shut up, that they had to learn something, and so on – and afterwards, the whole class broke out cheering!” Sahir told us that he filmed the whole thing. He announced that he would post it on Facebook so that we all can see it tomorrow. (Nov 11 2008)

Pupils and teachers all agreed that the c-class was generally a noisy crowd. In fact, it was generally acknowledged around the time of the incident described above that this class was the noisiest class in the programme for general studies. The noise reverberated in the spacious school’s atrium, auditoriums, classrooms and corridors from the onset of the school year through the autumn, over Christmas and into the spring, before it was muffled by the summer exams.

This wasn't the first time I heard the Skogbyen pupils relate and relive scenes of chaos and noise, nor was it the last; they told profuse and varied stories about noise. The pupils mostly used the term noise ('bråk') or chaos ('kaos') to refer to non-constructive – in an academic sense – chatter. However, noise also referred to aggressive disruption, with outbursts of verbal aggression against the teacher or other pupils, and violence and fights amongst the pupils.

In this chapter, I investigate in what ways pupils responded to the specific structure of teaching in Skogbyen, lived and experienced between teachers, parents and peers. I first suggest seeing noise as a reaction to the school's structure in different ways, which are also gendered. In particular, I argue for seeing certain noisy expressions as *affective practices* that do different types of work according to the context, the doers and their self-narratives. In the chapter's second part, I discuss what other consequences the school's particular demands combined with classroom noise could have for the pupils.

Context, style of teaching and school

The open platform style of the school was often a complicating factor in everyday school life for both pupils and teachers. This was especially confusing at the beginning of the school year, as the rooms tended to shift, and the shifts were only announced on Fronter, the internet-based learning platform used by the school. Even when the pupils became used to the school, they were still rather confused:

I asked Ahlam, Uma and Orri about which room we were to meet for the science class, which was about to start. But they didn't know, and we started to go around looking for rooms again. I asked if they didn't have a fixed science classroom? Uma said pointedly that they don't have *any* fixed classrooms. Ahlam popped her head into some empty classrooms while she asked Uma to check Fronter. Uma said she didn't have any battery power left, and Orri said seemingly proud that she hadn't checked Fronter in three weeks.

Ahlam opened the door to a full second grade classroom, apparently to ask if anyone there knew where we ought to be. She kept her head in the door for a long time, talking with the teacher. Uma said after a while: "You don't *have* to disturb another class too, pull your head back!"

Most of the class had now gathered, searching together. We tried the science room downstairs, but on our way there we suddenly saw Henrik, the teacher, through a door upstairs. Finally in the correct room, Henrik started giving messages: the class is to be split in two groups and one group must find another room. (Nov 3 2008)

Situations like the one described above were the exception rather than the rule, but they weren't unusual. The architectonic and pedagogic design was intended for a learning situation resembling that of a university, with self-instigated learning and responsibility on individual pupils. Like the walls and the *time* in school, the subjects bled into each other, they had seven-week long projects on big topics like *Humans* and worked on aspects of that topic in most subjects.

This design had its flaws, however. One was that although all of the pupils had their own laptop computer and they were expected to check Fronter at all times, this was subject to resistance – as Orri's comment that she hadn't bothered checking Fronter in three weeks may illustrate. Beyond the *pupils'* resistance, there were external circumstances hindering the success of the school design, such as when the only available computer didn't have any battery power, or in other instances, such as when all of the rooms were taken. This happened rather frequently, and the teachers were then forced to change rooms on very short notice, which often led to some unsatisfactory situations.

Some teachers could control unclear work situations with a degree of order, sometimes by balancing authority with friendliness. The first time the mathematics teacher Ammar taught a large auditorium of about 60 pupils, he opened by presenting himself:

Ammar started telling the pupils about himself. He said that originally he's from Pakistan. I heard some whooping from the auditorium, and someone said something in Urdu. There were yells that I thought sounded surprised and impressed and someone said *yeah*, when Ammar said that he came to Norway nine years ago. He talked about his education and that he'd studied pedagogy. Malika raised her hand and asked: "What is pedagogy?" People around her giggled. Ammar said briefly that it is something one needs to teach.

Abdul asked: “Have you really only been here nine years? In that case you speak Norwegian really well!” Ammar answered: “Thank you, but not certain”. People laughed in a friendly way. After a short while, Ammar had to tell them off some for talking among themselves. The lesson proceeded in an orderly and pleasant way. (Aug 22 2008)

Ammar achieved general respect from the pupils. Coming from Pakistan, like many of the pupils’ parents, was only part of the reason: Ammar was also the strictest of the teachers, yet friendly at the same time. Other teachers struggled more to gain the pupils’ respect. The day after a particularly chaotic class, I chatted with the young teacher Kåre when he accompanied the pupils on one of the hikes in the beginning of the school year:

Accompanied by five or six chatty girls, I sat by the water with jars filled up with water insects and muddy water. I noticed some commotion close by. It turned out that Kåre told the pupils surrounding him that he was going to eat one of the water insects. He put it in his mouths and swallowed! The pupils swooped around him, screaming, whooping and yelling.

After the class walked on, Kåre came up to me and asked me what he could do to get the pupils to be quiet and more disciplined in class. He had already asked Malika and Iselin for advice. (Aug 29 2008)

If Ammar’s style – which may be called ‘fatherly’ – is located at one end of a teacher style continuum, then Kåre’s style – which can be called ‘friendly’ – was at the other end. In between, there was a range of different approaches to discipline and teaching, but the pupils repeatedly told me and the teachers that they preferred discipline. Undoubtedly, combining authority and respect with being cool and friendly with the pupils was a difficult task. Despite their differences, the teachers were mostly young and liberal, frequently allowing the pupils to listen to music when they did group work. Most of the teachers had troubles controlling the pupils’ computer use in class, especially the use of popular social network tools such as Facebook, MSN and Biip. Other researchers also find that group work like this tends to be rather chaotic, and that it is the strongest pupils that end up carrying most of the work load (see for

example Nielsen, 2009: 215). In Skogbyen, group work was often viewed by pupils as equivalent to *free time*.

By midterm, it seemed as though the teachers had entered a phase of pedagogic reconsideration. They commented on their own pedagogic style frequently – “this isn’t working!” – and often talked about it from a meta-perspective, including the pupils in the debate:

Leif broke up the chitchatting and started telling the pupils off for “prattling”, and started the meta-pedagogic discussion with the pupils again. Leif said: “In this school there is a focus on the pupils being conscious of certain things!” He asked the pupils what they were going to do. “So far, the system obviously doesn’t work. Do you want more presentations? More tests?” – “Yees!” somebody shouted. “Nooo!” someone else yelled. The pupils started to suggest how they thought the system could be better. Most of them wanted more discipline. (Nov 3 2008)

The lack of borders and authoritative regulation, and the emphasis on self-discipline frustrated the pupils. Many pupils voiced a communal counter-requirement that the *teacher* should discipline them. In fact, by the end of the first week a group of girls had already listed ‘discipline’ at the very top of a list that they were asked to make, about what the teacher should contribute to the group. The majority of the teachers, however, could or would not discipline the pupils to the extent the pupils wanted, if for no other reason that they were, after all, obliged to adhere to the requirement to teach the pupils how to discipline themselves.

What the pupils saw was a *release of frames*. This was the authoritative message implicitly communicated from the school’s structure and organisation, which both pupils and teachers in different measures of zeal and success tried to counteract. Using the British sociologist and linguist Basil Bernstein’s approach, the pedagogic style in Skogbyen could be seen as having *weak classification* and *framing*. *Classification* refers to the extent to which the boundaries between things are maintained, originally referring to boundaries between curricula. Classification at Skogbyen was weak in terms of the subjects and curriculum bleeding into each other, and to extend Berstein’s meaning, classification was also weak between physical rooms; learning areas and relaxation areas were often mixed, for example, and walls

were removed. *Framing* refers to communication *form*: the degree of control over the communication of knowledge. The teachers' framing was weak insofar as they did not tell the pupils directly how to solve tasks, and in terms of order in the classroom. In Bernstein's theory and empirical research, he argues that weak framing and classification benefit middle-class pupils rather than working-class pupils (Bernstein, 2003 [1990]). The pupil group was, although mixed, largely working-class. The pupils' noisemaking can be seen as a response to this pedagogical and architectural organisation, and as a result of a mismatch between the pupils and the structure of the school.

Noise work

Although only a handful of pupils initiated disruptions, more than half of the class was frequently involved in noise-making. One way to get at the meaning of noise is to ask: what *work* did the noise do for the pupils? What function did it have?

Latif was one of the few boys in class, and normally a well-behaved and polite boy. There were, nevertheless, some contexts in which he thought noise-making was 'okay'. He told me that early in the school year, he got fed up by the homework plan not working. He and the other pupils felt that the Fronter system was too complicated, it was more difficult to find their actual homework compared to junior high school, when they could find everything on one sheet of paper. He told me that he was part of a group of pupils that made the teachers change their practice:

Latif: There was quite a lot of chaos in the lesson. Like in Nora's lessons. It was like noise, but it wasn't only noise for *noise* – it didn't come from nowhere. It was a bit more concentrated noise. It was the *intention* to make noise about just that topic.^{xxxiv}

Noise-making could, thus, be designed specifically to change an unsatisfactory system. As such, the goal-oriented noise-making can be understood as one way of resourcefully handling the difficult demands from the school. I saw in class that it was Latif who led the pupil group's protest, and they were listened to in this case, perhaps because the 'noisy' protest was coupled with Latif's well-articulated arguments. However, the noise-rebellion that Latif told me about was an exception; generally,

pupils didn't successfully use noise to communicate with the school's authorities in a constructive way.

A different type of noise-making was "for no particular reason", Latif told me. It was only "for fun". Recounting such a 'fun' time in an English class, Latif told me that he liked the subject, but struggled with the teacher:

Latif: She explains differently. She tries, she explains as though we were adults. As though she talks to you and tries to explain. But in junior high it was different. Then it was an *explanation*, done properly. They understood that: "All right, so much we can understand. Okay, we'll stay at their level", or something.^{xxxv}

Sometimes noise-making was just for fun, as Rene Rosales has also suggested in a study of a primary school in Sweden (Rosales, 2010: 241-250). However, from what Latif describes, it seems that in this instance, noise was more than just fun, and rather than 'for no particular reason', it seemed to be a clear response to a situation when the teacher explained things in a way that was too difficult for the pupils to understand, 'as though they were adults'. A suggestion as to why they could experience making noise as fun, is that it was often a communal, shared coping strategy to save face from the indignity of feeling stupid in such situations, or being seen as incompetent (Fangen, 2010). In the following, I will continue the line of argument I have developed so far, about noise-making at Skogbyen being primarily a way for pupils to handle difficult demands from the school, but I will further highlight how this noise-response also was *gendered* in specific ways.

Noise as gendered affective practices

As many qualitative studies have shown, noise-making and an anti-school attitude may work as means of constructing or upholding difference, be it classed (Ambjörnsson, 2004, Willis, 1999 [1977]), gendered (Lyng, 2007, Frosh et al., 2002) or racialised (Fordham and Ogbu, 1986, Fordham, 1996). In the influential British ethnography *Learning to Labour* (Willis, 1999 [1977]), Paul Willis asked how working-class boys ended up with working-class jobs. He argued that culture provided 'the lads' with a set of values and frameworks that enabled them to engage

in a pleasurable opposition to school, a practice that was rewarded in the moment, which simultaneously meant that they didn't recognise their own exclusion from future work success. Since Willis, research on confrontational opposition to school has mostly focused on working-class boys. Indeed, anti-school behaviour is often theorised as an effect of working-class masculinities (Lyng, 2007, Music and Godø, 2011). Increasingly, however, attention has been given to girls' confrontational opposition (Davies, 1984, Ambjörnsson, 2004, Jackson, 2006), but little of the research has been about noisy girls with an ethnic minority background. When *girls* are noisy, however, *masculinity* stops being a relevant explanation – or does it? Playing on Willis' term 'the lads' (Willis, 1999 [1977]), Carolyn Jackson uses the term 'ladettes' to describe underachieving and oppositional girls (Jackson, 2006) and asks how their 'laddishness' is different from boys'. I am critical of the term 'ladettes' because the diminutive implies that their opposition is less original, mimicking masculine forms of opposition. When girls are noisy, it seems that gender is always the explanation, whether it is masculinity or femininity. Another way to explain noisy girls is that they are resisting feminine ideals (cf. Ambjörnsson, 2004).

In Skogbyen, I quite often saw outbursts of violence or loud aggressive arguments sometimes intensified with screaming, threats of beatings, even death threats. The class was dominated by girls, and I only heard this type of aggression from girls. There were four or five particularly visible and noisy girls out of around twenty girls, but many joined in the noise-making for the fun of it. Perhaps there are other ways of understanding noisy school opposition in girls, other than as either an attempt to resist feminine ideals or an attempt to mimick boys? In the case of Skogbyen, both the context and the noisy pupils were different than in the bulk of the research cited above. In a Norwegian context with strong aims and demands for equality, consciousness is heightened about girls' visibility in school. At the same time, new demands are directed at the pupils themselves, they are to be visible and active – but in a more relational manner than before (Rudberg, 2009). In Skogbyen, the noisy pupils were minority ethnic girls, and I will argue that *their* noise-making and aggression may well be analysed in similar veins as the research above, but that it has its own particularities.

Aggressive noise-making (the Norwegian word *bråk* covers this better than the English *noise*) was set off by some type of provocation. It could be protesting

against reading texts with sexual content, against unfair treatment in some way, or dissatisfaction with grades, as in the following example:

The teacher Kari started handing out graded papers. Ahlam shouted out to Kari: “Teacher, if I get a bad grade, you don’t know what I’ll do!” She hit one fist into her other hand. Kari seemed unaffected and continued to hand out the papers. Upon receiving her paper, Uma gasped, looking angry. Four or five girls around her asked in impatient voices: “What did you get? What did you get?” Uma waited a bit before she answered that she got 3+.³⁸ Suddenly she exclaimed to Kari, from her seat in the third row: “I’m gonna HIT you afterwards, you fucking bitch!” She spoke threateningly and quickly, but kept a little smile on her face. The long, slim legs were folded, and one foot kept bobbing up and down, up and down. I felt unnerved. I couldn’t see Kari’s reaction, but soon she said in measured tones that the next grade counts more. Ahlam turned to Hadi: “Hadi! Let’s slaughter her!” They talked about Kari. Kari sat closer to them than I, she was bound to have heard it. All the time Kari moved around the room, Uma followed her with her eyes. Hadi commented: “Look at her giving looks!” Uma said aloud for all to hear: “*Walla*, I’m gonna kill her!” (Nov 4)

Part of the explanation for the pupil’s reaction to her grade might be an expression of academic ambition. However, the way it was done not only shows the futility of such aggression, as Kari just ignored the threats (although I don’t know if she was as unperturbed as she seemed. She did not confide in me, however). It also illustrates the lack of restraint the pupils experienced in terms of what they were allowed to say and do in class: a sense of local, spatial *entitlement* in school.

The situation above does not, however, necessarily indicate that the pupils’ lacked knowledge of the correct institutional discourse or that they were *unable* to behave in any other way. I mean to say that their outbursts in general must not be interpreted as lack of ability or knowledge. On the contrary, their body language in the above situation and the comments from the on-looking girls suggests to me that on one level, the pupils were acting out a script. Without wanting to disregard the depth

³⁸ The scale goes from 1 to 6 where 6 is the best. 3+ is mediocre.

of emotions in the scene above, I want to suggest that the noise was an *affective practice* (Wetherell, 2012) that became partly *routinised* for the pupils who made the most noise. An indicator of this in the situation above is that Uma announces her aggressive reaction even before she has seen the grade, and as such, her anger seems at least in part studied, prepared.

A second central point here is the relational manner with which this protest is performed. There is a dual communication going on in the scene above. While the focused communication was being intensely directed towards the teacher, there was simultaneously another conversation beneath the surface between some of the girls. Ahlam sets the tone at first. Uma's hostile comment after seeing her grade is as much a response to Ahlam's initial threat as it is a response to the teacher. Ahlam then includes Hadi into the community when she suggests slaughtering the teacher in Uma's defence. It is a *relational* aggression that seems to be as much for each other as against the teacher. While the noisy girls mark their similarities and their togetherness, they do this in the presence of the whole class. The relationship between the audience and the performers in this instant is constitutive of both groups – for the moment at least.

A contrast and parallel to this community aggression happened on one of the first days of school, in front of the rather insecure and politically correct new teacher calling the register. This time, the culprit was a boy:

In a funny mock authoritative voice, Abdul mimicked the teacher's voice and pretended to survey the class over invisible glasses, triggering laughter from the surrounding pupils: "Yeeeeees, well, *here* we have many *immigrants!*", he squeaked. He asked the teacher with the same mock voice: "Do you think those who have *daaark* skin make a lot of noise?" (Aug 28, 2008)

Abdul's joking was typical of him – he filled the role of class clown during the short period he went to Skogbyen (he left after only a few months to attend a school that was higher in the exams league tables than Skogbyen). His performance was solo, and insofar as he drew on others, it wasn't relationally, but rather as an audience. Abdul's joking still had a relational element, however. The joke would not have worked had it not been for the community of the peer group of ethnic minority pupils.

Moreover, the level of emotions was far more subdued than what we saw in the example above. Through humour, Abdul showed a clear resistance towards the new teacher, who, in this instance, represented what might have been Abdul's impressions of school. In making fun simultaneously of the teacher and the 'immigrant' pupils, Abdul touched on the everyday tension caused by the reality of the differences between the groups and a school-driven political correctness (see chapter 5). Abdul's reference to 'noisy immigrants' can be seen as evoking the stereotypes that were mostly unarticulated, but made relevant in the meeting with the school's release of frames. As these stereotypes were mostly implicit and indirect, so their power perhaps needed an equally subtle resistance, such as irony and parody. Literary critic Henry Louis Gates has called such forms of resistance as "signifying", referring to skilful manipulation of language used to turn the power of language against its 'masters' (Gates, 1989). The protest against negative images of ethnic minority pupils was simultaneously confirmed and questioned by Abdul's parody.

The small group of remaining boys – varying from three to five in a class of around twenty-five pupils – were mostly quiet after Abdul left the school. In any typical situation in this boisterous class, the girls would stand for both relevant and irrelevant talk, while the boys, who almost always sat in a corner nearest to the teacher, would react typically in this manner:

While Uma and Latif taught, Aza contributed with some quiet comments from next to the teacher's desk. I couldn't hear what he said. He didn't ask any questions loudly, and neither did Enver, as usual. (Nov 10 2008)

Although the number and silence of the boys in class meant that a gendered comparison of different types of noise is difficult, the two noise-situations above may be interpreted as examples of traditional gender patterns. While the boy acted in an individualised manner and drawing on humour, which is often described in the research as typically masculine form (Frosh et al., 2002), the girls acted in a markedly relational manner (see for example Nielsen and Rudberg, 1989: 187).

However, there was something less traditionally feminine about the girls' noise. What about the girls' loudness, their visibility and, in particular, their *aggression*? Although these are traits not as commonly tied to girls as they are to boys, there are numerous similar findings that seem to tie a loud confidence and

visibility to working class girls (Skeggs, 1997, Ambjörnsson, 2004). Gender scholar Harriet Bjerrum Nielsen's description of working-class girls in a school in Oslo's east side 20 years prior to my fieldwork depicts girls who claim space, speak loudly, are active in class and walk with great bodily security (Nielsen, 1988). In later studies, middle-class girls are increasingly visible too (Nielsen, 2009). Are girls like Uma, Afsheen and Hadi above similar to these girls, or is it possible that we are seeing something else? Let us now turn to how the noisiest girls in the class narrated themselves.

A symbolically Norwegian school

In a conversation with the two girls Inas and Elif, they talked about a pupil-teacher meeting Elif had with Ammar:

Elif: I'm like: "Ammar!" He's like: "how are the math-lessons?" –"You are a foreigner, you are only one who can make us be quiet!"

Inas: Leif, he thinks we, he thinks we are so smart that we can work on our own. He should be teacher in the third, third grade.^{xxxvi}

On one level, the exchange between Elif and Inas can be seen as similar to Latif's above, that they perceive that the teachers treat them as older or smarter than they are. However, in the interview with Elif and Inas, this was but one of many instances where their self-understanding was articulated in *ethnic* terms. The sequence above illustrates how the lack of self-discipline was symbolised and partly enacted through white, Norwegian middle-class teachers (both female and male). Ammar was the exception in the teacher group that confirmed the rule of the Norwegian style of teaching in Elif's eyes. In Elif's interpretation there seemed to be a tangible presence of symbolic white Norwegian privilege, which tied the school system and its demand for self-discipline to Norwegianness.

Moreover, the chief noise-makers primarily understood noise as the ethnic minority pupils' form, as though it was *because* they were ethnic minority pupils that they were noisy. That none of them had Norwegian as a first language was frequently brought up in relation to their academic standards, as when a pupil got a grade 3 on a test, and Inas exclaimed dramatically:

Inas: Do you know how *strict* she is?! She will fuss until death! Just ask what Ramin got. She will fuss until *death*! She will fuss about all your mistakes! She doesn't understand that we're foreigners. You see? I want to tell her: Don't you understand that we're foreigners?! For fuck's sake, do you think I speak Norwegian at home?!

That the school-system may be said to be symbolically Norwegian, seemed to imply for some pupils that it was not for the ethnic minority pupils. This perception was pervasive. One example was the typical self-devaluation in a boy's comment made during a competition in class: "No wonder we did badly, we were only foreigners in our group!"

Some of the teachers also turned to cultural explanations. A teacher told me that this class had low academic standards. He sighed and said that he had "never met a group of such immature pupils". As an explanation, he told me that many of the pupils from an ethnic minority background live in large families and are, therefore, used to lots of noise. He mentioned one girl from a Pakistani background who told him that she is only alone when she is in the bathroom (Nov 12 2008). In a similar study from a Swedish school, Rickard Jonsson cites a teacher who proposed that in schools with a high proportion of ethnic minority pupils, the schools would need particularly clear rules of conduct (Jonsson, 2007: 90). It seemed, however, that cultural explanations were the *least* common among the Skogbyen teachers (although I didn't systematically interview them about this), but the *most* common among the pupils.

Still, after three years, this explanation dominated. In my visit in the third grade, I got to talk about how things had changed since the first grade with Angela.

She said that so many had left after the first year. Why, I asked, and she said that everybody knew that this school was 'Skogbyenville 2'. Ask whoever you want, she said, everybody says it. I asked what she meant, and she said: "Noise and foreigners, and it means that people want to get away". She told me that half of the form had left the school. Somebody stuck it out through second grade and then left. The second graders this year made as much noise

as they did in the first grade. “Especially the girls”, and she pointed a couple of them out to me, both wore hijabs: “They are the noisiest”. (Jan 11 2011)

Back in the first grade, Inas and Elif also described the pattern as one where ethnic minority pupils were the noisier and worse pupils. In their opinion, this pattern was contextually dependent on the number of ethnic Norwegians in class:

Inas: Mum said to me, she says, every class I’m in, it’s always me who’s put in the black³⁹ class, you know?

Elif: Me too! Troublemaker⁴⁰ class!

Inas: Me too.

Elif: No, not my last school. We had troublemakers, but they worked. We had Norwegians too, you know?

Inas: We had troublemakers in my class. We had Norwegians too, half of the class were Norwegians, the other half forei-, foreigners, *noisy* foreigners!

Elif: Here there are *only* foreigners, nothing else!

Inas: They are two, in all, *two*⁴¹ Norwegians in our class.^{xxxviii}

Although Elif and Inas articulated themselves in more radical terms than many of their classmates, what they voiced was, nevertheless, a prevalent collective narrative that related noise and low achievement to ethnic minority pupils.

Sometimes, this narrative was used as part of an exclusionary tactic in class. This became clear when I asked Lars to tell me about the first time he got a grade at Skogbyen:

Lars: (Quiet for some time). Yes. It was... maths. In a, yes, a test. I got, it was very... very good, in fact. Got 5+, actually. (Quiet). It was kind of... (Quiet). I remember that I was p... - I tried to put it visibly on the desk, while all the others went around and compared their grades. And then... Eh. (Quiet). I don’t know, what happened again? (Quiet). It was a very good start, at least! (Laughs)

³⁹ As an adjective *Svarte* is polysemic: it means the colour black, but in *kebab Norwegian* it also means bad. As an interjection it is used as swear word.

⁴⁰ Literally: “noisemaker”.

⁴¹ The number of Norwegians varied, but they were in fact four at this point in time.

I: (laughs) What did you mean when you said that you put it visibly on the desk? So that they could see?

Lars: Yes. Really. I ended up just showing it to them, but... It wasn't all that... (quiet). It was very different, because they went around congratulating each other on their 3s and stuff. And then I thought that I would come and shine, you know. But it didn't turn out like that. They aren't, I don't know... They, heh (quiet), just then, I felt really pushed away.

Ingunn: How?

Lars: No, because they kind of, here it was like they were like: 'Okay, look at you!' Or, 'you are a nerd.' They said 'Yes, *potato can*' and stuff. So that was, well, yes. I hadn't really expected anything else.^{xxxix}

Throughout my interview with Lars, he distanced himself from the ethnic minority pupils through what he perceived as differences in academic motivation and ability. His story relates great disappointment when his joy and wish to share his good results was met with the disdain of his classmates. Lars handles this disappointment with an active dis-identification from 'them', both through the pronoun 'them', and through the stories of how they were proud of a mediocre grade. One of the sorest points in his story is when he reveals that they had called him a 'potato', and said 'potato can'. 'Potato' is an expression from kebab Norwegian, and it means 'white ethnic Norwegian.' The terms emphasised his difference: not only '*can* he', in the sense that he did well, as opposed to them, but he was a 'potato', racially and ethnically different. That this was expressed in the local slang, which was to a large extent inaccessible to Lars, meant that both form and content served to push him away.

Anthropologists Signithia Fordham and John Ogbu suggested in a path-breaking article that the main reason why black pupils had poorer results in U.S school than white pupils, was that the black pupils experienced ambivalence and 'affective dissonance' in relation to their academic work, partly because academic success were seen as a 'white people's prerogative' (Fordham and Ogbu, 1986). The researchers suggested that the notions of 'acting white' and 'acting black' happen in opposition toward each other, so that the African American youths in their study developed an oppositional identity towards white youths. Since white meant doing well in their studies, black gained the meaning of not doing well in school. The black

children formed their own language and style in opposition to whites to maintain their group identity.

I don't meant to imply that all pupils defined their relationship with the school as an academic institution based on their 'race' or ethnicity all of the time or in all contexts, nor that all ethnic minority pupils experienced 'affective dissonance', but many did. Elif and Inas told narratives that were perhaps particularly 'ethnified'. However, the Skogbyen pupils' groupings and actions were clearly often consciously racialised.

In a Danish primary school study, sociologist Laura Gilliam found that both pupils and teachers assumed that the ethnic minority boys fared worse in school than ethnic majority children. She found that many of the ethnic minority boys were noisy in order to assert a position in opposition against the school and against Danish society. As in Skogbyen, the teachers acted as though they were blind to ethnicity (see ch. 4), and according to Gilliam, this became problematic when majority-Danish norms are dominant in the school. The children experienced being different from what the norms dictated (Gilliam, 2009, Lidén, 2001).

Ultimately, noise-making wasn't a straightforward act of fun, resistance, rebellion or opposition – though it *could* be all of the above. Skogbyen pupils' noisemaking was an often routinised, and at times fun, affective practice and a marker of belonging, emotional security and power. For those included, noise-making could work as an emotional safe place. Ann Arnette Ferguson writes in *Bad Boys* about young black boys who are deemed 'bad', and frequently sent to the 'punishing room' in school. She argues that this room is a place of power imbalances and identity formation, but also that it is a place where the pupils create another space for themselves in the school. The punishing room functions as "an escape from the pain of the classroom for many" (Ferguson, 2001: 44). In a similar way, making noise had the potential for creating a secure space at Skogbyen. Although the noise was not a room, but rather an affective practice and a situation, noise-making presented a relief from what Abdul once referred to as the "tough demands" (*harde krav, ass!*) from the teachers: difficult explanations, a difficult system and demands for self-control and self-guidance.

Tough girls

That noise-making is a way to protect oneself affectively is something that is well documented in school research (as in Gilliam, 2009, Ferguson, 2001), and it is a view that departs somewhat from the Willis' school of thought where the focus has been on materialist class-reproduction where short-term benefits become long-term loss. My point here is that social class, ethnicity and gender are intertwined in Skogbyen, both in terms of the reasons and the consequences of the pupils' noise-making. Such an intersectional analysis is particularly salient because of the specific demographic in this class, where traditionally social or numeric minorities (girls, ethnic minority pupils) were in the majority.

Social class was visible through the mismatch between the school's demands and the pupils' skills. The pupils repeatedly said that their noise was a protest against demands they couldn't cope with. It might not be a coincidence that the pupil who led the more constructive noise to change some of these difficulties came from a middle-class background. The majority of the pupils came from working-class backgrounds and the majority of the noise was non-constructive, as such, this can be read directly into the longstanding tradition of Paul Willis' classic analysis (Willis, 1999 [1977]).

However, this feeling of incompetence was narrated in *ethnic* terms, where ethnic majority pupils were pitted against the ethnic minority pupils as good and bad pupils respectively. In Skogbyen, racialised school resistance, 'acting black' as Fordham and Ogbu called it (Fordham and Ogbu, 1986), was achieved through a re-enactment of the pop cultural 'gangster' figure for example seen in hip hop music, visible, for example, in the use of a slang with many swearwords and the way many walked with a swagger. Researchers have pointed out that for more young men than young women who don't master the school setting well and feel stigmatised by the teacher or in general just bored of school, the *tough guy* is an alternative source of respect and status. These young men are often inspired by the gangster or other sub-cultural images (Fangen, 2010, Sandberg, 2005, Sernhede, 2005). In research, girls' play on gangster imagery is rarely analysed in its own terms, not as mimicking boys or acting masculine.

In Skogbyen, however, many of the noisy girls in class played on the gangster image too. After an incident when two girls had slapped each other during lunch, a group of mostly girls gathered outside:

Elif sat on a bench watching a large group of girls arguing loudly, shouting and discussing. Elif said: “There’s gonna be a fight, let’s break out the popcorn! *Walla*, there’ll be a fight after school!” She told me that there were frequent fights when she went to junior high and she told me a long story about fights between girls in her old school. Afterwards, I walked over to the chaotic group of teens. Many approached me with “Hey author, are you getting this?” It seemed as though they were keen for me to record it. Latif was filming while many of the girls discussed and argued heatedly.

Uma told me that she had messed up too. She started to scream at a girl and when she was about to go over to her, someone held her back. I thought she looked proud as she said this. Someone said to Hadi: “Hadi, finally I’ll see you in action!” Uma said in a low voice, as though to herself: “I hate seeing her getting slapped”, before she shouted to the group at large: “Who held me back, *fuck!*” And to a friend: “you got slapped, and she will fucking get one back!” She said under her breath to Latif that she would personally make sure she would, and when she did, she looked at me out of the corners of her eyes and said that she probably shouldn’t say that out loud. (Sept 9 2008)

What surprised me when I witnessed the situation above was the apparent taken-for-granted violence, the almost coquettish way that some of the girls flirted with throwing punches and violent reputations. This flirtatiousness was especially turned on, it seemed, by being watched – by fellow pupils, by me and by the camera. Again, like the aggression in class cited above, there was some part of this that seemed studied and for show. There are some aspects of this situation that are important to highlight. One is that here, the form of the girls’ interaction is also relational, both in terms of relating to the onlookers and to each other. I will come back to this below. Another vital aspect is that the fighting arose out of an incident where another girl’s sexual respectability was questioned. As the Norwegian researcher Sidsel Natland asserts, instances related to sexual respectability are especially legitimate reasons for girls’ violence (Natland, 2008) and this might also be one part of the reason why the violent sanction seemed to be important to communicate to the ‘audience’. Protecting other girls’ sexual respectability might be important in order to protect one’s own (see also Ambjörnsson, 2004).

The violent ethnic Norwegian girls in Natland's study often used a cultural understanding of violence as a staging of *masculinity*, calling themselves 'one of the boys'. Natland suggests that they can both be understood as 'gender crossers' while at the same time opening up accepted forms of *femininity* (Natland, 2008: 18). The 'fight girls' in Skogbyen, who were by and large also the noisy girls, did not view themselves as 'one of the boys'. Whenever I heard noise being gendered, it was in feminine terms: I heard explanations for the noise like "We're almost only girls, and we girls we chat, chat, chat!" Conversely, I never heard anyone talking about girls' *violence* in masculine terms, although they were sometimes compared with boys' violence, as when Angela said that "there is a lot of fighting between girls, and it's as if girl gangs are forming. Like the ones the boys have. I've seen that there have been many more like those".^{xi} She said that she didn't think it was as common as boy gangs, but that "the girls are coming now, I think, a lot of them".^{xli} In general, girls' noise and violence were not interpreted as *masculine* expressions.

On the other hand, girls' violence has not been viewed as having a potential for the expression of femininity in the way that violence has been seen as a way of expressing masculinity. The 'fight girls' at Skogbyen's form of femininity is an oppositional femininity, but as opposed to other comparable findings like Natland's, it isn't a tacit undercurrent that only consists of a few girls. Rather, this oppositional femininity was a more mainstream form in Skogbyen. Although the active participants were a minority, there was a majority of passive (although cheering) participants. Being aggressive didn't position some girls as significantly *different* from the other girls.

Boys' tough attitudes might be seen as mirroring expressions in popular culture, but so, I suggest, may these ethnic minority girls' femininity. There is now an increasing number of female artists who successfully play on a combination of sex and violence where *women* are the perpetrators. This is a musical discourse that has been available and mimicked by black and Latino girls in the US for decades (see for example Wilkins, 2008:151), but this is a position that has arguably only recently become available to girls in Norway, due to the rising popularity of hip hop and related genres. A potent example of a song that displays a particularly tough type of femininity is the Barbadian artist Rihanna's song *G4L*, which became popular around the time the pupils were in the second grade. 'G' is a common hip hop cultural

reference to ‘gangster’,⁴² and, many ethnic minority pupils, both boys and girls, referred to themselves and others as ‘G’: “she’s a real *G*” (see for example how it was used by Iselin in chapter 5). Being a ‘G’ was part of the ethnic minority ethnic package. That this ‘G’ was pronounced in English (rather than Norwegian) attests to its hip hop cultural reference. In *G4L*, Rihanna sings:

I lick the gun when I'm done 'cause I know that revenge is sweet, so sweet
This is a gang, ladies' bang, baby bang, tell me what you need
Any motherfucker wanna disrespect
Playing with fire gonna get you wet
How it feel down there on your knees
I got these girls like a soldier
Trip and its going down-down-down
I'm ready to roll
Girl I'm with you
If they get you, they get me
So come on let's go, bitch I'm with you if you with it – you with me
You know I'm down, down for life
Load it, reload it and let's go
Gangster for life, till the day that I die I promise I'll stand and fight⁴³

The lyrics make violence sexy (‘licking the gun’), which, however problematic, isn’t unusual in popular music. Just as in the Skogbyen examples above, girls’ violence doesn’t seem to jeopardise the narrator’s femininity and sexuality. What I want to draw attention to is that sex and violence combine here in a central theme of *girls’ friendship and loyalty*. The woman in the lyrics, staged by Rihanna herself, is fantasising about violent vengeance with a gun – but she isn’t going to enact that violence on her own. With her, she has ‘a gang’, a ‘ladies’ bang’, she has ‘girls like a soldier’, and she asserts to her ‘Girl’(-friend) that ‘if they get *you*, they get *me*’. This isn’t unlike Uma’s rhetoric above, saying to her girlfriend: ‘you got slapped, and she will fucking get one back!’ Perhaps it is partly *because* violence is combined with same-sex loyalty and friendship, and traditional elements in femininity (Hey, 1997),

⁴² As in rapper Dr Dre’s 1992 hit single ‘Nuthin’ but a G Thang’.

⁴³ Rihanna. From the album: *Rated R*. (Fenty, 2009).

that it appears to be less threatening to girls' femininity. In any case, it seems that friendships and expected loyalty are closely entwined with the girls' affective practice of opposition. Friendships might lend them courage to behave out of the institutionally accepted. The mainstream cultural framings of friendship, violence and a highly sexualised femininity may be seen as paving the way for new and rougher forms of femininity for those who might 'legitimately' (that is, having a multicultural competency or qualifications, cf. chapter 5) play on those cultural elements. Paradoxically, the school institution also enables the performance of this type of oppositional femininity, as its weak framing heightens the possibilities for noise and violent visibility.

There were clear signs, however, that this new femininity jeopardised possibilities for inhabiting other types of femininity like the 'good girl', especially the good *schoolgirl*. I will come back to this below, when consider individual consequences of the school system and the noise.

Ambition and consequences of noise

The pupils had oral examinations in chemistry one by one. The first pupil to be tested was Abia. I was standing outside in the corridor together with Ahlam, Inas, Elif and Hadi, waiting for their turn. Elif said to Ahlam: "Feel my heart, it pounds so hard!" She grabbed Ahlam's hand and placed it over her own heart. The girls, agitated and excited, danced around in the corridor and exclaimed their nervousness to anyone interested. They started an intense exchange of knowledge – chemical reactions, definitions of electrons, the periodic table. Inas' restless movements lead her twice to trip over my bag, the second time she exclaimed emphatically that "*This – is – suicide!* Ok, *ok*, can anybody tell me how an atom is organised?!" Ahlam explained, and then asked: "So, what are chemical bonds?" Inas squeaked, "*That's what we've talked about the whole time, habiba!*"⁴⁴ I asked them when they've learnt all of this (after all, it didn't seem as though they did much in class), and they told me in the same hectic energetic way: "We study *tons* at home!" Inas: "My mum asks what I learn here, have you *seen* our class?! I don't learn *anything*

⁴⁴ Habiba: From Arabic, my dear, my friend. Also *habibi* (masc).

in school! But we just study at home”. The opening door interrupted them. Abia came out. For a brief second the silence was complete. And then they all started talking again: “What did you get, how did it go?!” (Nov 5)

Chaotic schooldays had significant consequences for the pupils. To get by academically, many couldn't count on working in school. They had to work at home – not only with homework, but with the work that was supposed to have been done in school. Even for the pupils who were able to manage both tasks, this was hard work and necessarily set them back. In a recent Norwegian report, the researchers find that the number of pupils who spend much time on homework is significantly higher among ethnic minority youths. However, they don't find that those who spend much time on homework also get better grades than those who spend less time on their homework (Frøyland and Gjerustad, 2012).

The British sociologist Máirtín Mac an Ghail suggests in *The Making of Men* that educational underachievement was a coping strategy for dealing with a system based on racism (Mac an Ghail, 1994). My point is *not* that the open, modern pedagogical system at Skogbyen or the teachers were racist. One of my points in the following is that the Skogbyen's pedagogy nonetheless has an adverse effect on ethnic minority pupils because the school's organisation let systematic differences in pupil population blossom. Mac and Ghail's focus on the underachievement strategy leaves out how other pupils who do *not* have the same coping strategy deal with similar demands (see also Woods and Hammersley, 1993: 5-6). In the following, I will investigate different individual coping strategies.

“When my father yells, the walls shake”

Yalda wasn't one of the noisiest girls, but often involved as a 'side-kick'. She told me that she found high school difficult; she thought that the transition from junior high to high school had been especially hard. She got help to do her schoolwork from her father mostly, because he had a junior high school education from Norway, although her mother had higher education. The help she got from friends in class was, however, most important to her.

The desire to do well in a chaotic school life seemed to be easier when students worked socially in a way that collapsed the academic into the social. In fact,

most of the pupils stressed the social aspect of learning and especially doing homework together, which didn't necessarily rule out the role of the parents, but was an important addition. This became clear in one Norwegian lesson, when the teacher told the pupils how it is a good thing to write in essays that 'on one hand...' – Orri whispers under her breath to me: "... and on the other hand!" My parents are teachers, I learn everything from them!" Inas leaned in close and said that "I'm so good in Norwegian because I learnt everything from someone in the second grade here at Skogbyen, walla!" (Nov 5, 2008). Another consequence of noisy and chaotic school days besides the increased need for doing work at home, was an increased need for support from others, apart from the teachers.

What happened then if the parents were a hindrance rather than a help for succeeding in school? What if they couldn't help or support their children's schoolwork? Elif, who was one of the noisy girls, lamented:

I don't care about *them* [the rest of the class], if they get a 2 or – what bothers me, the only thing I care about is whether it affects *me*. When they are noisy in class, I can't work. And I have *no* role models. So it's like... who am I going to look up to? I don't understand how the others do well!^{xlii}

For Elif, lacking role models in class became a serious problem because not many of her relatives had finished secondary school, and none had higher education. Elif's parents were not supportive of her schoolwork. She told me that her mother didn't think she could do well in school, although, in fact, Elif did well in many subjects. Elif summed up a conversation with her mother: "I got 5 on the math test. [Mum says:] 'You cheated. I know it. You cheated.'"^{xliii} And her father, Elif said, was "aggressive" and "really scary. He, when he yells, the walls shake! Oooo! My father is scary. So I almost never talk with him".^{xliv}

The lack of parental support and role models in class meant that ultimately, Elif had few she could rely on for inspiration and support. Her ability to perform well rested almost solely on her own drive and desire to do well. However, Elif also had a best friend, Yasmin, who went to a different school. The first thing Elif said to me when she introduced Yasmin was that Yasmin "cares about my grades, and I care about her. You see?"^{xlv}. The most important thing about Elif's best friend was that she acknowledged Elif's need to do well in school.

The way we understand ourselves is always mediated by cultural signs (Ricoeur, 2006: 158). That self-understanding is formed by understanding cultural signs means there are both powerful possibilities and restrictions on how the self may be formed (see also McNay, 2000: 80). For example, the notion of a future trajectory common to second-generation immigrants to Norway may motivate and fortify the narratives of ‘foreigners’ noise, and in turn, these narratives may influence the action of the pupils in the present. On the other hand, for Ricoeur, constraints and possibilities are not only external: they also surface from people’s investments in different narratives. Why for example Elif was so agonised by the noise, even as she was contributing to it, was, perhaps, because she was in a painful position between a strong ambition to do well and a sense of disentitlement from success that several of the noisy girls shared. They shared this kind of disentitlement with the loud and visible working-class girls in the studies I cited above (Skeggs, 1997, Ambjörnsson, 2004).

For some pupils, their parents’ relationship to their schoolwork created problems for the opposite reasons: too much pressure. For these pupils, noise-making was *not* an available strategy for dealing with difficult schoolwork. Rather, noise was a serious obstruction to get a sufficient amount of work done in class. This was the case for Nabika, who was quiet, openly studious and hard-working. During the first week of school, she drifted towards the ambitious Ingrid and the little group of ethnic Norwegian girls. The majority of the ethnic minority girls treated Nabika with the same kind of distance they displayed towards the other ethnic Norwegians except Marte, but a few times at the beginning of the school year, I witnessed how Nabika was rebuked by her fellow pupils for asking relevant questions in class: “Why is she asking so many questions?”, Ahlam asked disdainfully of Nabika.

Although Nabika was a dedicated pupil, she didn’t achieve as much as she wanted to. Every Sunday she spent the day at ‘homework help’ organised by the Sri Lankan community, and after school on weekdays, she attended the school’s organised homework help. Her parents did not help her with her homework, which is why they insisted that she got extra schooling. Nabika had a bad relationship with her parents:

Nabika: Because they want me to, they demand so much of me and they don’t understand me. They are kind of, we get into fights because of it.

Ingunn: What do they demand?

Nabika: That I should get good grades, and then have to make sure that I do well with this thing and that. Like, just imagine if anyone sees me with my boyfriend! That kind of thing. They expect that I shouldn't do things like that, because people will talk and "oh no, it affects the family" and... there is so much to think about. That's why one gets so tired of school, even though it hasn't anything directly to do with school.^{xlvi}

She worries about what will happen when her parents, specifically her father, sees her report card, because:

Nabika: He'll probably expect top grades. Last year, I didn't dare to show [the report card] at home before the vacation, because then I knew it would be... (quiet). So I said that we'll get it after the holidays. Then I showed it to them after the holidays, and then... yes. (Laughs). He says I will get beaten if I get the same again.^{xlvi}

She 'only' got 3s and 4s, she explains, and adds that she understands that they react, but:

Nabika: I get so tired when they nag, because it affects school. I can't handle it, I just go to bed, or I just sit there. Sit and think, and get annoyed, and sad at the same time, and then I fall asleep.^{xlvi}

I noted the same tension between the will and/or pressure to do well and the difficulty in doing so in a handful of girls. Abia told me, for example, that when her father asked her why she didn't do better in school, she thought to herself: "'Oh my God, it's *your* fault!' I can't handle my father anymore, I'm going to collapse!"^{xlvi} Most of the pupils described their parents as important sources of support and help, but these girls described their parents' pressure to do well in school as precisely that which *hindered* their success.

In a sense, Elif and Nabika's almost opposite positions in class illustrate that what was jeopardised with a noisy femininity was a 'good school girl', middle-class-styled femininity. This dilemma resembles the dichotomous positions for black girls Signithia Fordham describes in her ethnography *Blacked Out*. 'The loud black girls',

who fall through academically and are signified by a striking visibility, refrain from ‘gender passing’, that is, becoming like white middle-class girls, and at the same time they refrain from being alienated by the black community. In contrast, Fordham describes the clever black girls, who have a “deliberate silence, a controlled response to their evolving, ambiguous status as academically successful pupils” (qtd. in Taylor et al., 1995). The emotional strain of the ‘clever black girls’ becomes visible through stories like Nabika’s and Abia’s, but as I will show now, *toil* was not only the ethnic minority pupils’ burden.

Academic desire

Nabika created a quiet space in school together with Ingrid and some other girls, with little contact between them and the ethnic minority peer group. Whereas this seclusion can be read in terms of the formation of local ethnic groups, as described in the two previous chapters, it was also a strategy for coping with extremely tough demands. These demands could either come from parents, as in Nabika’s case, or, as for Ingrid, it could be self-imposed demands.

Ingrid always gave me an impression of order: her clothes were neat, always in bright colours, her handwriting exquisite. During the interview, it struck me that all her movements seemed to be for a reason – the way she clearly brushed away hair from her face with a steady hand – up to the point when she got emotional, and then her hand movements got bigger, but still surprisingly controlled. For Ingrid, the consequences of being a pupil in a low-achieving school class had both positive and negative sides. On the downside, she found the noise sometimes almost unbearable and called the other pupils “*extremely* noisy”. While the other groups “went bananas, *our* group might just let out a small bit of laughter”. A few times, it got too much for her:

The teacher was talking, and Elif, Ahlam and Aza raised their hands. Idil asked a question. Then she applied nail polish. Hadi powdered her face. Ingrid and Abia were on Facebook. Hadi asked me if I remember the last English lesson (it was very noisy and Sahir filmed it again), and if I’d seen that Sahir had put it on Facebook. Hadi said it was worse before he started filming. Uma

had her head in her arms and earplugs in her ears almost through the whole lesson.

Ahlam threw an empty juice box at Latif. The class became very silent all of a sudden. The teacher got slowly up while she stared at Ahlam. Latif said in a funny-strict voice, alone in the quiet classroom: “*That* means a note to the parents, a warning, suspension and a scolding!” The teacher said to Ahlam: “I’m sorry, but I have to give you a warning”. Ahlam started to protest, but she didn’t get far before Ingrid jumped up on the other side of the classroom, looking absolutely furious, yelling in a high, thin voice: “YOU JUST SIT THERE LAUGHING ALL THE TIME! WHY DON’T YOU JUST SHUT UP! YOU’RE WASTING OTHER PEOPLE’S TIME! JUST SHUT UP!”

While Ingrid was yelling the noise level increased significantly. Many people shouted: Oooo! Ahlam shouted back: “Why are you talking to me? Why are you talking to me? This has nothing to do with you!” Elif and Inas threw themselves into the battle, although it was unclear to me whether they were on Ahlam’s side – they were clearly against Ingrid. Elif said: “Do you want me to clear away some desks so you can fight it out?” The teacher said nothing, before she suddenly in a clear voice continued with what she was talking about before she was interrupted. (Nov 19 2008)

Ingrid rarely raised her voice in class; the outburst above was, therefore, quite rare for her. Elif, who understood noise-making strictly in ethnic terms, couldn’t figure out this explosion from Ingrid and expressed her astonishment to me:

Elif: Ingrid, she’s a bit like, even though she’s Norwegian, she is just as crazy sometimes. I think: “What are you doing!?! Are you asking for trouble? Hahah! She makes a fool of herself. (Quiet) There’s something with her, you know? The whole lecture she is quiet. And then she comes to class and pretends to be bad. What, what are you then? Are you really a quiet girl, or are you cool? What are you? You have to choose, right!

Ingunn: You have to choose?

Elif: You have to choose. You can’t be both.¹

Here, Elif articulates unusually clearly the unsaid rule that a noisy girl-style and a ‘good girl’-style were mutually exclusive. These categories were heavily invested with ethnic meaning: Elif’s phrasing ‘even though she is Norwegian’ must be understood against the predominant narrative for Elif, and to a certain extent generally in class, that the ethnic Norwegians were normally quiet and the ethnic minority pupils were normally noisy.

The positive side of being an ambitious pupil among less ambitious peers was that, in her opinion, it increased her own chances of success. Ingrid had purposely designed to go to a school with many ethnic minority pupils to get better grades, instead of going to the local school where she and her parents lived – over an hour by bus outside of Oslo:

Ingrid: [At the other school] there are *only* Norwegian pupils almost. So the Norwegian classes [there] might be more demanding, academically speaking. I have thought a bit about that, that it might be more difficult to get good grades, since there are only Norwegians. Everyone is starting at the same starting line, kind of. So here it is much easier in a way.

I: Easier – what?

Ingrid: Here. To get better grades and kind of *go somewhere* after high school.^{li}

For Ingrid, this school is not an academic fall as it was for Lars and Iselin (see chapter 4), but rather a possibility. She had her chance at excelling at Skogbyen because she saw the other pupils as less of a competition: “Most people are happy to get 4⁴⁵ and are a bit average, like ‘whatever’. But *I* want to reach the top. I really *have to*. I have decided what I want to do in my future”,^{lii} she said with a laugh. For Ingrid, part of the reason why she was invested in her career more than the average Skogbyen pupil, was her family background. Ingrid’s parents didn’t have much money and her mother was seriously ill. Ingrid wanted to be doctor, but neither of her parents gave her much emotional support in her day-to-day life. However, her older sister didn’t finish high school, and Ingrid reflects that her parents “think it’s good that we, that I have

⁴⁵ Refers to the grade 4 on the scale from 1-6.

decided on a goal, and they kind of want *someone* to succeed (laughter). Because [my sister] didn't cope with school, it is really important that *I* do, kind of".^{liii}

Spending a lot of time travelling to a school far away from her home, having a boyfriend and high goals that she had strong personal reasons for achieving, *and* struggling with a chaotic learning situation, meant that Ingrid worked extremely hard and had a tight schedule. Both Nabika and Ingrid paint a picture of enormous stress and toil, a struggle to do well despite many obstacles:

Ingrid: Things can be demanding, but you can do them. And just where I am now, high school, here it is like – think about how serious it really is! Because, it really seems like a junior high, the form I'm in, [those born in] 1992. It is really like, yes, I don't know – just eat, not pay attention in class, skip a class here and there. It is like, for me, it is really just like I'm trying to get through this, with good grades. Just... try to achieve it, just... just try to endure it. It is pretty exhausting, because I'm working my hardest to get good grades. But still. It just *has* to go well soon. (quiet)^{liv}

Ingrid, Nabika and Elif's toil was doubled: they wanted to succeed in school with obstacles both at home and in school. For Ingrid, her drive was to have a different kind of life from her parents. What is different for Ingrid compared to the two other girls is that she capitalised on her self-perceived assets as an ethnic Norwegian when she chose a school with few other Norwegians as a conscious way to reach her goal. That she was narrated – by Elif, amongst others – as one of the 'clever Norwegians' – might have been quite welcome. Nonetheless, one had to be exceptionally driven to be able to find the possibility to succeed in this class without the support of parents.

Tough demands and tough girls

In this chapter, I have argued that Skogbyen's lack of clear borders in architecture and pedagogy demanded of the pupils an ability to contain and discipline themselves. At the same time, it was hard for pupils to meet these demands because the material as well as the immaterial frames were removed. The school structure seemed to be geared towards pupils with a considerable larger capacity for self-discipline and more opportunities for support and help from parents than the majority of its actual pupils.

At the same time as the lax rules were part of the frustration fuelling the noise, the release of frames and rules enabled it. Through the noise, the pupils did work: identity work, border work – and homework! They showed and created a resistance community that, partly because of this school class' demographic, was almost completely dominated by girls.

I have argued that the noise can be seen as a sanctuary of self-respect to keep a dignity in situations that may be experienced as humiliating or threatening. For the pupils who didn't react to the 'tough demands' with noisemaking, but rather sat quietly and worked during most of the lessons, the combination of noisy school days, high demands and internal or external pressure was extremely hard. Despite the school's emphasis on self-discipline, this trait was hard to find in the pupils – but where it was found, it was laced with toil and sadness. To do well in this class, it seemed that extreme discipline was necessary, either coming from other people, like for Nabika, or coming from oneself, like for Ingrid.

Although I was often dizzy and tired from all the noise during fieldwork, the noisy girls had my attention and my sympathy. They were 'the cool kids' who were the easiest to connect with and the most fun to be with. However, when reading through my field notes with the benefit of hindsight, I resented the fact that they hindered their own and others' education. This ambivalence in my own reactions facilitated the recognition of a similar ambivalence in the pupils in the noisy group: the noise-making holds a sense of the group belonging, but also the possibility of educational (self) exclusion. Like the box in a box of layered belonging – where the local had prevalence over the national for many of the ethnic minority pupils - being noisy created both inclusion and normalisation at the local level and marginalisation and alienation at the institutional level (cf. Willis, 1999 [1977], see also Skeggs, 1997).

Since the teachers encouraged active and vocal pupils, the pupils needed to have the skill to understand what kind of 'noise' was welcome, and what kind was unwelcome. The school's structure thus laid the premise for noise-making both because of its lack of borders and because it required implicitly a level of high competence from the pupils. This opened a space for a group of space-claiming, visible and noisy minority girls. The girls performed an aggressive relational noisiness, which in *form* drew on gangster imagery, in *need* expressed frustration, disentitlement from success in a perceived Norwegian school and a need for

protection from indignity, and was *made possible* by the school system. The aggressive, noisy, oppositional femininity was not an alternative form of femininity in the Skogbyen context. It was mainstream.

That these pupils thought of noisemaking almost exclusively in ethnic terms is vital to understand, especially because this is in line with the same pupils' identity narratives as *more foreign* (see chapter 5). The way they understand themselves in relation to school puts no store on being girls, but rather on being 'foreigners.' Their self-understanding is to a large extent shaped by their identification as 'foreigner' in Norway. For these pupils, noise was also *identity work*.

The introvert struggling girls were as frustrated with the system as the noisy girls. Why did they react so differently? Rather than seeing ethnic minority pupils' noise as something that came 'naturally' because of some explanation rooted in their background culture, I have suggested in this chapter that it is useful to consider noise as an affective practice that was unfolding in the moment, yet embedded in a specific, gendered and racialised social context. As such, *doing* noise rehearses emotional structures that are more easily available to some than to others. The pupils who were deeply invested in a 'foreigner' identity were those who especially bought into this immediately upon starting school, and perhaps this was one of the reasons why noisemaking became a 'hotspot' of meanings of ethnicity. In the next chapter I investigate another hotspot of ethnicity and another facet of girls' life in school where visibility could be both a blessing and a plague: sexuality.

7. BALANCING RESPECTABILITY

It was the first week of high school. All of the 15-16 year-olds were forming working groups around the edge of the still water, all except Iselin. We had walked for about an hour to get to this pond in the woods, it was mid-morning and a bright day.

Iselin sat on the edge of the wooden pier and looked down. Inaya walked over. Behind her was a group of other girls, seemingly uncertain whether to engage or not. Inaya said consolingly to Iselin: “Don’t bother with what they say! Can’t you be with our group?” Iselin continued to look down, and Inaya and the other girls seemed to give up; they left to sit further out on the pier. I walked tentatively over to Iselin, who looked up at me, her face set with indignation, and without hesitation she started telling me what was wrong. “It is so different here! The boys don’t respect the girls! They call them ugly things, like *whore*. That is a word that you just don’t say! I learnt that in pre-school”.

A few minutes of soothing pep talk later, I left Iselin and walked over to the group who had been kind to Iselin. Inaya, Elif, Adiba and Amir smiled at me, and as I sat down I heard Elif, who was occupied by another conversation, burst out: “Å lø!” I remarked that I had heard that word so many times since we had started school. Elif laughed and said “Yes, we always say *lø*”. Knowing that it was a common kebab Norwegian slang word, but not much more, I asked if I could say word like that or if it would sound weird. Elif said that I could, because I wasn’t a *babe* (*berte*). “All the Norwegian girls in school are babes, haven’t you noticed?” Elif and the others laughed. Elif told me that they called them *kæber*. “What does *kæbe* mean?” I asked. Telling me that it means *whore*, Elif indicated with a nod of her head over at Iselin. “Like that one over there...” Somebody said “Iselin”. Elif repeated, with a disappointed sing-song voice: “Iselin, Iselin, Iselin... She is a *kæbe*. We call all the Norwegian girls *kæber*. They can’t speak like that”. “But Marte, she

can!” one of the girls exclaimed. “Yes, I love hearing Marte speaking words like that. It makes me happy!” said Inaya. (Aug 29 2008)

This chapter is about girls’ sexuality, morals, and racial-ethnic border-work. The question that is addressed in this chapter is: what role do sexual demarcations and the symbolic play in the lives of individuals and for groups at Skogbyen school? Where did Elif’s comments come from and what did they really signify? What about Inaya’s approach? What was it like for different pupils, to live between their peers’, the school’s and their parents’ often diverging values regarding sexuality and relationships? I investigate this both in terms of how sexuality was understood as multiple economies of respectability in school and in terms of the relationships between daughters and their families. I show how markers of female sexuality and sexual morals may be used to create and maintain borders between girls, and argue ultimately that for some, maintaining sexual-moral borders worked as a rectification of indignities suffered in school. I’ll begin by taking a look at what kind of sexual mores the school communicated to the pupils.

“Sex and relationship stuff”: Institutional sexual mores

It happened now and then that the pupils created ‘chaos’, as they would say, after teachers included explicit sexuality in texts or films as parts of their teaching. Like the time they were asked to read a text containing references to what the pupils called only *dicks and fuck (pikk og faen)*.⁴⁶ This created an uproar among the pupils, who refused to read the text because the novel described female sexual fantasies and masturbation, and they ended up leaving the lesson in protest. When I came back to visit the pupils at the end of their first school year, I joined them to watch the film *Mannen som elsket Yngve* [*The man who loved Yngve*] in a Norwegian class. Neither the sexuality in teaching nor the pupils’ reactions had changed much:

In the film there was a big party with a lot of alcohol and people who were kissing and fondling each other. The main character Jarle and his girlfriend laid naked on the sofa, the girl asked Jarle if he thought that they would be

⁴⁶ See the example that opens chapter 6 (from Nov 11 2008). The text they referred to contained excerpts from Olaug Nilsen’s novel *Få meg på, for faen* (Nilsen, 2006 [2005]). The English translation used in the novel’s film adaption (Jacobsen, 2011) is *Turn me on, goddammit*.

together forever. Latif said loudly: “NO!” And several repeated after him: “No – no – no!” Uma kept her head on her desk and didn’t watch any of the film. Afsheen and Latif were hushed by Nora, who sat in the back, behind everyone. Inas and Elif were chatting about something else. In a scene in the shower, Jarle gave Yngve long, dwelling looks. Aza hit his hand on the table, looking upset, and put his head down on the table as to avoid seeing. When the scene was audibly over, he looked up again.

After the class I spoke with Ahlam. She sat on the radiator with a couple of other girls, asking me what I thought about the film. I said that I had read the novel and shrugged, trying not to stop her voicing her opinion. She hesitated and mumbled that Nora always had “mumble-mumble-stuff”. I asked her what she meant, and she said: “Like interpretation-stuff”. And then she looked at me and said: “You know – before this, we saw *Tatt av kvinnen* [*Gone with the Woman*] – there is so much sex and relationship stuff!” – Don’t you like that”, I asked. “No”, she said, “And I think that is the case for all of the Muslims!” (April 14, 2009)

There was a general discourse of equality, feminism and a free and homo-tolerant sexuality which became apparent both through the majority of the teachers’ general discourse and through the curriculum. The split in the pupil mass and between most of the pupils and the teachers was rarely as apparent as in these instances. They also heightened the religious identity of the pupils: whereas one demarcation line between Skogbyen pupils was often between majority and minority pupils, religion became particularly visible as a central category when the topic was sexuality, as Ahlam’s comment above illustrates: ‘all Muslims’ dislike ‘sex and relationship stuff’. Although the categories ‘Muslims’ and ‘ethnic minority pupils’ were partly overlapping, the difference lies in which category gained prevalence in their narratives at different times.

The emphasis on religious/cultural differences is something that is visible in Norwegian schools’ curricula. In Norwegian school textbooks, there is often an implicit fault line of sexual mores between stereotypical Western and non-Western values, to a larger extent than for example between secular and Christian values (Røthing and Svendsen, 2010). Åse Røthing and Stine Svendsen have shown how a ‘Norwegian’ sexuality is touted in Norwegian sexual education in school and shown

as ‘best’, while for example Muslim sexual morals are portrayed as ‘other’ and as ‘old-fashioned’. They argue that the Western tolerance discourse purges the Norwegian public of negative attitudes against homosexuality, and locates these attitudes instead with ‘the other’. Norwegian culture, and Western culture in general, is portrayed as what the researchers term as ‘homo-tolerant’, while ‘homo-negativism’ is in this culture linked to especially Muslim countries (Røthing and Svendsen, 2010).

Teachers’ seemingly flippant comments about sex or sexualised matters outside formal teaching or outside of the curriculum could also cause pupils’ moral outrage:

As the teacher Kari left the classroom for a minute, Ahlam turned quickly towards Inas, Idil and Hadi, and said: “Do you know what she said? I told her that she looked a lot like another teacher at another school, and she said that maybe her father has been out on the town and given her a false sister!” Ahlam grinned widely, she looked as though this was a sensation. But Inas looked furious. Her mouth was wide open for so long that Hadi poked Idil and said: “Look at Inas!” Inas left them, and as she did, she said: “I’ll kill her! What’s *wrong* with the teachers in this place, I will personally make sure that she won’t come back to this school. To say something like that about her father! That’s what’s wrong, they have no *respect!*” (Nov 19, 2008)

Joron Pihl, Norwegian scholar in ethnic studies, argues that teachers evaluate children’s achievement in primary education based on their ‘cultural and educational capital’, and that this leads ethnic minority pupils to being marginalised in school and seen as deviant (Pihl, 2009). It is likely that sexual norms, as part of this cultural capital, can contribute to this effect, especially for older pupils. The pupils who disliked ‘sex and relationship stuff’ certainly got the message that their values did not combine well with the school’s values, represented through the curriculum and teachers’ comments. The school itself was one of the foremost bringers of a certain ‘state approved sexuality’ that many of the pupils had to face and actively negotiate.

However, although Muslim pupils noticed and reacted against the sexuality that the school presented, they didn’t show signs of experiencing this as disempowering or marginalising – at least not outwardly. On the contrary, they

treated it in a manner of moral indignation, ridicule and disdain. A central issue below is to try to understand both the disdain and ridicule, and to ask whether the school's obvious value system affected different pupils beyond the surface. Before I get that far, however, I wish to elaborate somewhat on what seemed like a system of different 'economies' or value systems of women's respectability among pupils.

Different economies of respectability

Iselin had a different relationship to the institutional sexual mores of the school. This was illustrated by the fact that one of the teachers that the Muslim pupils perceived as being provocative was the one Iselin went to for advice after several instances of being called a 'whore':

Iselin: The boys here, I don't think they mean – or, like the teacher explained to me: "I don't think they mean *whore*, Iselin, they just mean, it is like a thing they have, they talk like that. It is their language, you see?"^{lv}

During the first day of going to Skogbyen high school, it was shocking to Iselin that not *everybody* knew not to use the word *whore*, and that the boys didn't respect girls (like her). Iselin had also experienced having her sexuality questioned by ethnic Norwegians. There were obviously also 'moral gatekeepers' among ethnic Norwegians. Nevertheless, she understood the moral gatekeeping in the Skogbyen context to be a matter of ethnicity and religion. Iselin proposes Norwegian sexual freedom as the most important difference between herself and the Muslim girls when she told me about what she viewed as a childish party:

Iselin: All [the Muslim] girls are like that. Of course some of them party, but no one in Skogbyen who is any kind of foreigner has a party. You see what I mean – with alcohol. Because they have to be good Muslims and of course it is about sex and all that.^{lvi}

To Iselin, the freedom to experiment with sexuality, to dress the way one wanted and to be gay-friendly were important parts of her identity and her way of viewing herself. She understood Muslim girls' sexuality primarily as repressed and childish, and drew

an image of the Muslims in Skogbyen as strictly religious and not participating in the heterosexual game. Her renunciation of ‘Muslim sexuality’ is partly because she thinks that Muslims at Skogbyen lacked the two major signs of entering Norwegian adulthood: having sex and partying with alcohol. However, her view was also related to her feelings about having her own sense of respectability attacked:

We sat in a room and we were pretty serious, all of us worked. And then one guy said “everyone who is a virgin, put your hand up” Then everyone puts up their hand, except for me. *And* Abdul. Then Abdul said, “Wow, Iselin, okay”, and I go: “Yees? I *have* had sex. I had a boyfriend, you see, I had a boyfriend for ten months, so that is why I had sex!” And then all of them looked at me, even a Norwegian guy! But he lives here. Then this guy, Abdul, says: “Yes, well when you walk past us, it doesn’t exactly look like you’re a virgin”. And then I say, “Are you saying that I look dirty, do I look like a whore?” And then they manage to say *yes!* And it is completely serious, no one is laughing, nothing! And just that *ignites* me. Why am *I* a whore and *he* is cool, I don’t get it. He had sex with a girl!^{lvii}

It was also fairly common for Muslim girls to also be called a ‘whore’ too. In one such instance, a fight broke out in the cafeteria between a group of girls from a Pakistani background, after one girl had called another girl ‘whore’ behind her back, and a third girl had told her friends about this slander. All of the girls who were directly involved *and* their girlfriends took part in the fight, mostly as supporting bystanders. In my material, girls who were called ‘whore’ reacted negatively if it was done in earnest (and not in jest or affectionately between friends, as was common), feeling that their reputation and respectability were at stake (see also chapter 6). However, what seems to be the fundamental difference between the two examples above is that for Iselin, as a true child of the Norwegian gender equality era, the word ‘whore’ ignites her because she feels a genuine entitlement to sexual freedom, and no one should stop her sense of (that) entitlement. As opposed to Iselin, the girls in the cafeteria didn’t fight for their right to *have* sex, they fought to keep the reputation that they *had not*.

After some months, Iselin told me that her ethnic minority classmates seemed to respect her more than they did at the beginning:

Iselin: I think that the boys have become like wow, Iselin, she isn't only blonde anymore. And that is really good. Because I really don't want *that* one on me, if you see, to be like blonde and stupid and screwing around.^{lviii}

Iselin repeatedly used the expression 'blonde and stupid', or only 'blonde', as shorthand for promiscuous and stupid. While telling me this, she stopped in her tracks and suddenly told me about a new friend that she went to a party with. Iselin was appalled that her new friend seemed to be "completely loose" and "made out with everyone", "with her boobs hanging out and it was like, Gooood, like do I have to sit with her!"^{lix} She linked the two stories together: the story of her gaining more respect for distancing herself from the blonde and stupid image, and the story of her embarrassment at her 'blonde and stupid' new friend. She laughed at the fact that the girl wanted to be a make-up artist and called her 'very blonde', even though she acknowledged that she isn't even blonde. She clarified for me that 'blonde' means "very stupid". In connecting these stories, Iselin tied together blonde hair, stupidity, lack of ambition and promiscuity. Her own blonde hair, however, had made her the subject of demeaning remarks from the time she started Skogbyen (see also chapter 5).

What Iselin highlights is a continuum of respectability where she places her former self and her new friend at the very lowest point, characterised by a *lack of respectability*. At the other end, as *far too strict*, she places many of her classmates. The path she sketches for herself moves her into a middle position between the two, which retains both respectability and sexual freedom; it isn't unlikely that her starting at Skogbyen strengthens this trajectory of respectability. However, it is also clear that this path started *before* Skogbyen and must be seen in connection with more widespread cultural currents than those only related to her positioning as a white girl in an ethnic minority environment. This became clear as Iselin juxtaposed her experiences at home to her new experiences at Skogbyen. She told me how astonished she was at Skogbyen boys' general self-confidence in sexual matters, "they believe they can have you sexually". She told me how she was at a party, where started to dance and one guy, Ali, just started to dance with her. "I was just: 'I don't know you, and I don't want to dance with you!' And then he was like: 'Yes, come on!' and I was like 'No!'

and then I just had to leave”.^{lx} Ali said she had “a nice ass” in front of everyone. Iselin didn’t like it. He started to ask, according to Iselin:

Iselin: “‘Oh Iselin can’t you meet me, and date me, and why don’t you like me? Is it because I’m not rich, is it because I’m a foreigner? Is it because I’m not Norwegian?’ (laughs) I was just like: ‘It has *nothing* to do with that, you’re just not my type!’^{lxi}

Iselin continues in an explanatory tone, where she contrasts her experiences ‘where she is from’ (also the east side of Oslo, but not the suburbs) with how it is ‘out here’:

Iselin: Where I’m from, we are friends before we start dating. I think they must have misunderstood, because girls don’t like to hear – or at least *I* and my girlfriends don’t like to hear that we are hot or sexy. We like to hear that we are sweet and kind! *That* is so much better, because then you seem a bit proper. If you are ‘hot’ or they say ‘I could fuck you’, if you hear ‘you are fuckable’, it’s not very nice to hear”.^{lxii}

The quote indicates that Iselin was invested in this in-between position even before and outside of Skogbyen. However, this investment in sexual respectability is emphasised in the meeting with an ethnified ‘other’, where she is met with different values and attitudes than she is used to – making it all the more important for her to fight to retain a respectable position.

Simultaneously, her stories continually foregrounds ethnicity. Local ethnic belonging and religion ties in with the continuum of respectability, thus, her own experience of battling for her own respectability also becomes framed in ethnic and racialised terms. Yet this can be analysed from another angle. The Danish psychologist Dorte Staunæs (Staunæs, 2004) writes about an ethnic Danish 13-year old, Bettina, who, like Iselin, understands her experiences with sexuality, friendships and relationships solely in terms of ethnicity. Staunæs compares Bettina’s experiences with her and her colleagues’ experiences from junior high school, and finds that ethnicity was never thought of as relevant in the episodes they remembered from their own youth, where for example, boys had pushed sexual limits. Iselin’s story is definitely about ethnicity, but it is also about finding out about sexuality at that age –

a trajectory that is rarely devoid of power relations, as Staunæs points out (Staunæs, 2004: 276).

Valued belonging

It was common among teachers and pupils to tie together certain value systems, religions and cultures, and also to attach to them the ethnic packages of ‘Norwegian’ or ‘foreigner’. A particularly apt example is the contrast between two friends, Marte and Orri. Marte and Orri both believed in abstaining from sex before marriage. Both were Muslim girls, neither of them wore a headscarf, but they dressed ‘properly’ according to Islamic religious mores. However, the similarity stopped when it came to their values regarding gender equality. When we discussed boyfriends in the interview with the two friends together, I was a bit taken aback when 16 year-old Marte told me that she didn’t want a boyfriend, she wanted a husband: “*Now!*” Orri chimed in, saying that Marte had to wait “3-4-5 years. Education first!” Marte continued, half-jokingly, to say that her hypothetical husband had to be rich, but Orri kept insisting that she needed education. Marte countered:

Marte: What if we get divorced, what are you going to do? He’ll take your house, he’ll take your car, he’ll take your child. Or wait – *I* would take the child perhaps.

Orri: Then you’ll be lost if you don’t complete your education. At least finish! Or have a job and work a bit in between, earn some money. You have to think like this! There is no rush to get married if you have a man who loves you. He won’t leave you if you say that you don’t want to get married right away. So I think that education comes first. Definitely!^{lxiii}

Their disagreement on topics related to gender equality and the future position as a woman in relation to men, career and children, continued through much of the interview. On discussing children, Marte told me she wanted many kids – jokingly, she said that she wanted to be a Somali family. Orri, continuing on the same topic, told me that she thought it was important that a husband would share the housework equally.

Orri: It shouldn't be like *I* am the one who is going to do all the housework and that *he* is going to work. I think *both* should be working, both should look after the kids. Like both should share, so that *one* doesn't have to do all. Because there are quite a few who does it like that in the developing countries, or like in Morocco at least it is like that. It has been highly modernised, and women work too, but often, men are the ones who work, while women are at home. But I don't think it ought to be like that.

Ingunn, to Marte: Do you think so too?

Marte: (confirming:) Mmm – but the man ought to work the most. *Earn* the most! Not work the most, but earn the most.

Ingunn: you want – why?

Marte: Because I need the money, of course!

Ingunn: Wouldn't it be better if *you* earn the most?

Marte: Well, he would give it to me!

Orri: No, you should both provide for each other! I think that if you like your job, no matter how much you earn it shouldn't matter, really. You will manage with the money you have, it's not as though you will be poor or anything.^{lxiv}

Orri's last comment, 'it's not as though you will be poor or anything', can be seen as a telling and rather touching testimony to the security of the Norwegian welfare state. Social class doesn't necessarily or solely manifest itself in the distribution of financial wealth, but can also be detectable in attitudes and norms. This is particularly important to note in Norway, where economic differences are less extreme than in other countries (Aarseth, 2008, Skilbrei, 2003). While middle-class Orri with Moroccan parents touted ideals that media, schoolbooks and, to a certain extent pupils, connected to both middle-class and *Norwegian* ideals, Marte expressed notions that she herself actively placed in non-Western countries.

Both Marte and Orri place Marte's attitudes there: Orri places Marte's attitudes in 'developing countries' like the African country Orri's parents are from. Marte compares her wishes for a large family to Somali family structures. Orri, who 'really' had ethnic minority background, attests to the ideals of equality. Perhaps Marte also over-compensates to properly become part of the ethnic minority peer group. In so doing, she 'hyper-corrects', exaggerating her alignment with what are perceived to be prevalent social attitudes and values among certain ethnic minority

groups. In light of Anthias and Yuval-Davis' theory that it is through gender and sexuality that the borders of ethnicity are maintained (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1993), Marte can be seen as an extra strict gatekeeper of this border perhaps because of her tenuous position, her close proximity to being 'Norwegian'. Orri, on the other hand, feels completely at ease with planning a future with an educated husband, although she will not be having sex before marriage either.

Maria Bäckman mentions a girl similar to Marte in her book *Miljonsvennar* (Bäckman, 2009a). The country is Sweden, but other than that, much is similar to Skogbyen. The white girl Joanna was a so-called *innvandrersvenska*, she was Swedish and white, but all her friends were ethnic minority youth. She wanted to get married after high school, not have sex before marriage, and she said that she did not get along with Swedes. She thought that the Swedes around her had a careless attitude towards sexuality (Bäckman, 2009a: 155-8). An important part of what is counted as part of the Swedish 'ethnic package' is about a certain form of sexuality and relationships, and Bäckman reads Joanna's attitudes as a way of actively negotiating the narrative of typical Swedish girls as blonde and easy, as 'whores', to make herself virtuous and safe.

For Marte, the fear of what happened to girls like Iselin at Skogbyen might have had an effect in making her even more adamant, so as not to be seen as a 'typical Norwegian girl', as a *kæbe*. I think, however, that the reason for Marte's denial of more typical Norwegian sexual mores was more about declaring allegiance and *belonging* with the ethnic minority peer group. Marte's identification with the peer group was, as I showed in chapter 5, of immense importance to her. Her borderwork is done 'from within.' In this respect both Marte and Iselin resemble the British working-class women Beverley Skeggs (Skeggs, 1997) has described, who went to great lengths not to be seen as working-class. Especially in terms of disciplining their bodies, exercising, wearing respectable clothes and displaying a respectable sexuality, they, like Marte and Iselin, worked from within to show certain allegiances, which was all the more important for the perceived unsavoury nature of their working-class background. However, unlike Marte, Iselin's allegiance lay with an equality-oriented, moderate sexuality.

A central point here is that there were different economies of respectability, and these were often related to religion and/or to the loose ethnic packages. The patterns were clear, but in many instances there was no simple link between values

and religion or culture, as becomes evident in the difference between Marte and Orri – a difference that illustrates the meaning of social background read in ethnified and gendered terms. Sometimes, the differences in value might be about a search for respect that had little to do with religion. However, the tendency was to narrate these differences, as Marte, Orri and Iselin both did, as ‘ethnic’.

In the difference between Orri and Marte above, it is necessary to note that Marte had to settle with little advice from close adults on the subjects of gender equality, career, love and sexuality, while Orri told me that her ideals of a future relationship and career was built on the model of her parents. There are two paths that follow from this. One path is to investigate the role of parents, which I will discuss now. The other is to investigate the exaggerated moral narratives in the peer group that might have fed into Marte’s notions, which I will return to below.

Youths and parents

In the following part I will investigate how the pupils lived between their peers’, the school and their parents’ often diverging values regarding sexuality and relationships. A large majority of the Muslim girls were content and agreed to a large degree with the rules or opinions of their parents. The girls who seemed the most content with abstaining from sex and boyfriends had in common parents who seemed strict compared to mainstream Norwegian parents, but nurturing and supportive. It seemed that these girls’ choices were as much their own as they were their parents’ – they did not struggle visibly against their parents’ rules. Rather, their life choices seemed to stem from their personal conviction, and impossible to unravel from their parents’ wishes for them. Hadi, for example – who said that she did not want a boyfriend now, as it might interfere with her schoolwork – looked up to her parents. They had come from Pakistan to Norway before she was born. She seemed secure and stable in her relationship with them. Specifically, she admired the way that they handled difficult information, for example when Hadi would tell about “maybe a fist fight or an argument or something like that. It’s about how they handle things and give advice. Yes, and how I should handle it instead of, like if I make mistakes, then they can show me how I really ought to do it”.^{lxv} Hadi’s upbringing seemed moderate from my point of view, with some firm rules that were laid out by gentle guidance.

These girls had in common that they felt they could do what they liked, but they respected their parents' trust, and they did not want that trust to be broken, as Yalda said: "like they trust me, and I don't want to take advantage of that in any way".^{lxvi} To my knowledge, these girls were never in any conflicts at school – both because they were quiet and content girls, and also because they complied with what was expected of them, with the collective narrative of sexually virtuous Muslim girls. The most striking of their shared traits was their loyalty to their parents. Nevertheless, this acquiescence does not mean that there wasn't also a power dimension in the relationship between parents and daughters. The Norwegian sociologist Kristin Engh Førde interviewed Muslim girls in an Oslo high school who wore the hijab, and found that the girls mostly see the donning of the veil as a matter of their own free choice, similar to the group of girls I discussed above. She shows how, nevertheless, wearing a hijab must be seen as a choice within highly power laden relations with peers and parents, which is intertwined with the girls' view of wearing the hijab as individually motivated (Førde, 2006).

A handful of the girls in the c-class, however, did *not* have a similarly accepting attitude towards their parents' or wider family's rules. In general, it seemed as though the Muslim girls in class got more actively religious during the years I followed them for my research. I noticed a marked rise in the number of hijabs in class from first to third grade. Several of the Muslim girls in class that did not already wear a hijab, expressed a hope or an expectation that they would one day wear it on a regular basis. The first time Orri tried on a hijab in public, she exclaimed: "One day I will wear it, *Insha'Allah!*"⁴⁷ I will now turn to Uma, who was one of the girls who started wearing a hijab during the years at Skogbyen.

Change

Uma was generally considered by the people around her to be a beautiful girl – I thought the same. She was also highly self-aware and could spend more than half of the lesson applying elaborate eye make-up with a little mirror in one hand and an eye-liner or mascara in the other. At other times, she could spend whole lessons staring blankly into space with a sad expression on her face, listening to music on her headphones. Yet at other times she was the centre of attention, normally surrounded

⁴⁷ Arabic, meaning by the Grace of Allah (God).

by a dedicated group of friends, both boys and girls, but mostly girls. She was positively conscious of her middle-class background and said her parents took it for granted that she would go to university, and she also wanted this for herself. She started dating a boy around the time she began at Skogbyen whom she stayed with during the three years I knew her in school.

She started wearing a hijab in the third grade. On the day she first tried on the hijab, it just *felt right*, she said to me. She found that “things fell into its place”.^{lxvii} Uma wrote in an email in 3rd grade that religion had always been important to her and was an important part of her identity. A couple of months after the first try-on, she decided to just “put it on and walk outside, and then it was done”.^{lxviii} She wrote that “there are some small reasons why I think hijab is important now, apart from the religious, for example that I think that society is too sexualised and I want to show that I distance myself from that”.^{lxix}

To me, it seemed obvious that she loved Islam and wanted to be a good Muslim. In her email to me, she also wrote as though the religious reason was an obvious one. She gave an additional reason for wearing the hijab, however, explaining that society is too sexualised. I wish to spend some time tracing this reasoning and its relevance to Uma’s biography. What was it that made Uma feel that wearing a hijab was just *right*?

The claim of society’s over-sexualisation may be understood both in light of the discourses that were available to Uma at this point – for example discourses of sexualisation of society – but also in the light of her personal *embodied* experiences, particularly how she experienced being the centre of attention because of her beauty. In my first interview with her in the first grade, at a time when she was not yet wearing a hijab, she said she thought her good looks brought nothing good, and that she believed that personality was all that mattered. The inside should, she reflected, have prevalence over the outside.

Uma: To be honest, I have a really bad impression of boys (laughter). As a rule they are only after one thing. It’s like: ‘wow, she’s pretty, I have to get to know her’, if you see what I mean? Just so that they might eventually start dating me. And...I feel as though they don’t see my personality at all.^{lxx}

Yet she was also drawn to the positive attention, and did seem to put a large amount of energy into her looks. Something about this attention jarred, however. It did not feel right to her. Generally, Uma seemed disillusioned and had a negative impression of people: “I know how false people can be, I don’t like people! Sometimes, I’m telling you, I wish I was a cow! That would have been *so* much better! They only eat grass and aren’t false”.^{lxxi} Uma gave me the impression of a young girl weary of society’s pressure. For her, the hijab was a relief.

More than her relationship with different acquaintances and strangers, there was also a more personal reason for her to subscribe to the discourse of society’s sexualisation: her relationship with her previous and current boyfriends and her parents. Throughout the interview in the first grade, she told about a strong need for security, reasoning that many conflicts with boyfriends, one of whom was emotionally abusive, girlfriends, and especially her parents during the last years, had made her insecure and sad. She saw her boyfriend as a saviour, and said that all she wanted was to be safe with him. That he was a believing Muslim, actively supporting her to make choices such as giving up smoking, fighting and to start praying, meant much to her. Moreover, her relationship with her parents was conflicted, she said. She thought that she had been a ‘difficult daughter.’ she ‘didn’t listen’ to them, and lived her life “as though she was twenty when she was fourteen”. Being a virtuous young woman whose veil indeed symbolises meekness would be a way to rectify what she thought of as her mistakes in the relationship with her parents. Religious motivations aside, contributing to her choice was her relationship with her parents, her recent depression and her low self-esteem, and not least, her ambiguous emotions about her looks and the fact that they gave her no satisfaction – at the same time as they gave her a lot of instant gratification. Uma was also in a moderate Muslim environment and was, veil aside, still allowed to have a boyfriend, unlike many of the other Muslim girls. As Dorthe Staunæs found for girls a few years younger than Uma, to start wearing a veil meant an *exclusion* from the social activities of the rest of the class (Staunæs, 2004: 186).

This was not the case at Skogbyen, where wearing a veil largely was perceived as positive. This must be seen in the context of larger cultural changes in which Muslim women in Europe increasingly wear hijabs (Førde, 2006: 4). This happens also in Norway (Thorbjørnsrud, 2004), as well as outside of Europe. Fadwa El Guindi recounts that in the streets of 1970’s Cairo, veiled young urban college

students were a new, strong and increasing presence, incomprehensible both to the contemporary urban Egypt and to her own parents (El Guindi, 1999: 161). El Guindi perceives veiling in Egypt as ‘in vogue’ because it is part of a “strong, resilient social and political movement”, where women could be “asserting her Muslim identity, career-oriented, modern and veiled” (El Guindi, 1999: 168). Thereby she suggests that the veil, which may be seen paradoxically as an ‘out of date’ garment in an increasingly *modern* world (cf. Førde, 2006: 4), may also be seen as an assertion of possible female identities. Whereas Muslims in Norway do not take part in a social movement as strong, they nevertheless may be seen to be influenced by the same social currents, and, not insignificantly, the power of fashion (Thorbjørnsrud, 2004). For Uma, it was not possible to untangle her personal emotions about herself from the meaning of the culture she was embedded in – not least the collective narratives of Skogbyen. But for her, all these reasons moved her in the same direction, making the donning of the veil ‘just right’ for her.

Control

There were also some girls who wore a veil, agreed with their parents, but felt discontentment with the *way* the rules were enforced. Bilan, a rather timid girl, told me that her parents were strict, but that she felt that their rules were good, and that she also wanted what they wanted. From the day I met Bilan, she always tied the hijab underneath her chin. During the interview, she kept pushing invisible threads of hair from her forehead underneath the cloth, her hands moving as though they had done that movement many times before. Underneath the table, I caught a glimpse of her usual attire: a tight pair of jeans and pointed ankle boots with stiletto heels. She said that she sometimes wants a boyfriend, but then she considered that: “Actually, like for myself, I think that it is kind of best to wait for the big love. Instead of fooling around with it all the time”.^{lxxii} This was also her parents’ opinion. She knew this, without them telling her directly. She had picked it up, rather, from how they commented on other peoples’ choices, in real life and on television.

However, it was her brother, her elder by three years, who kept an eye on her, said Bilan. She could really talk with him, she said, but they also fought a lot, both big and small fights. They could, for example, talk about television or anything, and their discussions could lead to fighting. “So”, she said, “not big fights. Then he is like a

support like he watches what I do and.... Like I shouldn't do bad things and stuff'.^{lxxiii}

Ingunn: Okay – what does ”bad things” mean for him?

Bilan: For example boys, that I'm not to be with boys. Drinking, or smoking, or drugs. *All* of that.^{lxxiv}

Here, Bilan herself introduces the topic of her brother watching over her, and she introduces this in the midst of our talk about fighting. She introduces this with the noun 'support', *støtte*, which can also be interpreted as an interrupted adjective 'supportive', *støttende*. It is ambiguous whether this watching over her is the source of fights, or whether this was an apropos to the topic of fighting. In any case, the two are linked in her narrative, and the implicit connection between conflict and his watching makes the word *support* or *supportive* less than straight forward. This ambiguity is further emphasised when I ask her where the limit is drawn for her relationship with boys. Bilan answers hesitantly:

Ehm, like, when it is... You know, when you like fool around with each other. When girls and boys fool around, that they don't cross the line kind of. Or that...Or, I don't really know what he thinks. But I, myself, take care and watch myself.^{lxxv}

Even though her brother watched over her by checking that she was not doing anything she was not allowed to do, Bilan asserts that she also watches her own conduct. Her brother knew many people at Skogbyen, and he was potentially always there as a symbolic presence, as, according to Bilan, he had told all of his friends to keep an eye on her. Frustrated, Bilan told me that a boy in class did this even without being asked. This boy had told her brother that she had done things, like smoking and sitting on boys' laps, which Bilan said was not true. This rankled all the more because she felt she ought to be trusted. Throughout the interview, Bilan vacillates between presenting her brother as the one who watches her, and at the same time emphasising that she watches over herself. Norwegian sociologist Anja Bredal found a similar ambivalence in a study of boys from ethnic minority background in Norway. Some of the boys are taught to 'look after' their sisters so that they won't end up as 'bad

women' (Bredal, 2011: 71). These are situations, Anja Bredal notes, where care and control are entwined.

The balance between autonomy and subordination never conflicted with her sense that she agreed with her parents' implicit rules. This acknowledgement of her parents' greater wisdom and knowledge of what was best for her was something that most of the girls who were religious and abstained from dating shared (cf. Førde, 2006: 101).

Doing it anyway

The young Muslim girl Ahlam told me that having sex "isn't allowed in Islam before marriage, but almost all Muslims do it. They don't care"^{lxxvi} Ahlam continued:

Ahlam: Nowadays, Islam has developed so much that you can almost count on all the girls having done it. All the Muslim girls have done it. There is no one who – but they might not tell every person.

Ingunn: Do you mean Islam in Norway, or Islam [Ahlam interrupts]

Ahlam: Yes, Islam in Norway really. In Europe. My cousins in England have boyfriends too, and their parents know about them.^{lxxvii}

It was quite likely an exaggeration that all Muslim girls had had sex, perhaps helped along by the fact that Ahlam herself had a secret boyfriend. The Norwegian sociologist Mette Andersson discusses a similar case where a Pakistani girl in the Pakistani pupil group, herself a Catholic, put forward the 'fact' that 60% of the Pakistani Muslim girls had sex and had boyfriends (Andersson, 2005). This was modified yet confirmed by many other informants in Andersson's material. In my material, Ahlam's contention that *all* Muslim girls had had sex stood alone. Anderson's informant, like Ahlam, was in some ways excluded from Pakistani-Norwegian culture, and this fact may partly explain their similar exaggeration: sexual matters in this context is a sore spot, full of tensions between peers and parents, cultural cross-pressure, and hidden experiences and feelings.

The validity of Ahlam's statement notwithstanding, there was at least a handful of girls who had boyfriends against their parents' wishes. Abia was not typical of these girls, but her extreme experiences shed light on the processes that

could be involved for several who were living between different economies of respectability. She had a boyfriend, with parents from the same country as her own. She also mentioned a handful of boys that liked her and wanted to be with her. Her parents and brothers did not know about her boyfriend, although they had been going out for three years:

Abia: One day, all of this will come out. But everybody else knows it now, except my brothers and my father and mother.

Ingunn: Yes – what do you think would have happened if your father knew?

Abia: (quiet). To be completely honest, I think he would have beaten me to a pulp. Seriously.^{lxxviii}

Abia had reasons to believe this would have happened, she said: "I've received blows to the head or stuff like that, just because he was mad because I'd answered back or something".^{lxxix} One time it was more serious, she told me, but never as severe as the beatings that her cousins had received from her father's brother. She described to me in detail how after Abia's uncle had found out about his daughter and a boy, he had beaten her up severely and cut off her hair, whereupon the girl disappeared. She turned up a year later in a crisis centre. In the wake of this experience, Abia realised that her boyfriend had to remain a secret:

Abia: So I thought: Oh my god, dad must *never* know about me and him. The people from [background country] are a bit weird. Dad doesn't really get Norwegians... or he has lived here for quite some time, so he gets a lot, but when it comes to boyfriends it is just completely like: 'No Abia, no boyfriends! You're going to be a doctor and you're going to get married and so on. He has always threatened us and said like 'Yes, if you find your own man and get married and stuff I will kill you' and 'I don't care if I have to go to jail.' He has always said stuff like that.^{lxxx}

The boyfriend whom Abia hid from her parents was himself controlling also her sexuality.

Abia: So we fought a lot and he was quite strict and said stuff like ‘no, you can’t wear tights.’ And I was like: ‘What? Why not?!’ And he said just that: ‘No, other boys will look at you’. He is, he still lives a bit in [same background country] I think. And then gradually he became more strict. Then I just couldn’t take it anymore and broke it off.^{lxxxix}

They soon made up, however, because Abia was heartbroken and missed him, but she still reacted to his rules and aggression, and her girlfriends did too. Abia told some intertwining stories: the shocking story of control and abuse, both by father and boyfriend, and on the other hand, her narrative of herself as popular among boys. Her way of being a young girl was similar to those of her classmates who also were flirting with boys and perhaps had boyfriends. The difference between Abia and them was that the majority of these other girls did not tell me about any kind of abuse, and talked about their parents being kind and loving. Abia’s story is first and foremost a story about the level and nature of the *sanctions* imposed on her by people close to her, and the amount and terror of the control some of the girls could succumb to, without letting it show in the day to day life in school.

Abia’s story can say something about the difficulties of those immigrants and their children who are asked to balance different economies of respectability and needs for security, a need that at least for Abia is strengthened by her biography. It would perhaps not have been simpler for Abia had she grown up in the country her parents were from, but she *narrates herself* in light of a Norwegian discourse of free sexuality, perhaps exaggerated by my presence and questions. She orientated herself towards a practice of freer sexuality for young girls, in stark comparison with the practice her father advocates, and both in words and action discredited the strict sexual mores for Muslim girls. Abia understood and explained her father’s authority and violence, and her boyfriend’s wish to control her sexuality and looks, through *culture*: both of them were “still in [country] up here”, she said, and pointed to her head. She explained her own abstinence from sex the same way. The conflicts were deepened and changed by seeing them through her Norwegian eyes.

Generation conflict and change

As anthropologist Christine Jacobsen points out, conflicts that would be seen as a *generation* conflict in studies about Norwegian teens, will more often be seen as *cultural* conflicts by researchers in studies about second generation immigrants (Jacobsen, 2002: 34). The Skogbyen pupils themselves, however, were strikingly conscious about their own relationship with their parents. To generalise, the ethnic minority pupils showed this through a particular consciousness about their own youth. For example, many of the ethnic minority girls said that they did not think that they were mature enough to have a serious and/or sexual relationship. Some of the boys also said this about themselves. When talking to them, it seemed apparent that they really felt that it was too soon for them to be having boyfriends or girlfriends. However, the rhetoric they used implied that someone else's assessment was being reproduced. After all, one cannot see oneself as immature if it is not in relation to someone more mature.

In comparison, ethnic Norwegian girls like Iselin, Marianne and Ingrid never portrayed themselves as immature. On the contrary, they told confident stories of romance, alcohol and sexual experience, and spoke about their parents' role as predominantly a minor or a supporting one. While Ingrid seemed to think of herself as the most mature person in her family, more so than her parents, Iselin told me that when her boyfriend broke up with her, she went to her parents' bed crying at five in the morning, and both her mother and father together comforted her and tried to cheer her up. The next few days, all the three of them talked about what she could do to feel better.

In my material, the girls with a difficult relationship to their parents often had boyfriends, even as some were genuinely afraid that their fathers would hurt them physically if they should find out. It was not always the case that the parent/daughter relationships were difficult *because* of boyfriends. On the contrary, in several of the examples above, it was the other way around – the relationship with their parents had been difficult for a while, and having boyfriends came after, perhaps as emotional relief, as an act of rebellion, or a combination of these factors. This, at least, was Nabikas's opinion. She suggested to me that there is a great gap between the parent generation and the young generation of Muslim women growing up in Norway today. She told me that some of those who are raised in the strictest way become

“completely weird and says yes to everything. If [a boy] just as much as glances over, she makes a tsunami only because of that. It was like that a hundred years ago, we have gotten over that now”.^{lxxxii} What Nabika meant by this was that girls with a (too) strict upbringing created a disproportionate amount of fuss over boys who showed them just the slightest degree of attention. The girls in question were not able to relate to boys in a way that suited modern times. It seems that the stricter the parents, the more rebellious and conflicted the children. It might also be that the girls who feel a strong connection with their parents/father and their home country are also less interested in playing the liberal and open heterosexual game.

In general, it was the relationship with their *fathers* that was the most apparent source of anguish for most of these girls. Perhaps this was because of the active mediating role their fathers took in their relationship; the fathers’ power was direct and that relationship demanded much effort from the girls: to negotiate, oppose, or endure. In comparison, the role played by the mothers of these girls in my research was almost always a passive one. Some of the girls spent much time during the interviews articulating how the mother/daughter relationship was a site of disappointment and grief.

I move now from individual girls, and their differing values and relationship with their parents, to the alchemy of what happens in the meeting between these individuals and the collective narratives that formed in Skogbyen.

Morality and border-work

The Canadian sociologist Michèle Lamont has argued that morality is a central site for understanding the symbolic distinctions between racial-ethnic groups and the reproduction of racial inequality. In a study of black working-class men, she found that black men saw themselves as morally better than white men, emphasising other qualities than did the white men (Lamont, 1997).⁴⁸ Following Lamont, Yen Espiritu argues that “female morality – defined as women’s dedication to their families and sexual restraint – is one of the few sites where economically and politically dominated

⁴⁸ In the same vein, the American sociologist Allison Pugh writes in her study about consumer culture and children about the way that certain parents in her study resist consumer culture by placing a high value on the family’s difference. She writes that “social mobility or immigration can provide a narrative of outsider superiority that bolsters parent refusals” (Pugh, 2009: 156), and she mentions several parents who “saw themselves as outsiders with superior cultural notions of parenting” (Pugh, 2009: 159).

groups can construct the dominate group as other and themselves as superior” (Espiritu, 2001: 421). This notion of entitlement and power is an important point in this chapter: I argue that strict sexual morals worked as a re-dignification for the tenuous and heterogeneous group of ethnic minority pupils.

Although I was aware of research that points to the exposed position of girls in the upholding of cultural borders (see for example Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1993), the sexualised aspect of social life in Skogbyen was, nevertheless, one of the first most striking issues to arise in my fieldwork. Markers of girls’ sexuality were highly, and continually, present: they were more visual and articulated in everyday interactions than I was used to, and marking the borders between ‘good girl’ and ‘bad girl’ permeated much of Skogbyen’s collective narratives. A recurring comment from the pupils was that when it came to sexuality, it was the *girls* who had to be careful to conform to set standards. A higher proportion of ethnic minority girls, especially the Muslim girls, told me stories about parental control and about trying to find ways to negotiate the strictness of their parents, against a backdrop of Norwegian ideals of (sexual) freedom. Ethnic minority boys did generally have a stricter set of rules than did the ethnic Norwegian boys, but they had far more generous reins than did the girls. Afsheen told me that if a boy went out drinking, the Indian or Pakistani parents would say: “Why are you doing this? It isn’t good, we still cannot stop you, but hey, what can we do?”^{lxxxiii} But if it was a girl who had been out drinking, they would say: “Oh, you have destroyed everything for us! Everything, everything, everything. Ruined the respect, the reputation. What shall we do now? We can’t show our face to anyone”.^{lxxxiv} The heavy burden of honour was on the girls’ shoulders.

Transgressions of body, transgressions of speech

According to Inas (the girl discussed above who threatened a teacher because of a joke with sexual undertones), a girl could get called a whore if any of these things happen:

Inas: If a girl comes with really short shorts – it is often jealousy. Really short shorts, and a sleeveless shirt in the summer, before, you were called whore. If you have fucked very many boys – whore. If your top is low cut down to here – whore. If you walk ‘catwalk whore’ kind of, if you go like this

(demonstrates with swinging arms and shoulders) – whore. If you go with high heels and short shorts and think that you're a supermodel, whore. Eh, what else... Yes, if you only speak right out, you know when boys and girls are together, if a girl then starts to talk about cocks and fucking, porn, all of that, in front of a boy, like 'oh I fucked him yesterday', then you're kind of a whore because you don't have respect. You just say stuff out loud. But it is different from person to person. But the environment that *I* live in, where I have grown up, here it is like I say. From *my* point of view, the east side's point of view. It is probably completely different on the west side.^{lxxxv}

There are two issues that this quote raises: one is what I thought of as some pupils' double consciousness (cf. Du Bois, 1903, Gilroy, 1993b) that became visible when discussing sexual mores. On the topic of the borders of female sexuality, Inas inserts phrases like 'before you were called', 'then you can be seen as', 'but it is different from person to person'. Knowing Inas and the way she normally spoke in the classroom, it was though she was at pains not to appear normative in this part of the interview. This is both an understandable and common presentation of the self, to avoid presenting oneself as punishing or as a bully. However, her layered communication highlights an important point: that there was a double consciousness in the 'whore' discourse, a knowledge of two different economies of respectability. It was present in different contexts. In this instance, it became evident when Inas spoke consciously about the theme to me - an ethnic Norwegian female adult – this was perhaps because she did not know me well or because she assumed differences in values between myself and her.

The other issue is the border that Inas blatantly makes visible, a border that Skogbyen girls could not cross easily. She visualises this as a profoundly symbolic border, without mentioning anything physical-sexual between two people: touching, kissing or having sex, nor does she mention having a boyfriend. I would like to use Inas' statement as an entry into investigating borders of female sexuality in the c-class, because the border she referred to resonated with what I saw permeating the pupils' collective narratives. My starting point is the two main paths across this border in my understanding of Inas, both of which are symbolic: transgressions of body markers, like clothing, and transgressions in speech.

Whether the pupils *dressed* inside or outside the border of sexual respectability largely mapped onto the existing local-ethnic border between the ethnic Norwegian pupils and the ethnic minority pupils. For example, I first became aware of how distinct the style of clothing the majority of ethnic minority girls in the c-class was – they wore mostly black and grey, covering most of the skin, jeans that were tight by the ankle and sneakers or other flat shoes – when I saw girls from the school’s other programme walking past me in the cafeteria:

A group of white girls walked past, all of their clothes extremely colourful. One of them with high heels complained loudly about how hard it was, walking down a sloped rack to the eating area. All of them wore elaborate hair styles. One of them even wore her hair short. (Aug 21, 2008)

In my group of respondents, the ethnic Norwegians were more similar to this group of unknown girls walking passed me. Their style of clothing did not go unnoticed. Ingrid, who like many of my informants told me that there were strict rules for clothing for girls in Skogbyen, was the only one of the girls who did PE (physical education) wearing shorts. She told me that:

Ingrid: I don’t understand how people can work out in pants. I do it from time to time, but it is like extremely hot when you do special things. So I wore, so I hadn’t changed after PE, and I was in the cafeteria. And then Malika came over and said: ‘It isn’t summer now’. I just said: ‘I know.’ –‘Okay!’ Like completely, just to say something, it is just so like ‘shut up please’. It is like: *why?*^{lxxxvi}

While neither ‘whore’ nor any other sexualised terms were used, Ingrid understood the implications of Malika’s comments – her way of dressing was not approved of.

For some, it was a matter of ethnic Norwegians girls on the wrong side and Muslim girls on the right side of sexual respectability. Marte, herself a Muslim, seemed to think so. For example, she tied a preoccupation with looks and being cool specifically to ethnic Norwegians:

Marte: In primary school there were many Norwegians, there were *many* Norwegians, but they were like... I felt as soon that it was... it was me, Husna, Shada and Orri, and then, there were the Norwegians who were like: *Hello*, is it really possible to *be* like that? You see?

Ingunn: How?

Marte: Not all the Norwegians, I don't say all!

Ingunn: But what was it you noticed with the Norwegians?

Marte: Things like... I don't know, it's like... *stupid* people! (laughs)

Orri: They're a bit more preoccupied with clothes and makeup and hair and music, while... [Marte interrupts]

Marte: It is like, I remember so clearly those girls in PE. A Norwegian girl said to me and Shada (Marte speaks deliberately clearly and slowly): "are you going to wear a jacket in junior high?" I was like: "Yes, why shouldn't we?" She just: "Pah, then you won't be *cool*, you won't be cool in junior high!" But not all Norwegians are like this. But the Norwegians that I have experienced are like this. But I haven't experienced all Norwegians, so I can't criticise. For example *you're* not like that.^{lxxxvii}

Marte associates ethnic Norwegians here with unreasonable fussiness about clothes and looks and 'coolness'. It is not only about dressing revealingly, but about giving undue *attention* to your looks, an attention that also be manifested just in everyday conversations like the one taking place in Marte's PE class. Although much can be read into the quote above in relation to Marte's own positioning, the general moral gist to be gathered is that the body's outside should not have prevalence over the inside.

Transgressions of speech could be equally damning. Angela was a pupil who continually moved on the border between groups, not quite fitting in, having her main group of friends outside of school. She was from a southern European country and had moved to Norway before she started primary school. She dressed revealingly, showing much of her skin and a toned midriff, with jeans and tops that were a decidedly tighter fit than the clothes other ethnic minority girls in Skogbyen normally wore. Angela also repeatedly crossed the other border that Inas mentioned, that of talking about sex in public, and especially in front of boys:

Angela: If you say stuff that it could be ordinary to say to the Norwegians, they [the Muslim pupils in her class] are a bit like 'No, don't talk about it', you see?

Ingunn: Oh, like what?

Angela: (Laughs) There are a few things. It's just a bit... I don't know. If you joke around about stuff that we usually joke about. It's like stuff that has to do with maybe girls and boys and stuff like that.

Ingunn: About sex and stuff?

Angela: Yes, perhaps that. Like jokes or just fool around. And then it would be just: 'No, no, don't say things like that!'^{lxxxviii}

It is like the Muslim boy Sahir put it: "It is okay to have sex", he said, "but it is something that one shouldn't talk about. It is private!"^{lxxxix} To a certain extent, it was a matter of *don't say it if you do*, rather than *don't do*. It seemed that if the taboo for ethnic Norwegians was talking about skin colour or ethnic difference as I showed in chapter 5, the taboo for the Muslims was being explicit about sex.

Nevertheless, a particular type of sexually explicit banter was a thriving part of everyday interaction in class. For example from the English lesson:

When they discussed the book *The curious incident with the dog in the night time* I constantly heard comments and jokes about the 'dog book', bitches and doggy style. Uma told the teacher, Leif, that she read the whole book in one day, seven hours! Uma waved her fingers in Leif's face and told him animatedly that "That is 300 pages in one day!" Hadi asked her what it is about. Uma retorted quickly: "You ought to know, *you* read it in doggy style!"

Later, Elif walked over to Inas and told her excitedly about a girl whom they met in a party. She had talked behind their backs afterwards! About everybody, Inas and Idil too! Inas wanted to know what she had said about them. Elif didn't know, but the girl had ignored her on Facebook. "Ooooh, she has gone back to [another city] now, but we will go there and fucking beat her up! What's she thinking, that they won't find her?!" Elif laughed excitedly, she gave Inas high five, they agreed that they will most certainly beat her up:

“Does she think that we can’t catch her!?” Inas said again and again: “I will fuck her mother! I will fuck her mother!”⁴⁹ (Nov 3, 2008)

How can the tendency to castigate teachers and other pupils for telling sexual jokes exist alongside the use of such sexually explicit language – in the same pupils? One answer is that they were two different things. Inas was not playing on the same type of on-the-subject sexual discourse as the teachers or some of the other pupils. It was more like she was referring to or ‘quoting’ aspects of the ‘gangster’ image, present, for example, in the lyrics of hip-hop songs,⁵⁰ and as such, the above scene can read as a statement of peer group belonging and insider knowledge. The availability of the peer banter is similar to the loud, devil-may-care femininity that I discussed in relation to the ‘noisy girls’ in the previous chapter. Inas is not *actually* talking about sexual matters, she is using sexualised language to mark belonging and code knowledge. Therefore, Inas and her female classmates are able to talk to each other and to the boys like this in class, without sanctions.

Border control

Who was able to transgress the borders was more than a matter of religion, as became evident when I talked to Elif:

Elif: Iselin is proud of that she does it. People are different. She came to me, she just, I was about to make a scene, she just came over to me and started talking. ‘Are *you* a virgin? I’m not a virgin.’ I was like: ‘Have I *asked* you? Do you care? Get away!’ (laughter) She’s, I feel sorry for people like her. She is proud over the fact that she is a... It’s like... I feel sorry for her.^{xc}

A subtle way for Elif to create a hierarchy of the girls in the class was to say ‘I feel sorry for her’. This pity implied that the pitied girls did not know any better, as though they had a handicap that made them act that way. Iselin’s handicap was being an ethnic Norwegian. Angela, on the other hand, had no such excuse, although it helped that she was not Muslim:

⁴⁹ “Jeg skal knulle mora hennes!”

⁵⁰ Such as in lyrics by rap artists Missy Elliott, and, more recently, Nicky Minaj.

Elif: When you're going out with people, you'll get a reputation. If you're Muslim and if you're going out with people. Angela's reputation isn't *that* bad. We, if she'd been a Muslim and had done it, we would've called her whore to her face.

Ingunn: Oh yeah?

Elif: But now, we only say it behind her back, you see.

Ingunn: Oh! Okay, so that's better? Okay.

Elif: At least then she's not hurt. If she had been a Muslim and had done it, because a Muslim isn't supposed to do it. Christians aren't *that* strict, right?^{xci}

Elif illustrates in this interview excerpt a way that sexual mores could be relative in the Skogbyen context. Christians don't mind as much as Muslims, she says. 'Christians' in this context, however, does not refer to believing Christians, who in many contexts may share some of the sexual mores of Islam. 'Christians' in this context is code for ethnic Norwegians. I ask Elif if she thinks it is different between Iselin – who is ethnic Norwegian – and Angela, who is not:

Elif: Angela *plays* Norwegian. She is only with Norwegians. She is like a wannabe-Norwegian.

Ingunn: Oh. What do you think about that?

Elif: What I think? I, I feel sorry for her. She... I feel sorry for her. It's sad, you, you shouldn't be like that.^{xcii}

In Elif's eyes, Angela did not belong to the group of ethnic minority pupils, at least in terms of sexual morals. Angela's main group of friends was ethnic Norwegians, but she did have a large group of friends from all over the world. Although she was a skilful code switcher in most contexts, she did *not* switch her way of speaking and dressing and signalling an active sexuality in class, which made her stand out, similar to Iselin. However, the difference between Iselin and Angela was Angela's unclear status in terms of ethnic belonging, in an environment where ethnic belonging was the most important identity marker. This might have contributed to Angela's more explicit sexuality being severely sanctioned, and not only by people calling her *whore*: even more serious measures were taken. Angela told me that "a boy accused

me of... something I hadn't done. He said that since I didn't want to do it with him, he went around and said to everyone that we had done it [having sex]". Then the boy started blackmailing her with some alleged naked pictures of her as 'hostage'. She was to give him NOK 700 for each of the seven pictures; if she didn't he said he would print the pictures on flyers and hand them out in school.

The gatekeeping around Angela was more extreme than around other girls, I think, because Angela's in-between ethnicity in the context of Skogbyen placed her in a particularly exposed position. If Marte did border-work from 'within', then Angela did border-work 'from without.' Her position caused trouble in the sexuality area because she did not play the part of ethnic minority 'correctly', with a small concession, as she wasn't Muslim. Nonetheless, Angela created disorder in the categories. In the classic study *Purity and Danger*, Mary Douglas suggests that what falls 'in-between' is unclean and needs to be banished in order to keep the categories straight (Douglas, 1997 [1966]). Calling other girls 'whore', 'kæbe' or 'babe' ('berte' in Norwegian, used in Skogbyen mostly in a derogative manner) was also *not* about ethnic border-work. It was about claiming respectability, power and positioning, and could also be used for fun and inclusion, as many researchers have pointed out (see for example Ambjörnsson, 2004, Bræck, 2006). However, it was also one available entry into conceptualising and not least *exaggerating* differences between the different ethnic groups in the class, both mapping onto and overlapping religious borders.

Although the sexual gatekeeping was mostly done by other girls, direct sanctions could also come from boys, as Iselin and Angela experienced, although some boys could, apparently, not dream of such a thing: when on one occasion I asked Lars if boys also use the word whore to refer to girls, he burst out laughing and said with emphasis: "Absolutely not!" Bredal, in the study of young immigrant boys in Oslo, analysed the way ethnic minority boys sometimes spoke of ethnic Norwegian girls in a derogatory way and their wish for a 'pure wife' as a way of expressing fear of being rejected, or of being dominated by ethnic Norwegian women (Bredal, 2011: 95).

Within Skogbyen, the border control consisted of mainly a handful of girls with particularly strong voices who had the power of defining status, cultural meaning, and the borders in class. Whether the 'border police' are boys or girls, this is not only about fright or value difference in themselves: moral elevation can also be

seen as a way of establishing a positive group identity. In *Multiculturalism without Culture*, political scientist Anne Phillips argues that cultural and religious differences are commonly seen as harbouring differences in *values* (Phillips, 2007: 23). Social scientists sometimes exaggerate value difference, she argues, in order to identify groups in essentialising ways. Often, the individuals in different groups do also, however, exaggerate value differences between ethnic groups (Barth, 1998 [1969]). Such an exaggeration in value difference was, I believe, the case for the first months for the first-year pupils in Skogbyen (see chapter 5).

The exaggerated narrative that Elif presents, that ‘we call all the Norwegian girls ‘*kæber*’’, is as essentialising as it is exoticising. In *Orientalism*, Edward W. Said eloquently shows how the idea of the Orient helped define Europe “as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience” (Said, 2003 [1978]: 1-2). In the context of Skogbyen, the ‘box within the box’ as I discussed in chapter 5, this was also to a certain extent true for this type of exaggerated narratives. Some pupils used the image of the Norwegian *whore* as a way of constructing a group that seemed clearer, to banish members that hovered somewhere along the borderline. However, just as for the noise-makers, the damning of a ‘Norwegian’ sexuality created both inclusion and normalisation on one hand, and marginalisation and alienation on the other. Examples such as Inas’ almost routine aggression towards the teacher, and the pupils’ protest against hearing about things to do with sexuality, etched the specific *Norwegianness* of the school even deeper into the ethnic minority pupils’ consciousness. They effectively and clearly refuted this with derision, on the (spoken and unspoken) premise that they were *not*, in terms of school and sexuality, Norwegian.

It is of critical importance that the Muslim girls were in majority in class. Much classroom research that shows how the numerical minority – be it in terms of gender or ethnicity – in a class becomes the social minority. Most common in Nordic research are studies where there is a small minority of pupils from non-Western backgrounds. In *Skoletid*, Harriet Bjerrum Nielsen followed a class intermittently over 10 years of schooling from the first grade in primary school. In this class, two of three ethnic minority pupils were quite isolated in subtle ways, and increasingly so after the transition to junior high school (Nielsen, 2009: 222, 260-261), when many of the ethnic majority girls start dressing in ‘cool’ clothes and going to parties. The issue for these ethnic minority pupils was to try to adapt to a more typical ethnic majority

youth style as far as possible, or lament how that became increasingly difficult. In Skogbyen's c-class, the Muslim girls were the ones to set the terms. Girls like Iselin who were deeply invested in an ethnic majority youth project, with 'cool' clothes, partying, boyfriends and sex, had limited resources to draw on in meeting these standards, although she had a clear sense of entitlement to protection from them. In the excerpt that opened this chapter, her response to being called 'whore' was only to refer to common sense and the knowledge that this was something that 'you just don't say! I learnt that in pre-school'.

It is remarkable that the pupils who most tenaciously guarded the border of sexual respectability were the same girls who felt the most pulled down by the narrative of the failure of ethnic minority pupils in school. My suggestion is that for these girls, the guarding of ethnic/religious-sexual borders through a strict moral code was used like noise-work: as a way of defining groups and of positioning oneself within a system that encompassed both power and belonging in school while simultaneously marking a disassociation towards the school as a 'Norwegian' system. Crucially, the use of sexual mores as a power vector may also be a way to rectify indignities suffered in other aspects of life, especially what regards these pupils' sense of belonging to the nation and the school as a perceived Norwegian institution. The process of rectification is what Erik Erikson talked about when he wrote: "Where a group's socioeconomic status is in danger, the implicit moral code becomes more restricted, more magic, more exclusive, and more intolerant, as though an outer danger had to be treated as an inner one" (Erikson, 1968 [1994]: 55).

Two years later

Two years later, Iselin was to see herself as a survivor of a tumultuous high school period. It was summer and we sat outside in a café. She was 18 years old, smoking and drinking a *café latte*, and her top was of thin, white cotton, open down the sides and back and only held together by thin pieces of string. Underneath it, the bright bikini top she was wearing was visible. Iselin talked about Uma, one of her classmates, and her recent hijab donning. Iselin could only interpret this veil as forced on her by Uma's boyfriend, who was also Muslim. Iselin was outraged; she could not understand why a beautiful girl like Uma wanted to cover her pretty hair. "So sad – she is so beautiful, and now she wants to hide it, it is just because she is so in love

with her boyfriend”. Half a year later, in third grade, Iselin told me that she had recently been in a very emotional discussion in a religion class, with amongst others, Uma and Inas, two of four hijab-wearing girls in class at that time. The discussion about whether the veil was oppressive for women got so heated that Iselin had burst into tears. She found Uma’s opinions especially weird. “Like she only *just* started to wear the hijab. Not very long ago, Uma had herself been smoking and flirting and dating!” It is hard for her to describe just why it feels so wrong. Perhaps it jars completely with her world-view – the right for Iselin to *own* her sexuality is felt so completely bodily and emotionally that she just cannot understand this apparent abdication of sexual ownership in Uma.

Many of the girls from an ethnic minority background experienced youth transformations that were somewhat different from the ethnic Norwegian girls in my material, and perhaps more radical in terms of potential conflicts with parents and/or peers. However, what some of the ethnic Norwegian girls *in this setting* go through was also highly radical, although in a slightly different way. It is easy for those who follow the ‘life chronology’, writes psychologist Mona-Iren Hauge (Hauge, 2009), by which she means those who do what is expected of them, depending for example on their age and gender, in a given culture. The problematic ‘subjectivation processes’ happen for those who break with the chronologies. Although Iselin follows the ‘correct’ chronology for the white, heterosexual teenage girl, she does it in what is experienced as the *wrong place* for her, and it is, therefore, not experienced as unproblematic – in this particular context, at this time and in this place. Nevertheless, Iselin felt as though she came out as a ‘winner’ in the end, denouncing Uma’s choices much in the same way that Elif did with *Iselin’s* choices above, when Elif said she felt sorry for her. Iselin’s feeling of ‘being better’ is related, I think, to the fact that whereas the Muslim girls’ trajectories in general moved against the institutional sexual mores and Norwegian discourses in general, Iselin and the most of the other ethnic Norwegian girls’ values were reflected and confirmed by them outside of the school setting.

Rectification

I cited above Yen Espiritu’s study of first and second-generation immigrants of US Filipino/as, where she posits that it is within the realm of female morality that the

dominated groups can construct themselves as superior (Espiritu, 2001: 421). In her study, it is the white Americans that are the dominant group. In Skogbyen, however, the power balance was far more ambiguous. I have argued that many of the Muslim girls approached the hotspot of sexuality with a *double consciousness*: some of the Muslims felt estranged in the encounter with the school's state approved sexuality morals. Discussing their own values with me, they often articulated their sexual values in a way that showed that they were knowledgeable about assumed value differences. At the same time, they also felt morally superior. Some of the Muslim pupils went further than just feeling; they used sexual mores, especially through the power vector 'whore', to *assert* cultural superiority.

In the official context of the school, Inas, Elif others ethnic minority girls' sexuality is never directly questioned, but through many subtle hints, they are – in comparison with the Norwegian norm – nevertheless positioned as too restrained. My point is that the school still made these girls feel as though their sexuality was *problematic*. Iselin, who often was the one who met this 'assertion' head on, was also the one who articulated a sense of sexual equality entitlement, which mirrored with the school's institutional sexual mores.

The enactments of local power, and the construction of a morally better group than the ethnic Norwegians, can be seen as *rectifying* the fall in status emanating from a perceived lack of institutional power. I have shown how this created and upheld the specific tension of power within Skogbyen. This power takes on a specific hue when it is sexualised and gendered; the *whore*-discourse draws on a deeply seated patriarchy and old negative female stereotypes to a much larger degree than the noisy, room-claiming power I discussed in chapter 6. The notion of belonging to *another culture* could perhaps give a sensation of being superior, and is intimately connected with the feeling of otherness and of being outsider.

However, the pupils in this chapter interpret and narrate themselves – their situation, their choices and their bodily sensations, and the way they react to their feelings – based on their own personal conviction. This may be religious or in other ways culturally defined, and is closely related to their upbringing and parents, and their emotional investments in different discourses. Not one of the pupil thought in earnest that their (real or alleged) abstinence from sex before marriage was only to show moral superiority to get 'one over' the ethnic Norwegians or their fellow Muslims. Rather, the choice of how to communicate and practice their sexuality rose

from personal biographies and discourses taking on individual meaning. For some of the ethnic minority girls, the sexual virtue communicated was felt bodily, emotionally, and was directly connected with their world-view. For others, it was more complex and conflicted. For the ethnic Norwegian girls, the school and social discourses confirmed their sexual choices. *All* of the girls had to balance sexual honour in different ways, and their stories invariably revolve around a search for dignity, security and respect.

8. CONCLUSION

-“Half of the class went to the Gaza demonstration yesterday”. Inas told me this as she and I were in the girls’ bathroom just outside their classroom. It was January 2009, and my fieldwork at Skogbyen high school was about to end. Inas stood in front of the mirror and freshened up her subtle eye-makeup, and, looking into her own mirrored eyes, she said: “Some hooligans from the second year just showed up to create chaos. They didn’t even know what the demonstration was really about”. She went on to tell me that the pupils from Skogbyen just stood and watched, and told me about a meeting that was about to begin with the pupils who were there and the teachers. She lifted up her hijab, and I caught a glimpse of her long black hair tied back. She took off the veil completely, straightened the long soft cloth out in her hands and put the middle bit back on top of her head. With swift, confident movements she fastened the two ends back and twirled them around the bump of her ponytail. That was the only sound, the rustling of the fabric. The scarf covered perfectly all of her hair, but not an inch of her skin except the top of her ears; her earlobes were free and weighed down with large pearl earrings. She straightened her black cardigan while she said, alarmingly loudly, in that small room, that I really should come to the meeting too.

While Inas routinely adjusted her veil, she simultaneously brought into the school a noisy piece of the world outside: riots and a whiff of war. The Gaza War drew much concern from the pupils of Skogbyen, as in the Norwegian population in general, particularly among Muslim youths (Jacobsen and Andersson, 2012). Several pro-Gaza demonstrations were organised in the biggest cities, and on January 8 2009, the day before I met Inas in Skogbyen’s bathroom, around 40 000 people participated in the demonstration in Oslo. Some of the young participants – mostly young Muslim men between 16 and 20 years old – attacked a peaceful pro-Israel demonstration and 45 boys were arrested. The big and small actions of these youths bled into the media and confirmed the media image of ethnic minority boys as violent and raucous. In one of the newspaper articles covering the Oslo riots, a large image showed boys and young

men whose heads were covered by scarves, not covering their hair like Inas' hijab, but their mouths and noses. The caption resembled Inas' assessment: "The police imply that few of the worst trouble-makers have real interests in the Gaza war, and are only interested in vandalism and fighting the police" (Dagbladet [no named reporter], 2009, my translation).

The meeting with Inas in the Skogbyen bathroom was a potent reminder of what I in time came to recognise as some of the main stories that Skogbyen pupils told and *were* told about themselves. The trouble-makers in the street reflected a common media discourse of young, ethnic minority men and boys as troublemakers. This discourse coalesced with another: that of young, ethnic minority youths as more religious than ethnic Norwegian youth, symbolised above by Inas' hijab. The veil is a strong symbol, but it symbolises different things depending on the viewer. From one point of view, it symbolises religiosity, meekness, strength of faith and love of Islam – and from another, it symbolises suspended sexual expressions and possible oppression. Both statistically and according to common stereotypes, the troublemakers are mostly male. *Girls* are mostly seen as meek and subdued and as the potential victims of oppressive practices (Eide, 2011: 75, see also Alghasi, 2009). It was particularly in relation to this last point that local collective narratives in Skogbyen diverged from the media discourses. In Skogbyen, girls in general were not particularly subdued. There was much that I observed during the course of my study at Skogbyen school that broke with expectations, particularly in terms of gender.

However, there was also much that seemed to follow expected paths, even exaggerated. The crossroads I opened this thesis with, between Norwegian equality goals, new demands for skills, changing ethnic relations, and youth, was like a laboratory in which certain tendencies in Norway became particularly magnified. One thing was that some aspects of my fieldwork were overemphasised – the majority of girls, of ethnic minority pupils, the noise. Central mechanisms of power, marginalisation and belonging were overstated by the particular demography, together with the loose framing of the teaching in Skogbyen and the fact that the pupils went through these processes in their youth, a time prone to exaggerations and the melodramatic (Erikson, 1968 [1994], Nielsen and Rudberg, 1994). The exaggerated patterns mean on one hand that the findings give a skewed image of the reality in Norway. For example, over all, ethnic minority girls do very well in school and in higher education.

On the other hand, this means that through my findings, some general dynamics of the nature of relationships between differently positioned young people in a suburban Oslo school emerge and are magnified. The findings confirm what other researchers have called a nascent social segregation between youths in Oslo (Frøyland and Gjerustad, 2012). This study can clarify some of the central mechanisms that may explain ethnic segregation in school, as well as some possible consequences. My analysis has been focused on describing patterns of narratives and interactions, *and* their meaning. In this process, some generalisations have been difficult to avoid – despite frequent uses of *many* and *some*, there is still the real danger that in describing patterns for *many* and *some*, what the reader is left with is an image of *all*. I have tried to counteract this by including stories that break up the pattern in the analysis above. My struggle here is in line with what Yasmin Gunaratnam called a ‘double research practice’ (Gunaratnam, 2003).

It is as important as it is banal to note that these young people appeared to me as I have presented them in this thesis at a particular time in their lives and in history. They are not like that anymore. The way they are presented here is also the result of my gaze: the way that I looked at them while they were preoccupied with themselves, like I looked at Inas in the bathroom while she looked at her own reflection. Although I tried to go through the same motions as them, to talk with them and be with them, it is, nevertheless, impossible to fully understand or experience what it was like to be 16 years old at Skogbyen School in 2008, by anyone other than the pupils themselves.

At the beginning of this thesis, I asked a two-part question, and I will use these to frame the conclusion. Firstly, how is ethnicity produced and lived in the context of a multi-ethnic high school at a crossroads of individual, collective and institutional processes? Secondly, what consequences do the forms of ethnicity shaped at this crossroads have for high school pupils’ possibilities of development and different senses of belonging?

Central dynamics in the production of ethnicity

When the pupils and teachers were new to each other, some differences and likenesses were highlighted and others were glossed over, new identities were sought and new groups, friendships and enmities were forged. This thesis has described an *intensification* of expression and meaning of ethnicity when the pupils came to

Skogbyen, into a school class with a large majority of ethnic minority pupils. It is vital to point out that the intensification of ethnic meaning *did not* necessarily have to happen. Ethnicity was foregrounded as the most central identity marker in this meeting firstly because the strongest voices in class were preoccupied by their ethnic minority background, their identity and belonging, and ‘set the tone’. Secondly, it was accentuated because the pupils in general were not used being amongst many (other) ethnic minority youths in school. Finally, the pupils’ preoccupation with ethnicity was also related to wider media and political discourses in Norway at the time, especially in relation to education, as well as cultural representations of ‘black culture’ like in films and much mainstream hip-hop music.

For many of the pupils, one consequence of the high awareness of racial and ethnic meanings meant becoming ‘more ethnic’: more ‘Norwegian’, or more ‘foreign’. For none of the pupils were ideas about racialised ethnicity irrelevant. They all had to re-invent and re-narrate themselves to themselves and each other, drawing on the resources available in the classroom, in Norwegian society, media and popular culture. The re-invention brought on by the strengthening of racialised or ethnified narratives also intertwined with changes in gender, which I will return to below.

For individuals, the consciousness of one’s particular traits – for example ‘race’, ethnicity, social class or gender, becomes salient when meeting someone who is different for the first time (Said, 2003 [1978], Derrida, 1976, Fanon, 2008 [1952]). For gender, this happens early in life. For ‘race’ and ethnicity, this may happen early, or in a homogenous society, later, or never. For the sense of having a separate and specific ethnicity, the cultural ‘stuff’ (cf. Barth, 1998 [1969]) are likely to be noticed as significant differences only later, when cognitive abilities are more developed. Residential separation and ethnic enclaves may prolong encounters with difference. In the meeting in a multicultural context, which split the pupil mass into locally defined ethnic groups as in Skogbyen, the knowledge of one’s ethnicity became active and present, while other aspects of identity for a time retreated to the background. The school class’ demography is important both for group belonging and the sense of self. Much of the specific processes of ethnic formation I have described in the thesis are related to this raised ethnic consciousness. I will now go on to discuss these central processes in more detail.

Creating collectives

One central way that senses of ethnic identity were formed was through group belonging. However, in the groups that were created in Skogbyen, the meaning of ‘local ethnicity’ – who was called ‘foreign’ and ‘Norwegian’ – was somewhat released from the ordinary meaning of being foreign or Norwegian. One central way this happened was through a reading and mapping of themselves and each other into ‘ethnic packages’, based on markers such as skin colour, whether they spoke or could speak kebab Norwegian, their sense of humour, where they were from in Oslo, how they dressed, etc. This reading was based on an imagining of oneself and others within a category, which was partly created in that moment, and partly drew on existing social discourses, stereotypes and categories. It was an imaginative process, rooted in emotions of belonging or unbelonging, a search for identity, and of defining who was ‘like me’ and who was ‘not like me’. As Sara Ahmed argues, emotions align individuals with collectives (Ahmed, 2004a).

Integral to this process of creating local ethnic collectives was the formation of collective narratives. I have discussed collective narratives as mediators that tapped into larger societal discourses as well as events, meanings and acts, and brought them into school. Typically, ethnic minority pupils would be narrated as noisy, low achievers and the girls as sexually virtuous. Ethnic Norwegians would be narrated as good pupils and the girls as sexually active. One main point has been that these strengthened ethnified narratives were not only about ethnicity, however much ethnicity was an important part of the *plots* of the narratives.

Although Ahmed’s ideas are useful in conceptualising the use of imagination in this process, her view of how ethnicity and groups are formed is too focused on discursive structures to provide tools to grasp how this happens in practice. I have suggested that a central way to grasp the dynamics of the production of ethnicity is to analyse ethnicity as *lived relations*, through interaction, emotions and narratives. Collective stories and memories are made through materialised culture (statues, architecture, archives), institutions, but also *routines*. The study of lived relations enables a way of considering noise-making and sexual mores also in the form of affective practices (Wetherell, 2012), practices that play out partly routinised emotions, but embedded in larger social systems. A study of affective practices may be another entry for understanding collective meaning-making processes, aside from

narratives. This focus also shows more clearly that the emotional belonging to different collectives both latches on to imagined, pre-defined cultural ideas *and* is improvised in the spur of the moment. An understanding of emotions as affective practice and social interaction may open up for conceiving how practices like ethnic splitting, noise-making and upholding sexual mores are at the same time produced and shaped by social structures, and are also the precise means of expression through which power dynamics are lived, perpetuated and negotiated in everyday life (cf. McNay, 2004: 187).

Ethnic identities

As psychologist Erik Erikson argued, group belonging in youth is closely entwined with identity (Erikson, 1968 [1994]). I have used Paul Ricoeur's (Ricoeur, 1992) dual notion of identity to grasp how processes of identity formation happen in a given place and time, how identities change or may keep stable, and why people invest in certain discourses, and not others. Stories and generalised concepts of 'foreign' or 'Norwegian' values and practice, like who would be good pupils, who would be least sexually respectable or be most tolerant, were all collective narratives that, as ideas and stereotypes, were more stable than the pupils' ipse identity – that is, their narrative identity – and their practice. My analysis illustrates how many pupils experienced a change of identity and practice when they came to Skogbyen, and that they moved closer to the idea of the collective to which they felt belonging (or to which they were assigned). Values and practices like language, on the other hand, were what pupils saw as more stable entities, something that they might change towards. Who they could be was re-narrated and re-interpreted as they seemed to move towards more stable collective narratives. This was a circular movement: their sense of belonging and identity shaped their practice, and their practice shaped their ipse identity.

I have illustrated how a manifestation or fulfilment of one's self-understanding works in practice. For example, the pupils who upon starting school spoke more or a more broad form of kebab Norwegian and became more noisy and morally judgemental of other girls' sexual conduct, were *enacting* this self-understanding, like playing the score of music is enacting the music. However, this ipse fluidity had clear limitations, and like a score of music, or a text, the number of

interpretations is limited inside the frames of the text (cf. Ricoeur, 2006 [1981]: 159): despite the pupils' creative re-narration, ethnicity is clearly not a matter of free choice. The tendency to re-narrate many aspects of life – for example ideals of gender equality, school attitude, sexuality – as having to do with ethnicity, might limit the possibilities for conceiving alternative trajectories for oneself. The narratives that foregrounded ethnicity hid other aspects of the stories, such as difference, skills, entitlement and dis-identification.

Possibilities and belonging: The box in the box

Because of the ethnic split in Skogbyen, it is natural, but perhaps not advisable, to treat the groups separately as I now consider central consequences of the local ethnic configurations. It is not advisable because in doing so I risk reifying the very collective narratives that I have tried to nuance. In a sense, what is most evident in this study is the *doubleness*: on one hand the narratives and practice of ethnic difference and of high sexual mores and low school achievement, and on the other, stories and occurrences of transcending friendships, alliances and different practices. What I have attempted in this study is to draw the analysis of the narratives and the practice together, not in order to expose how the pupils did not always do what they said they did, but to see *why* such collective narratives are constructed in the first place, and how they shape practice. Nevertheless, there are some general patterns that were so typical that they seem to be the clearest way to deal with these findings.

The most apparent of these generalised findings was what I have referred to as the 'box in the box', the system of power and belonging on two central levels: the local school and the nation. Seen as generalised groups, the ethnic minorities' physical and numerical presence in school as a physical site left the scarce ethnic Norwegians out, sometimes painfully visible in their whiteness, sometimes *invisible*, not counted within the communal 'we' of the class. The ethnic Norwegians, however, were more likely to be empowered via the discursive, for example those celebrating free and positive sexuality for girls, from media and politics and the school, understood in terms of its pedagogy, in a sense an expression of the nation. The possibilities of power for the ethnic Norwegians were, to put it bluntly, abstract, potential and partly in the future, while for the ethnic minority pupils the same possibilities were clearer in the local interaction at school.

This twinned centre/periphery-ambiguity meant that as groups, the ethnic minority pupils seemed empowered and secure outwardly, while the ethnic Norwegians seemed marginalised. Postcolonial theory suggests that the creation of *we* versus *them* implies higher status for the group with the power of definition, the group in the centre, the ones ‘living the life of the nation’, to paraphrase Fanon (Fanon, 2008 [1952]: 110). Accordingly, the group (or person) in the periphery will have a low opinion of themselves (Fanon, 2008 [1952], Bhabha, 1994, Said, 2003 [1978]). Ordinarily in postcolonial contexts (as opposed to colonial ones), according to this school of thought, the peripheral group would be the immigrants to a country, and their descendants. In Skogbyen, however, because the scales had shifted, the peripheral group was in one sense the ethnic Norwegians, since ethnic borders were drawn so rigidly. The local centre was important for the ethnic minority pupils’ feelings of belonging and self-worth. However, *both* groups had some power of definition, some places they felt as though they belonged. The re-narration in terms of either *Norwegian* or *ethnic minority* in the meeting with a new school was, therefore, highly ambiguous for both groups. The ethnic Norwegians could more easily be re-narrated as successful pupils, but were marginalised socially and physically. To be an ethnic minority pupil in Skogbyen meant, for many, a share in the community as well as a sense of ownership of the school as a physical space, and at the same time, many also shared a sense of disentanglement and un-belonging to the school as institution.

Paradoxes of an ethnic Norwegian identity

The consequences of subscribing to an identity as Norwegian contained a series of paradoxes. In some ways, those ethnic Norwegians who did not have any multicultural competence had to reinvent themselves in the meeting with a modern multicultural reality. Because of their ethnic and racialised positions, they had to partake in a process of double marginalisation in the meeting with the demographics and status of the school, strengthened by the school and their own difficulties in articulating ethnic difference. They simultaneously had to deal with the school’s low status and their own social marginalisation within it. Being previously unmarked, they now had to invent themselves as ‘Norwegians’ in a multi-ethnic school environment, as white and as part of the country’s majority and the school’s minority.

Further, this self-invention was for some of the ethnic Norwegians a process of shame. For those pupils, being ethnic Norwegian in this context meant that they in some way or other had failed or were failing. Having to manage a defence against their own social and academic fall, the transition to a multicultural school entailed different emotions, motivations and trajectories compared to what many of the ethnic minority pupils experienced, although clearly, some ethnic minority pupils also experienced similar reactions (perhaps even more so among those who left Skogbyen early on). Feelings of low status could relate to different things: from without, in society at large, they could be about social class, social stagnation and ‘ethnic stickiness’, whilst inside, they were about whiteness and Norwegianness. There was also the possibility of using Skogbyen as a way of getting ahead academically, like Ingrid purposefully did. Crucially, these feelings of marginalisation could be turned to mastery and acceptance. Iselin’s story is a good example of this: after a while, she looked back at her own ‘racist self’ and acknowledged that she had learned a lot about different cultures and about tolerance from Skogbyen.

An important point has been to investigate the emotional attachment to belonging or ascribing to the collective cultural narratives. Some of the ethnic Norwegians articulated their sense of entitlement in Norway as Norwegians and as whites for the first time when they came to Skogbyen. Their senses of entitlement were realised in the fear of falling and losing what perhaps was felt as ‘theirs’; this was linked to the school as a low achieving school. Their process of self-invention was due to a double process of social marginalisation, which on one level took place inside school, and was on another level experienced – at least by some pupils – outside of school, related to going to a low-status school. This double marginalisation strengthened their senses of entitlement to whatever the ‘Norwegian’ was articulated as at this point: being sexually liberated, being an academic achiever, being preoccupied with looks and coolness, - to name some central circulating collective narratives. Although the pupils’ actual *choice* was limited, there *was* a choice (see, for example, Marte, who narrated herself as a ‘foreigner’). For many of the ethnic Norwegian pupils, the entitlement they felt entailed a new or renewed *academic* entitlement. This sense of entitlement plays out as a result of ethnicity’s entanglement with social class, but brought to life in the meeting with the multi-ethnicity in school.

Some of the ethnic Norwegians experienced their move to Skogbyen as though they were transported ‘out of place’ and, therefore, stood out. Although most

of them got into Skogbyen because they had *bad* grades from junior high school, maybe they found it easier to envisage future trajectories for themselves as academic achievers precisely because they were transported out of the setting they were used to.

Paradoxes of a 'foreign' identity

The word 'foreigner' was invested with meanings of local identity and belonging at Skogbyen. The pupils identifying as 'foreigners' *weren't* foreigners in the ordinary meaning of the word, but those who identified as 'foreigners' were more likely to find belonging and community in the local ethnic minority peer group. In a way, 'foreigner' was defined by being both outside and inside in the layered context of the school.

The constructed collective that encompassed a majority of the ethnic minority pupils provided security and confirmation, and the collective narratives were important in order to create 'fictive kinship'. What was particular about this group, however, was that a shared history was *lacking*. Therefore, certain collective narratives were created from what can be said to be a least common denominator between a highly heterogeneous group. For many of the ethnic minority pupils, this was their shared *difference* from ethnic Norwegians. Their shared difference became a key reference point perhaps because the collective narratives also reflected certain important emotions.

One of these 'shared differences' was a notion of being willing or unwilling custodians of traditions that were not already a naturalised part of Norway. In many instances, the sense of belonging to a multi-ethnic community brought with it *resources*: connotations to qualities such as tolerance, being knowledgeable, experienced, having 'street cred' and being 'tough'. Not all of these resources could be capitalised on in all contexts, however. For many of the ethnic minority pupils, it seemed that the external gaze from parents, siblings (brothers), parents' friends and extended family, as well as their peers, created *reflexivity* about their own culture and their actions and choices. For example, many displayed an ability to see themselves both from the inside and the outside simultaneously. I found that many ethnic minority pupils had a complex understanding of culture and their own life choices compared to the ethnic Norwegians. This could be because ethnic Norwegian pupils perhaps took for granted that they shared certain cultural symbols and values with me,

and, therefore, did not explain as much about their background, their religion or choices. It could also be possible that the ethnic minority pupils could more easily evoke these stories, perhaps because they could see their parents' culture(s) from outside (often presented as a rather unitary entity), as it was contrasted with what was 'typically Norwegian'. This reflexivity may also be because they would be asked to give an account of themselves more often than an ethnic Norwegian and/or a white person. The ethnic minority pupils' generally heightened reflexivity meant that they had to actively engage with their preconceptions about each other, although this sometimes became less exercised for the ethnic Norwegians.

Another common emotion was that these pupils often felt a sense of *un-belonging* to Norway, an un-belonging that was based on their *idem* identity: how they looked, their background country, their parents and family. For example, despite the teachers and the school's administration's attitude of not talking about difference or discussing ethnicity, they nevertheless communicated through practice and how they presented the syllabus an implicit Norwegian value standard. Many pupils understood themselves as different from this norm. They were more likely to identify with the neighbourhood and peers in class than with the school's project and with Norway, and, as other researchers also have found, they were more likely to identify with the transnational, such as 'black culture' (Sandberg, 2005, Sernhede, 2005). The identity as 'foreigner' is both local and transnational in its nature, but also in some senses overlooking the national.

However, while the media coverage of ethnic minorities in Norway was almost completely negative during the time of my fieldwork, it has three years later changed quite considerably (Integrerings- og manifoldsdirektoratet, 2011). The terror attacks in Oslo and Utøya in July 22, 2011, which coincided with the first summer after graduation for the Skogbyen pupils, might have contributed to a shift in public opinion regarding immigration. People in Norway are now significantly *less* negative to accepting more immigrants into Norway compared to 2009 (Integrerings- og manifoldsdirektoratet, 2012: 12), and people are also more proud to call themselves Norwegian and to *be* Norwegian. Perhaps the content of what it means to be a Norwegian is opening up? Perhaps it is easier now, for the moment at least, to feel a belonging to the national, in the wake of the terror? After all, the public and the authorities' most dominant reaction was an authoritative narrative of love, and a need and an urge for a larger 'we' was made explicit.

New girls

In the particular meeting between different forms of belonging and becoming, and as a manifestation of Norway's official gender equality aims and its coexistence with changing demographics, my findings show a girl position that defies the common media image of quiet, even oppressed, ethnic minority girls. I talk here of a rather small group of Muslim girls whose ways were often cheered on by their classmates: they were often noisy and boisterous in class and in the breaks, sometimes with an aggression that was directed both towards fellow pupils and the teachers, often spurred on by questions of female sexuality. The pupils were far too diverse to enable a simple cultural explanation for the practice of noise-making and the strict sexual gatekeeping. My point has been that this culture existed *in the classroom* (and hallways, auditoriums, group rooms and cafeteria), and it was the particular frames and culture created here that *enabled* this practice.

These 'new girls' are similar to a well-known girl position: the noisy girls who are mostly explained in other research through class, and who are also actively sexualised (Ambjörnsson, 2004, Bettie, 2000). However, while the Skogbyen girls used sexuality as a source of power to position themselves as respectable in line with Muslim ideals, the other type of 'noisy girls' in other research use sexuality as a power vector in that they position themselves as sexy – in line with Western norms (see for example Ambjörnsson, 2004).

Paradoxically, the word 'whore' is let loose in Norwegian classrooms while, at the same time, it has kept its enormous power. There is a liberation of both verbal sexual abuse and noise: it seems as if the school is a context and facilitator of the practice of some of the noisiest and most moralistic pupils. Measured against Norwegian equality aims, these few girls *challenged* gendered borders in the school's classroom in terms of visibility and aggression, but they simultaneously *shrunk* girls' possibilities in terms of sexuality. They grasped new possibilities for girls that have not before been accessible, and perhaps especially not Muslim girls – while they simultaneously channelled a form of sexuality that seem like a backlash in light of Norwegian equality policies.

There is a paradox in demanding more 'feminine respectability' and honour, but using traditional masculine forms like extrovert aggression and violence. It seems

that for the girls in Skogbyen, gender moved in two different directions: while the majority of the ethnic minority girls claimed space in a way that challenged authority more than many of them were used to at home, most moved *with* tradition in terms of sexuality. For the ethnic Norwegian girls, it was almost exactly the opposite: some of them emphasised their sexual freedom, but most of these girls kept quiet and were barely visible in the classroom. That the strict disciplining practices in terms of sexuality stand in stark contrast to the relative lack of self-discipline in many pupils' schoolwork, may be understood in light of affective practices, which gave room for certain emotions and outbursts in the school context, but restricted others – for example discourses about sexuality.

Hotspots of ethnicity

For the ethnic minority pupils, a perceived lack of institutional power and group homogeneity seemed to be rectified in the enactments of local power and the construction of a morally better group than the ethnic Norwegians, especially regarding sexuality. Sexual morals were vital in order to raise or reify the material status of the group. The most typical female ethnic Norwegian sexuality appeared more legitimate in relation to the school, and probably other important strands of society like the media. The ethnic minority girls' sexuality, especially the Muslim girls' sexuality, appeared more controlled and illegitimate, although it also was a site for mutiny and rebellion. It might be a contributing reason for understanding the conflicts/separation between the ethnic Norwegians and the ethnic minority pupils, and why it was the field of sexuality that was one of the main focal points for this collision. They all felt that *their* sexual norm was the legitimate one. This local and limited process of rectification can illustrate a more general process of what may happen when ethnic groups are segregated, and, to paraphrase Anthias and Yuval-Davis, when ethnic minorities share a positioning on the outer reaches of the nation (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1993: 95). The areas of educational achievement and sexual mores are especially important for understanding the meanings of ethnicity and gender in Norwegian schools and society today. These realms are like hotspots where different racialised, classed and gendered discourses meet and are contested – and where change can take place.

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Appendixes

1. 'Kebab Norwegian' Words

Å djinne (verb, to jinn): from the genie in Arabic folklore: to trick, fool.

Habiba (noun and adj): From Arabic, my dear, my friend. Also *habibi* (masc).

Kæbe (noun): girl, whore.

Lø (int): A range of meanings from *not, no, bad* and *ugly*, to *good, awesome* and *yes*, depending on the context, facial expression and tone of voice. Most probably it originates from the Arabic word *la*, which means no.

Masha'Allah: From Arabic, expresses thankfulness or joy.

Insha'Allah: From Arabic, by the will of Allah.

Skitten (adj): Bad, dirty.

Svarte (adj): Bad, black.

Walla: From Arabic: I swear by Allah.

2. Pupils

The names of the pupils I interviewed are written in bold types. The names of the pupils who left the school early in the first term are in brackets.

C-class	Girls	Boys
	Abia Afsheen Ahlam Angela Bilan Cathrine Elif Emma Hadi Husna Ingrid Idil Inas Inger Marianne Orri Saima Nabihah Uma Yalda	Aza (Cedric) Enver Ivar (Labib) Latif Sahir Ramin
D-class	Adiba Aida Andrea Anna Asima Haboon Inaya Iselin	(Abdul) (Adham) Alim Amanuel Amir Asad Daniel Eged

	Malika Masi Shada Kameela	Hermann Ihsan Imad Jamal Lars Mohammad Rafiq Rolf Steinar
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3. Letter to pupils and parents

Til elever og foresatte på XXX skole⁵¹

Forskningsprosjektet ”Nye kjønn, andre krav” på XXX skole - forespørsel om deltakelse.

Forskningsprosjektet ”Nye kjønn, andre krav?” er et nytt stort forskningsprosjekt ved Universitetet i Oslo, støttet av Norges forskningsråd. Prosjektet skal se på elever på ulike klassetrinn fra barneskole til videregående skole for å undersøke hvordan endringer i kjønnsrollemønstre og oppvekstvilkår blant barn og ungdom virker sammen med endrede krav til kompetanse og ferdigheter i dagens skole. Hva er det som er viktig for ungdom å lære i skolen i dag for å klare seg videre i dagens samfunn? Hvordan klarer ulike elevgrupper disse kravene? Er f. eks guttene ved å tape terreng? Hva betyr sosial og etnisk tilhørighet? Hva betyr vennskap, fritidsaktiviteter og nettverk for måten man deltar på i skolen?

Datainnsamlingen på XXX vil foretas av meg, Ingunn Eriksen. Jeg er ph.d-stipendiat i kulturstudier ved Universitetet i Oslo, og knyttet til Senter for tverrfaglig kjønnsforskning samme sted. Jeg vil følge elevene i skolehverdagen, både under undervisningen og i friminuttene. Elevene vil også bli spurt om å delta i intervjuer, som vil dreie seg om vennskap, framtidssønsker, opplevelsen av kompetansekrav, etc. Intervjuene vil vare omtrent en time og bli tatt opp med båndopptaker. Noen vil bli intervjuet to ganger. Gruppeintervjuer vil bare bli foretatt én gang. Jeg kommer også til å dele ut et kort spørreskjema til elevene, der jeg bl.a. spør om bakgrunn, trivsel og interesser.

Noen elever vil bli også bli spurt om å fotografere en skoledag slik de opplever den. Fotografiene skal fungere som samtaleutgangspunkt i gruppeintervjuer, og vil ikke bli offentliggjort. Utover tid til intervjuer vil ikke undervisningstiden bli forstyrret.

⁵¹ The letter is edited to preserve the school’s anonymity.

Det er frivillig å delta i prosjektet og den enkelte elev kan på hvilket som helst tidspunkt trekke seg, uten å måtte begrunne dette nærmere. Alle opplysningene vil bli anonymisert etter prosjektets slutt, og det vil heller ikke komme fram at prosjektet er utført på XXX. Ingen enkeltelever vil gjenkjennes i rapporten. Jeg har taushetsplikt og opplysningene vil bli behandlet strengt konfidensielt. Intervjuopptakene og bildene slettes ved prosjektets slutt høsten 2011. Prosjektet er meldt for personvernombudet for forskning, Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste A/S.

Ønskes mer informasjon om prosjektet kan jeg kontaktes på telefonnummer XXX eller epost i.m.eriksen@stk.uio.no. Mer informasjon om prosjektet finnes også her, hvorfra en full prosjektbeskrivelse kan nedlastes:

<http://www.stk.uio.no/forskning/prosjekter/skoleprosjekt.html#Anchor-Nye-17304>

Med vennlig hilsen

Ingunn Eriksen

Senter for tverrfaglig kjønnsforskning

Postboks 1040 Blindern

0315 Oslo

(Klipp gjerne av samtykkeerklæringen og behold informasjonsdelen selv)

Samtykkeerklæring

Jeg tillater at min datter/sønn deltar i forskningsprosjektet "*Nye kjønn, andre krav? Likestillingens barn i skole og familie*".

Elevens navn: _____

Foresattes underskift: _____

Dato: _____

4. Norwegian interview quotes

Laughter is marked by “@”.

ⁱ Girl: Nei nei, nå er jeg helt ærlig, jeg, jeg må egentlig takke deg egentlig, for det blir som en psykologitime for meg, så jeg synes det bare er deilig. Jeg trenger det her, så det var bare digg. Jeg trenger å snakke ut litt om ting.

ⁱⁱ Girl: “Det var veldig koselig å få det ut liksom. (...) Du er den eneste vennen min tror jeg”.

ⁱⁱⁱ Boy: “Først var det sånn sjokk hele sommerferien”.

^{iv} Uma: Ehm, hehehe, førsteinntrykket mitt var egentlig “oi, mange utlendinger”. Ehm, jeg vakke helt vant til det. Eller, klassen min før var, vi var fire utlendinger og resten var norske. Sånn var det på ungdom-, barneskolen også liksom. (...). Ehm... Så det var litt uvant.

^v Angela: Det var sånn, når vi så på klassebildet, så skulle vi prøve å finne ut hvem som er de norske. Det var to-tre stykker som var halvt. Så var det to stykker som var /helt/ norske. Eller tre eller no sånn. Så det var litt sånn overraskende. For hele klassen nesten er bare utlendinger.

I: Var det overraskende når du først så på klassebildet, eller var det overraskende da du begynte på skolen?

A: Eh... Jo, faktisk da også. Når jeg begynte. så så jeg det var utrolig mange pakistanere her. @@

I: Åja. @

A: At det går an. Det var kjempemange! Åh, så det var litt overraskende. Det visste jeg ikke, at det skulle bli så mange.

^{vi} Ingunn: Hvordan var [det] du opplevde det å begynne på Skogbyen?

Ahlam: Jo, eller, når jeg starta på Skogbyen de første dagene så kjente jeg ingen. Og... Så det var ganske sånn rar følelse når jeg skulle komme på skolen da. Og, jeg grua meg veldig lenge da. Eller, jeg grua meg egentlig ikke sånn skikkelig mye, men tenkte jo hvordan det kom til å bli hele året og hvordan klassen vår kom til å være og sånn. Siden jeg har, jeg har hørt mye om Skole B, det har sikkert du og, at det er en del, ehm, tospråklige elever da. Så, men når jeg starta på Skole B, den første dagen, så ble, så trives jeg ganske godt i klassen, og følte at klasse miljøet vårt var ganske bra og sånt. Og så... hadde vi bare en norsk jente i klassen. Den første dagen. Så, det var litt rart fordi på den skolen jeg gikk, så var vi bare fire utlendinger i klassen. (...) Så... Det var litt rart, men, det går jo bedre og bedre nå da. Så... Vet ikke jeg...

I: Hvordan, hva var det som var rart?

Ahlam: At det var så mange fra liksom... At det var så mange fra min da, eller som jeg har blitt oppvokst liksom. To fo-, to foreldre fra et annet land og bor i et annet land liksom.

^{vii} Ingunn: Du sa også at det var litt uventa, uventa å begynne her. Hvordan var det, hva mente du da?

A: Eh, forventet jo å komme inn på, for det første på media på Sentrumsskolen. Og så hoppa jeg nedover der og så endte jeg opp på allmenn på Skogbyen. Så det ble... annerledes.

I: Hvordan opplevde du det?

A: Eh, først var det sånn sjokk hele sommerferien. Så tenkte jeg jo ikke, var det helt fjernt. Men... Ja. Nei. Eh. Klarte å få komme inn i det og få en plan i hvert fall.

I: Hva er planen?

A: Begynne på media her til neste år. (...)

I: Ja. Åssen... Åssen er miljøet der i forhold til åssen du synes det er her?

A: Eh, føler at de... de likner på hverandre. Ja. Det er jo... som oftest så er det jo sånn, ja, sånn halvnerdete nordmenn.

I: (ler) Som går på media?

A: Ja.

A: Ja.

I: Hvordan er det her da?

A: Her er det jo, hvor mange prosent av det er innvandrere her? Jeg vet ikke.

^{viii} Iselin: Åja... Det var helt forferdelig. Det var det. Asså først så tenkte jeg bare, når jeg først søkte Skogbyen, så tenkte jeg bare: jeg kommer ikke inn hit, jeg kommer inn på første eller andrevalget mitt, jeg håper iallfall det.

Ingunn: hvorfor det?

Iselin: Jeg hadde dårlige karakterer, da.

Ingunn: Ja. Hadde skolen dårlig rykte?

Iselin: Ja, eller det var bare at... dårlig og dårlig rykte, men det er liksom Skogbyen, og det er X og det er X og det er X, det er, jeg, jeg passer ikke inn her, det går ikke! –tenkte jeg. Ikke sant? (...) Så husker jeg at jeg fikk det svaret, da, så husker jeg at jeg satt meg ned og jeg gråt! Og jeg gråt! Og jeg gråt og jeg gråt og jeg tenkte at det her er verdens undergang!

^{ix} Ingrid: Og så kom jo hu Marianne fra [bydel i nærheten]. Eh, hun kom jo etter hvert. Så... Hun kom, ble satt rett inn i grupp-, i grupperommet vårt, så det var greit.

I: Hun ble det? Av læreren?

K: Ja. Så... Da var ikke det et valg, holdte jeg på å si. Det var jo det, men. @ Jeg tror ikke jeg hadde endt opp med noen andre i klassen, for å si det sånn.

I: Nei, du tror ikke det?

K: Nei.

I: Hvorfor ikke det?

K: Jeg veit ikke. Det er bare sånn... Jeg veit ikke... Ehm... Det er sånn... Det har veldig, åssen, hvordan man er da, så liksom, ja... Altså, ikke sånn, for å være diskriminerende eller noe sånn, men altså, hun er jo hvit (rasler med ark) på en måte. Og det er liksom, hun er vant med sånn norsk kultur. Hun snakker kanskje ikke sånn kebab-norsk eller *wolla* og hele den pakka der, ikke sant. Så det er sånn, hun har en helt annen innstilling, eller annen holdning. Så det blir veldig sånn... For å @ si det sånn, det er sånn derre, hun hadde gått inn rett inn til oss på en måte.

^x Marte: Det er jo... de n... – de n... – de n... - jeg mener ikke norske, jeg mener, jeg er ikke, jeg er jo norsk men

Orri bryter inn: Si navn!

Marte: (...) Det er jo alle de norske som pleier å sitte alene. Så pleier alle vi, pluss meg, eller, ikke utl- dere er ikke utlendMarte, de er norske, men, de andre utlendingene og meg. (...)

Ingunn: Og de norske, det er...?

Orri: Det er Marianne, det er Emma, Ingrid...

Ingunn: For Emma, hun tenker dere på som norsk?

Orri: Nei..., men hun er en del av den norske gjengen, da,

Marte, emphatic: JO! Om hvordan hun er, hvordan hun er! Du, hun er typisk norsk ass!

Ingunn: (ler) hvordan da?

Marte: fordi, sånn som, nei det er ikke sant! (Himler med øynene, ler oppgitt)

Ingunn: Hvordan da?

Marte: Nei, det er sånn derre... jeg vet ikke, det er så typisk! Norsk!!

Orri: De er veldig annerledes fra oss da, for vi

Marte: (avbryter) vi bor på Skogen, og vi bor på Skogen2, og vi bor på Indre by, og (disse stedene) er helt annerledes enn for eksempel... hva skal jeg si... Bortenfor1 og Bortenfor2.

Orri: Ja, det er helt annerledes

Marte: Det er andre miljøer, feks på Skogen er det veldig sånn... De ler ikke av de samme tingene og det er ikke sånn samme humor og litt sånn samma språk.

^{xi} Elif: Angela *leker* norsk da. Hun henger bare med norske. (...) Hun er sånn wannabe-norsk på en måte.

^{xii} Latif: Å komme til skolen var ganske greit. Møte nye folk. Jeg ble faktisk kjent med hele den gjengen der, Uma, Hadi og Jente A, alle de liksom. Det var ganske, ehm...

I: Du kjente ikke noen av dem?

Latif: Nei, jeg kjente ingen av dem. Og så ble jeg bare kjent med de etter første dag tror jeg. (...) Det var sånn, da kjente jeg hele klassen liksom. Det har kanskje noe med kultur å gjøre. Det atte... Eller, fra forskjellige kulturer er vant til å bare begynne å snakke med hverandre sånn med en gang og sånn. Og så hadde jeg for eksempel Sahir, for jeg kjente han fra før. Og så kjente jeg Cedric, og så... ble jeg kjent med Latif og Hadi da. Via Cedric for eksempel. Og så ble jeg kjent med Saima og andre via Sahir, siden han pleide å være med dem. Så det ble sånn jeg ble kjent med andre via folk jeg kjente.

^{xiii} Ahlam: At det var så mange fra liksom... At det var så mange fra min da, eller som jeg har blitt oppvokst liksom. To fo-, to foreldre fra et annet land og bor i et annet land liksom. Så... Og så følte jeg liksom at jeg, det var mye mer åpent klassemiljø enn det det var på den gamle skolen min. At vi kunne liksom snakke, de fleste i klassen er jo pakistanere, så det var noen som snakka på urdu liksom, første dagen, og alle begynte å le og sånt. Så det er liksom, trives ganske godt.

I: Men da, åpent på den måten at man kan snakke urdu, men-

A: Nei, ikke urdu, men liksom, man forstår hverandre så mye bedre, føler jeg da. Fordi vi... Det er jo egentlig sånn, for eksempel når du snakker med en som er fra et annet land, enn deg liksom, så føler du kanskje at den tenker litt mer likt enn det en annen person gjør som er fra et annet land liksom.

I: Men, den liksom, fellesskapsfølelsen som du på en måte beskrev, eh, følte du den med de som for

eksempel var fra India da? For det var ikke så-

A: Ja ja, jeg gjorde det fordi, jeg følte det med de som var fra Norge også. Og, de som er fra for eksempel, vi har jo somaliere i klassen og alt det der. Så, jeg kunne bare snakke med dem, etter for eksempel en uke, ja, etter en uke, så ble vi ganske gode venner, hele klassen. Det, da tenkte jeg ikke over at de var fra et annet land enn meg liksom. Det gjorde jeg egentlig ikke på den gamle skolen min heller, for der var det ikke så mange utlendinger. Men... @ ja.

^{xiv} Sahir: Ja, det var sånn der, du vet, i begynnelsen av året, ikke sant, så blei plutselig sånn tilfeldig, alle, alle i hele klassen. Det aldri skjedde noen krangler, og ikke noe. Alle pleide å sitte sammen etter skolen og sånt. Etter skoletid, satt og snakka og så... ja.

Saima: Uma og alle.

Sahir: Alle sammen, Uma og dems gjeng, og vi også. Alle sammen.

I: Alle sammen? Hele klassen?

Saima : Hele klassen pleide å være sammen, ikke sant.

(...)

Ingunn: Og var hel-, var det absolutt alle i-

Sahir: En hel, nesten alle.

Saima : Nesten alle liksom.

Sahir: De fleste.

^{xv} Vi vet liksom hva, hvor den andre personen står, og det er liksom, det er liksom greit. Så da, da er det ganske enkelt. Sånn som nå, nå har vi liksom funnet hvor hører man til, hvilke grupper, mennesker er man med. Hvem er det som jobber og hvem er det som ikke jobber, altså. Det henger veldig sammen det, hvem man er og hvem arbeider best med. Ja. Så... Det går mye greiere, det er jo, nå er det sånn, vi, det er jo valgfritt. Og, eller, som oftest, gruppene er jo valgfritt.

^{xvi} Ingrid: For det første, så var jeg den første norske. Altså, det er jo selvfølgelig litt annerledes, å liksom være den første som kommer inn i en klasse. Og, jeg kjente jo ingen, og det var liksom, ganske mange som kjente hverandre (...) Så, Nabika liksom bare... Sånn i ettertid så har hun liksom bare jaaa, fordi jeg var på en måte litt sånn outsider.

^{xvii} Afsheen: Det, før bodde jeg i [Tettsted utafor Oslo], ikke sant. Og da hadde jeg bare norske venner, jeg hadde ikke noen utenlandske. Og jeg flytta til Oslo i 6. klasse (...) . Så jeg liksom flytta til Norge da, nei, til Oslo, så, da, da kom jeg i det utenlandske miljøet her. (...) Og så, der møtte jeg noen utlendinger og sånt, og det var skikkelig rart å se en inder og sånt og, det var sånn skikkelig rart, fordi de hadde en helt annen tankegang og sånn. Og da forandret det skikkelig, og så, men det var liksom, da ble jeg skikkelig sånn utenlandsk jente liksom. Sånn ordentlig ordentlig. Og språket endret seg og alt. Men nå som jeg har kommet her, så har det blitt *enda* verre.

Ingunn: Ja, du har blitt mer og mer?

Afsheen: Det er *bare* utlendinger her!

^{xviii} Uma: For eksempel, når jeg snakker med, utlendinger (...), så legger jeg om språket mitt litt, bare for å få dem til å på en måte føle at jeg har mer forståelse, hvis du skjønner hva jeg mener. For hvis jeg på en måte hadde snakka sånn her, så kan det hende at de føler at jeg på et veldig annet nivå enn dem liksom (...). Altså, da sitter jeg litt annerledes, jeg ordlegger meg litt annerledes, bare for å få dem, forståelsen av (...) at de på en måte kan slappe litt av og føle at «nå snakker jeg med en person som forstår meg og som er lik meg.

^{xix} Angela: Nå er jeg med de norske. Jeg vet ikke, det er sånn, på en måte personligheten min endres. Måten å snakke på og sånn. Ja. Når jeg er med de norske, så er jeg mer sånn... Måten de er på, så plutselig blir jeg sånn på en måte. Så når jeg går med utlendingene, så blir jeg som dem.

^{xx} Uma: Jeg har på en måte bygd meg selv opp til å bli mer den... utlendingen, holdte jeg på å si. (...) Jeg tror kanskje jeg gjorde et ubevisst valg en eller annen i tiden, at jeg ville gå mer i den utenlandske retningen enn de norske. Det her høres kanskje frekt ut. Det er ikke frekt ment, men jeg mener at... ehm... (stille) Sånn at det er mer, det er mer fargerikt å være utlending. Sselvfølgelig, jeg liker den norske kulturen. Jeg er glad for at jeg har norsk mor, for jeg får oppleve veldig mye av den positive norske kulturen som mange utlendinger kanskje ikke får opplevd fordi de ikke har den, fordi de bare er, bare er utlendinger. De har ikke norsk mor eller norsk far eller noe sånt.

^{xxi} Uma: Jeg er sånn kulturperson, holdte jeg på å si. Jeg elsker forskjellige kulturer, hvis du ser på vennegjengen min, så er folk, kjenner jeg folk fra Bosnia, Tyrkia, Vietnam... Folk fra mange land i Afrika. (...) Og mamma ville egentlig at jeg skulle komme inn i den klassen med mange utlendinger. Fordi da kan jeg på en måte relate-, eller da er det enklere å finne en å relatere seg til, holde jeg på å si.

Ingunn: Hvordan da?

Uma: Nei, men sånn med, sånn, bare sånn med kulturforståelse, liksom sånn eventuelt religionforståelse og sånne ting liksom. Jeg var jo glad for det. Og på en måte... Jeg føler at jeg klarer å

være litt mer /meg/, altså at jeg klarer å være litt mer den utenlandske delen av meg. For jeg vil jo ikke på en måte gjøre den delen veldig stor av meg, hvis jeg er omringa av veldig mange norske.

^{xxii} Uma: Det som jeg tror problemet har vært er at pappa har hatt det egentlig ganske dårlig her i Norge. Sånn at han ikke har blitt godtatt av familien til mamma og sånne ting. På grunn av at han er mørkere i huden, han er muslim og sånne ting liksom. Og familien til mamma er kristen. Og jeg tror egentlig de hadde tenkt at mamma skal gifte seg med en norsk en.

^{xxiii} Afsheen: Fordi du bor i et land som Norge, så lærer du det som er om kulturen din, du vet alt. Du vet, uansett fra barndommen, ikke fordi foreldrene dine forteller deg det, men du har jo indiske kanaler hjemme. Foreldre snakker indisk. Du får uansett med deg alt. Du får med deg på skolen og. Men fra utlendinger, du hører det samme om og om igjen. «Ja, mamma sa jeg ikke får lov til å gjøre det. Jeg ikke kan gjøre det. Pappa sa ditten, datten» ikke sant. Og du lærer ikke noe fra det. Og når du er i et land som Norge liksom, så må du lære noe. Pluss at de fleste snakker, de kan ikke ordentlig språket ordentlig en gang.

^{xxiv} Afsheen: Når liksom vi bodde utafør Oslo, ikke sant, da har sikkert ikke, jeg tror det, eller jeg tenker sånn i dag liksom. At hvis jeg fortsatt hadde bodd der, så tror jeg ikke pappa hadde... Han er, ikke det at han er skikkelig streng nå, men han, han, han hadde ikke vært streng på akkurat den måten. I: Å nei?

A: Skjønner du? Fordi da var ikke den indiske kulturen der! Skjønner du? Da hadde han ikke tenkt så langt.

^{xxv} Afsheen: Fordi de lyver så mye! (...) Det er bare for å leke englebarn hos de voksne, det er, hele greia, det er litt for å bare være, bare ha et bilde som sier at den personen er skikkelig bra for de voksne.

^{xxvi} Afsheen: Du vet, det er andre folk liksom, det er respekt, ikke sant. At faren din eller moren din har respekt i det indiske samfunn, pakistanske samfunnet ikke sant. Så det er sånn der: "Ja, dattera eller sønnen deres gjorde ditten og datten liksom". Det er mest hvis det er dattera da. Sønnen også liksom, men det er skikkelig mye hvis det er dattera. Du har sikkert lest bøker om det.

^{xxvii} Marte: Når jeg møter folk så sier de, jeg tenker ikke, jeg tenker ikke at du er norsk. Så tenker jeg: hvorfor ikke! Hahah! Det er sikkert på grunn av hvordan jeg snakker. Jeg snakker jo norsk, men problemet er: hvis du går til Skogen og hører hvordan en ungdom snakker der, de snakker helt likt som meg uansett.

Orri: Mens jeg, i forhold til det å lære, ikke sant, jeg snakker jo ganske sånn, jeg snakker veldig sånn norsk, da. For du kan ikke snakke sånn som vi gjør når du er voksen (...) Da blir det til at jeg lærer sånne ord og sånn, da.

^{xxviii} "Hovedproblemet er vel kanskje at ehm, ... jeg s..., skjønner du hva jeg mener, jeg skulle ønsket at jeg hadde, jeg skulle ønske jeg var utlending her! (Jah!) Jeg skulle ønske at jeg var fra pakistan eller... india eller et eller annet sted, for det hadde gått så mye bedre! Folk hadde tatt deg inn, um, med én gang, og, ja ja, du er "g" (uttalt på engelsk), asså, du er gangster, du er, du bor her og, hvis jeg hadde bodd på (lokalområdet rundt skolen) da, hadde vært fra pakistan, en jente, så hadde jeg ikke hatt noen problemer, det er iallfall det jeg tror, da, jeg tror ikke jeg hadde hatt noen problemer, mens med en gang de ser: jente, fra byen, og blondt hår, ... hvit, liksom, så er det bare, "nei, hun skal vi ha det litt, hun skal, hun skal, vi skal vise hvem som bestemmer her", skjønner du?

^{xxix} Først så var det lissom, de der utlendingene som er litt sånn dansejenter, da... Først så var de sånn, Åh, Iselin, du er så blond, eller, du er så bimbo eller... de kom med sånne uttrykk og var litt sånn, egnelig litt frekke og tenkte sånn herregud hvorfor går hun i denne klassen her og hun er så soss og ettellerannet sånn, da. Men nå er sånn at jeg sitter med de, jeg satt jo med de i kantina nå, og så er det sånn, veldig drama. De andre jentene, da, de som jeg er sammen med, N, G og R, som er den gjengen som jeg liksom har da, som er norske, de vil ikke, de, de, de vil ikke, de vil at jeg skal være bare med dem! [Åja?! Syns de..] Nei, jeg syns iallfall at når jeg skal begynne på denne skolen her så er det like greit at da kan vi iallfall være alle sammen, da, for, jeg må lage litt nettverk, sant! [Mmm] Mens de er veldig sånn: "Nei, vi være for oss selv!" [Åja!] Så, jeg har veldig lyst til å være med min klasse da, for vi går i klasse sammen, ikke sant, det er noe helt annerledes. De, alle jentene går i samme klasse, - jeg går alene. Derfor må jeg også skaffe meg mitt eget nettverk. Så husker jeg at jeg fikk masse pes for det, da.

^{xxx} Yalda: Den er helt som alle andre mennesker, bare at den er, ja, den er hvit da. I hudfargen. Det er egentlig hudfargen som [gjør de norske].

^{xxxi} Yalda: Jeg begynte å tenke på det der faktisk nå i første, at vi er utlendinger hvor enn vi går. Liksom, jeg syns det bare er morsomt jeg. @@ Det er morsomt!

^{xxxii} Uma: Det er det jeg ikke liker er at mange utlendinger har litt den der «fuck norske» liksom. «De er rasister» bla bla bla. Men det er jo rasistisk å si sånt! (...) Og nå er det sånn at norske er faktisk utrolig

redd for å si no feil. Spesielt når det er sånn, med å forklar-, snakke om utlendinger.

^{xxxiii} I: Hva er det med Malika da? Hvorfor er det...

S: Hun har bare ett eller annet sykt i mot meg. Og det handler ikke om at jeg har fordommer mot henne når jeg sier at hun er litt... sprø og, eh, forferdelig person. Fordi, jeg vet jo, hun framstiller seg selv sånn helt ærlig. Og så, hun /vil/ jo at jeg skal tro det. Altså, jeg vet ikke hva hun har i mot meg. Om det er det at, jeg vet ikke... Om det er det at hun er... nei, hakke peiling.

^{xxxiv} I timen så var det en del kaos. Sånn som i Noras timer. Det var sånn bråk, bare at det var ikke bråk for bråk liksom. Det var ikke sånn ut av ingenting. Det var... ehm, litt mer sånn konsentrert bråk. Det var *meningen* å lage bråk om akkurat det temaet.

^{xxxv} Hun forklarer annerledes. Hun prøver, hun forklarer som om vi var sånn voksne liksom. Som om hun snakker til deg og prøver å forklare liksom. Mens på ungdomsskolen så var det annerledes. Da var det forklaring, litt mer sånn ordentlig. De skjønnte at, "okay, så og så mye forstår vi. Greit, vi holder oss til deres nivå", eller no sånn.

^{xxxvi} Elif: Jeg bare: "Ammar!" Han bare: "hvordan er det i mattetimen? "Du er utlending, du er eneste som får oss til å bli stille!"

Inas: Leif, han tror vi, han tror vi er så smarte at vi kan jobbe på egenhånd. Jeg tror, han burde være lærer på tredje, tredje klasse han".

^{xxxvii} Vet du hvor streng hun er eller?! Henne pirker deg til døden! Bare spør hva Ramin fikk. Hun pirker til deg DØDEN! Hun pirker alle feilene dine! Hun skjønner ikke at vi er utlendinger. Skjønner du? Jeg vil si til henne: skjønner du ikke at vi er utlendinger?! Hva faen, tror du jeg snakker norsk hjemme eller?!

^{xxxviii} Inas: Mamma sa til meg, hun sier, hver klasse jeg skal inn på, det er alltid jeg som blir putta i den svarte klassen, skjønner du?

Elif: Jeg også! Bråkmakerklassen!

Inas: Jeg også blir putta i den.

Elif: Nei, ikke, ikke forrige skolen min. Vi hadde bråkmakere, men de jobba. Vi hadde norske også, skjønner du?

Inas: Vi hadde bråkmakere i klassen min. Vi hadde norske også, halvparten norske, halvparten utlen-, utlendinger, *bråkete* utlendinger!

Elif: Her er det *bare* utlendinger, det er ikke annet!

Inas: De er to, alle, *to* norske i klassen vår.

^{xxxix} Lars: (stille) Ja. Det var... i matte. På sånn, ja, på sånn prøve. Jeg fikk, det var veldig ... veldig bra egentlig. Fikk jeg 5+ faktisk.

Ingunn: Ja. Oi!

Lars: (stille) Det var liksom... (stille) Da husker jeg at jeg ble s-, prøvde å legge den litt sånn fram på pulten, mens alle andre gikk rundt omkring og sammenlikna sine karakterer. Og så... Eh. (stille) Vet ikke helt, hvordan var det? (stille) Det var veldig fin start i hvert fall. @

Ingunn: @ Hva mente du med å legge den fram på pulten, sånn at de skulle se?

Lars: Ja. Egentlig. Endte opp med å bare vise den fram da, men... Det var ikke helt sånn... (stille) Det var jo veldig annerledes da, for dreiv jo å liksom gratulerte hverandre for sine treere og sånn. Og så, da tenkte jo jeg at jeg skulle komme og briljere. Det ble jo ikke sånn. De er jo ikke, jeg vet ikke... De, heh, akkurat da følte jeg meg faktisk litt sånn skyvd unna.

Ingunn: Hvordan da?

Lars: Nei, at de liksom, med den så var det bare "okay, se på deg." Eller, ja "du er en nerd." (...) De sa "ja, potet *kan*" og sånn. Så det var jo... ja. Hadde egentlig ikke forventet no mer.

^{xl} Angela: Det er mye slossing mellom jenter, og det blir nesten dannet sånne jentegrupper da. (...) Sånn som guttene har, ikke sant. Så jeg har sett at det har blitt mange sånne.

^{xli} Angela: Jentene begynner nå, tror jeg. Veldig mange.

^{xlii} "Jeg bryr meg ikke om dem jeg, om de får toer eller- Det som er, det eneste jeg bryr meg om er om det går utover meg. Når de bråker i timen, kanke jeg jobbe. Og jeg har ingen forbilder. Så jeg har sendt, jeg kla-, det er sånn... Hvem er det jeg skal se opp til? Jeg forstår ikke hvordan de andre får bra!"

^{xliii} "Hun sier, - jeg fikk femmer på matteprøven. - 'Du juksa. Jeg vet det. Du juksa'".

^{xliv} "Faren min er skikkelig skummel. Han, når han skriker, veggene rister! Oooo! Faren min er skummel. Så jeg snakker egentlig aldri med han nesten".

^{xlv} "Hun bryr meg om karakterene mine, og jeg bryr meg om henne. Skjønner du?"

^{xlvi} A: (stille) Fordi, jeg vet ikke, de syns at jeg, de krever så mye, og så skjønner de seg ikke på meg. De blir liksom, ja, det blir litt sånn bråk mellom på grunn av det og.

I: Hva krever de da?

A: At jeg skal få bra karakterer, og så må jeg liksom... passe på at jeg gjør bra med det ene og andre.

Liksom, bare tenk hvis noen ser meg og typen min sammen. Sånne ting. De forventer liksom at jeg ikke skal gjøre det og sånn, for da kommer andre til å snakke og "å nei, og det går utover familien" og... Det er så mye å tenke på liksom. Det er liksom derfor man blir så sliten av skolen, selv om man, det egentlig ikke har noe med skolen å gjøre.

^{xlvii} ”Og når karakterkortene nå kommer, kommer han sikkert til å forvente at jeg er på toppkarakter. (...) I fjor så turte jeg ikke å vise karakterkortet i fer-, eller før ferien liksom. For da visste jeg det ville bli- (...) Så jeg sa sånn at vi får den etter ferien. Så viste jeg den etter ferien, og så... ja. @ Han sa jeg kommer til å få bank om jeg får det samme igjen”.

^{xlviii} Jeg skjønner at de reagerer, men det er jo ikke riktig med alt det jeg vil, så... (stille) Jeg blir så sliten når de maser, for det går utover skolen. Det orker jeg ikke. Jeg bare går og legger meg, eller, jeg bare sitter der. Sitter jeg liksom og tenker, og så irriterer jeg meg over, samtidig blir jeg lei meg, og så bare sovner jeg.

^{xlix} ’Herregud det er jo din feil!’ Pappa takler jeg ikke, snart knekker jeg.

¹ Elif: Og, Ingrid også, hun er litt sånn, selv om hun er norsk, hun er like gæren noen ganger. (...) Jeg tenker "hva er det du driver med?! Vil du ha bank eller?! @@@@ (...) Hun bare driter seg ut. (stille) Det er noe med henne, skjønner du? Hele timen hun er stille (...) Og så kommer hun til timen og leker gæren. Hva, hva er du da? Er du egentlig stille jente, eller er du egentlig kul? Hva er du? Du må velge, ikke sant!

I: Du må velge?

E: Man må velge. Man kan ikke være begge.

^{li} Ingrid: Det er /bare/ norske elever omtrent. Også det at norsken, at det krever kanskje litt mer, av, sånn faglig sett. Så... Det har jeg også tenkt litt på, at det kanskje er vanskelig, vanskeligere liksom, å få bra karakterer, siden det bare er norske. Alt blir, alle blir jo liksom stilt på lik linje. Så det er sånn, her er det liksom (...), føler at det er mye lettere på en måte da.

I: Lettere, hva da?

Ingrid: Her. Å få bedre karakterer og liksom komme meg no sted (...) etter videregående.

^{lii} Ingrid: De fleste er liksom glade for en firer og er litt sånn average, "samma det" liksom. Mens *jeg* vil jo nå toppen. Jeg *må* det liksom. Jeg har liksom bestemt ut hvordan, hva jeg skal gjøre i fremtiden min liksom. @

^{liii} Ingrid: “De syns jo det er bra at vi, at jeg har satt meg et mål, og de vil jo liksom at noen skal lykkes. @ Siden hun ikke klarte skolen, så er det veldig viktig at jeg gjør det på en måte”.

^{liv} Ingrid: Altså, ting kan være vanskelig, men du får det til. Og... Akkurat der jeg er nå, videregående, det er at, det er liksom, å tenke på hvor seriøst det egentlig er. Fordi, egentlig virker det som ungdomsskole, det trinnet jeg går på. ‘92. Det er veldig sånn, jeg vet ikke, det bare er sånn derre, spise, ikke følge med i timen, eh, droppe litt timer her og der. Det er liksom, for meg, så er det bare, jeg prøver egentlig bare å komme meg gjennom dette her, med bra karakterer. Bare... prøve å nå det, bare... Prøve å holde ut. (...) Det er ganske slitsomt, fordi jeg gjør mitt hardeste for å få bra karakterer. Men allikevel. Det må gå bra snart. (stille)

^{lv} Disse guttene her, jeg tror ikke de mener – sånn som hun læreren forklarte meg, da: ”jeg tror ikke de mener hore, Iselin, de mener det bare, det er en sånn greie de har, de snakker sånn, det er språket dems, skjønner du?”

^{lvi} Og sånn er det, alle [de muslimske] jentene er sånn. Og så klart det jo noen eventuelt som fester, men det er ingen på Skogbyen som på en måte som er utlending som har fest, skjønner du hva jeg mener, med alkohol! Fordi de skal være en god muslim og (...) det handler jo så klart om sex og sånn da.

^{lvii} Vi satt i et rom, og vi var ganske seriøse, alle dreiv og jobbet, og så sier han ene, J, sier: ”Rekk opp hånda de som er jomfruer. Så rekte alle opp, bortsett fra meg. Og Abdul. Så sier han, “Oi, Iselin ja”, så sier jeg, “jaah? Jeg har hatt sex ja. Jeg hadde kjæreste, skjønner du, jeg har hatt kjæreste i ti måneder, så derfor hadde jeg sex!” Og så fikk jeg det der blikket fra alle sammen, da, det var til og med en norsk en der også! Men han bor jo her. (...) Så sier han ene, Abdul, da: ”Ja, asså når du går forbi oss da, det ser ikke akkurat ut som om du er jomfru!” Og så sier jeg, ”mener du jeg ser skitten ut, ser jeg ut som en hore, da?” Så klarer de å si ja! Og det er helt seriøst, det er *ikke* noen som ler, det er ingenting! Og det *tenner* på meg, da, akkurat det der. (...) Og hvorfor skal *jeg* være hore og han skal være kul, liksom, det skjønner jeg ikke, for han har jo hatt sex med en *jente*!

^{lviii} Iselin: Så jeg tror guttene har blitt litt sånn, oi, Iselin liksom, hun er ikke bare blond lenger, da. Og det er veldig bra. Fordi at eh jeg vil gjerne ikke ha den på meg, skjønner du, å liksom være blond og dum og knulle rundt liksom.

^{lix} Men puppene hang ut og, det var sånn, guuud, må jeg sitte med henne liksom!

^{lx} De bare sånn når jeg dansa, han ene bare begynte å danse med meg, sånn derre, jeg bare jeg kjenner deg ikke, og jeg vil ikke danse med deg! Han bare, jo! Kom igjen a! Jeg bare, nei! Så måtte jeg bare gå

derfra liksom.

^{lxi} Iselin: "Å, Iselin kan ikke du møte meg a, og date meg, a, også hvorfor liker du meg ikke? Er det fordi jeg ikke er rik, er det fordi jeg er utlending?! @@ Er det fordi jeg ikke er norsk?!" Jeg bare: det har *ingenting* med det å gjøre, det er bare det at du er ikke min type!

^{lxii} Iselin: [Der hvor jeg er fra] blir man kjent, man er venner, da, før man skal begynne å date. Jeg tror de har misforstått, for jenter liker jo ikke å høre at, iallfall *jeg* og mine venninner liker ikke å høre at vi er deilige eller sexye! Vi liker å høre at vi er søte og snille! *Det* er mye bedre, for da virker du litt ordentlig. Hvis du er *deilig* og "jeg kunne knulla deg", hvis du hører "du er knullbar" liksom, det er ikke noe hyggelig å høre det!

^{lxiii} Marte: tenk om vi skiller oss, hva skal du gjøre. Han tar huset ditt, han tar bilen din, han tar barnet ditt. Eller – barnet tar kanskje jeg da.

Orri: Da er du lost om du ikke har fullført utdannelsen din. Hvertfall fullfør! Eller ha jobb og jobbe litt innimellom, litt penger, sånn må du tenke, det haster ikke å gifte seg om du har en man som elsker deg, da. Han går ikke fra deg om du ikke sier at du vil gifte deg nå. Så jeg syns at utdanning kommer først. Rett og slett!

^{lxiv} Orri: Det er ikke sånn at jeg skal gjøre alt husarbeidet og han skal jobbe, jeg syns at begge skal være yrkesaktive, begge skal passe barna, begge to liksom, dele på det liksom sånn at ikke én må gjøre alt. For det er ganske mange som gjør det i u-land da, eller som i [Bakgrunnslandet] iallfall så er det, det er blitt veldig sånn modernisert, da, og kvinner også jobber, men det er ofte sånn at menn er de som er yrkesaktive mens kvinner er hjemme. Men jeg syns ikke det skal være sånn. (...)

Ingunn: Syns du også det eller?

Inger: Mmm- Men mannen skal jobbe mest. (...) Tjene mest. Ikke jobbe mest, men tjene mest!

Ingunn: du vil - hvorfor det?

Inger: Fordi jeg trenger penga, da!

Ingunn: Men er det ikke bedre da om *du* tjener mest?

Inger: Han skal jo gi til meg, da!

Orri: Nei, dere skal begge forsørge hverandre, da! Jeg syns at om du trives med jobben din, uansett hvor mye du tjener så spiller det ingen rolle egentlig. Du klarer deg jo på de pengene dere har, det er jo ikke sånn at du blir fattige eller noe.

^{lxv} Hadi: Kanskje slåsskamp eller krangel eller ett eller annet sånt. Hvordan de tar imot og hvordan de gir råd og sånt. (...) Ja, og hvordan jeg egentlig burde takle det i stedet for å, hvis jeg gjør noe feil, så kan de vise hvordan jeg burde egentlig gjøre det.

^{lxvi} Yalda: Sånn som, de stoler på meg, og jeg vil ikke utnytte det på noen måter.

^{lxvii} "Følte liksom at ting falt litt på plass om du skjønner".

^{lxviii} "Ta den på å gå ut, så da var det gjort".

^{lxix} Det er noe små grunner til at jeg mener hijab er viktig, sånn bortsett fra de religiøse, f eks det med at jeg mener samfunnet er for sexifisert nå, og jeg vil vise at jeg tar avstand fra dette.

^{lxx} Uma: Jeg, for å være helt ærlig, så har jeg utrolig dårlig inntrykk av gutter. @ Som regel så er de bare ute etter en ting. (...) Det er liksom "oi, hun var pen, hun må jeg bli venn med," hvis du skjønner? Bare sånn for at de kanskje eventuelt, etter hvert, kan bli sammen med meg liksom. Og... Jeg føler at de, de ser ikke på personligheten min i det hele tatt.

^{lxxi} Uma: Jeg vet hvor falske mennesker kan være, jeg liker ikke mennesker! Noen ganger, jeg sier det, jeg kunne ønske jeg var ku! Det hadde vært *så* mye bedre! De bare spiser gress og ække falske.

^{lxxii} Bilan: Eller, egentlig selv liksom, jeg syns... Jeg syns det er ve-, det er liksom best å vente til liksom storkjærligheten liksom. Enn å drive og tulle med det hele tiden og sånn.

^{lxxiii} Nei, det er ikke så store, nei. Så er han sånn støtte, sånn, passer på hva jeg gjør og... Sånn, ikke gjør dårlige ting og sånn.

^{lxxiv} I: Åja. Hva vil dårlig ting si for han da?

B: For eksempel gutter da, han, gutter, at jeg ikke skal være med gutter. Eh, drikking, eller røyking. Eller, eh, dop. *Alt* det her liksom.

^{lxxv} Bilan: Ehm, sånn, når det går... Du vet når du liksom tuller med hverandre. Når, jenter og gutter tuller med hverandre, at det ikke går sånn over streken liksom. Eller at... Eller, jeg, egentlig jeg vet ikke hvordan han syns det er liksom. Men jeg er sånn selv som passer på liksom.

^{lxxvi} Ahlam: Sex er ikke lov i Islam liksom, før man gifter seg, men nesten alle muslimer gjør det. De bryr seg ikke liksom.

^{lxxvii} Ahlam: Nå så er, Islam har utvikla seg så mye at, du kan nesten regne med at alle jenter har hatt sex liksom. Alle muslimske jenter har hatt det. Det er ingen som, men de sier det kanskje ikke til hver og en person liksom.

I: In-, mener du Islam i Norge, eller islam-

A: Ja, Islam i Norge egentlig. I Europa. Kusine mine i England liksom, de har også type, og foreldrene dems vet om det.

^{lxxxviii} Abia: En dag så kommer det til å komme ut liksom. Men, alle de andre vet det unntatt brødrene mine og pappa og mamma liksom. (...)

I: Ja - hva tror du hvis faren din hadde fått vite om det på en måte?

A: (stille) For å være helt ærlig, jeg tror han hadde grisejult meg. Sånn seriøst.

^{lxxxix} Abia: jeg har fått sånn slag i hodet eller noe sånn, bare sånn, fordi han har blitt litt sint fordi jeg har svart han frekt eller noe sånt.

^{lxxx} Abia: Så tenkte jeg "herregud, pappa må aldri finne ut om meg og han". (...) De [fra bakgrunnslandet] er litt sånn rare. Så pappa forstår ikke helt den norske, eller han har bodd her ganske lenge, så han forstår mye, men når det kommer til kjærestegreier så er det bare helt sånn "nei Abia, ikke no kjærester! Du skal bli lege og du skal gifte deg" ditt og datt. (...) Han har alltid trua oss og sagt sånn "ja... Om du finner egen mann og gifter deg og sånn, så kommer jeg til å drepe deg". Og så, "jeg bryr meg ikke om jeg kommer i fengsel". Han har alltid sagt sånne ting.

^{lxxxxi} Så krangla vi mye en del, så ble han ganske streng og sa sånn "nei, du får lov til å gå med sånn *tights*". Og så jeg bare "hæ? hvorfor det?!" liksom. Han bare "nei, da ser andre gutter på deg" og sånn. Han er sånn, lever litt i [bakgrunnsland] ennå tror jeg. (...) Så begynte han å bli mer sånn streng og sånn. Så, bare orka jeg ikke mer en liten stund. Så gjorde jeg det slutt.

^{lxxxii} Nabika: De blir helt rare og sier ja til alt, hvis en bare ser bort og hun lager tsunami for det, - det var sånn det var for hundre år siden, vi har lissom kommet over det.

^{lxxxiii} Afhseen: Hvorfor gjør du sånn? Det ække bra, vi kan fortsatt ikke stoppe deg, men, hva kan vi gjøre?

^{lxxxiv} Afshseen: Å, du har ødelagt alt for oss. Alt, alt, alt. Ødelagt hele respekten, ryktet, hva skal vi gjøre nå? Vi kan ikke vise ansiktet vårt til noen.

^{lxxxv} Inas: Kommer en jente med så kort shorts - Ofte er det sjalusi, da. En så kort shorts, og singlett på sommeren, før så ble du kalt hore. Liksom, har du knulla veldig mange gutter - hore. Går du med utringing helt ned hit - hore. Går du catwalk hore på en måte, går litt sånn på en måte - hore. Går du med høye hæler og litt sånn kort shorts og tror du er toppmodell, hore. Eh, hva mer er det a... Ja, snakker du bare ut, snakker du bare ut i det, du vet når gutter og jenter er sammen, at en jente begynner å snakke om kukk og knulling rett, porno, alt det, rett foran en gutt, bare "å jeg knulla han i går" og, da er du på en måte hore for da har du ikke respekt ikke sant. Da sier du ting rett ut. (...) Men det er forskjellig fra person til person. Men det miljøet jeg lever i, det miljøet jeg har vokst opp og lever i nå, det er sånn som jeg sier. Fra *mitt* synspunkt, østkanten sin side, da. Vestkanten er sikkert helt annerledes.

^{lxxxvi} Jeg er den eneste som gymmer i shorts. Og jeg, jeg skjønner ikke at folk klarer å gymme i bukse. Jeg gjør det av og til, men det er sånn derre, det er så utrolig varmt når du gjør spesielle ting. Og så hadde jeg på meg, og så hadde jeg ikke skifta etter gymmen, så var jeg i kantina. Og så kom [Malika] til meg og så bare «det ække sommer nå da.» Jeg bare «jeg vet det.» «Åja!» Helt sånn, bare for å si noe, det er sånn derre «gå og legg deg» liksom. Det er sånn "hvorfor!?"

^{lxxxvii} Marte: På barneskolen det var mange norske, det var *mange* norske, men de var sånn der... jeg følte med en gang at det var ... det var liksom meg, Husna og Shada og Orri, så var det de derre norske som bare *hallo!* At det går an å være sånn! Skjønner du?

Ingunn: Hvordan da?

Marte: Ikke alle norske, jeg mente ikke, jeg sier ikke alle norske!

Ingunn: Men hva var det du reagerte på med de norske som du kjente da?

Marte: Sånn derre... jeg vet ikke, de er sånn... dumme folk! @@

Orri: De er litt mer opptatt av sånn klær og sminke og hår og musikk, mens -

Marte: Det er sånn, jeg husker så godt de jentene, det var i gymmen, til meg og S, en norsk jente bare [Marte speaks deliberately clearly and slowly]: "skal dere ha på jakke på ungdomsskolen?" Jeg bare, "Ja, hvorfor skal vi ikke det liksom?" Hun bare: "Tsk, da er dere ikke *kule*, dere kommer ikke til å bli så innmari *kule* på ungdomsskolen!" (...) Men det ikke alle norske som er sånn. Men de norske som jeg har opplevd er sånn. (quiet) Men jeg har ikke opplevd alle norske, så jeg kan ikke kritisere. For eksempel *du* er ikke sånn.

^{lxxxviii} Angela: Hvis man sier noe som kunne vært vanlig å si til de norske, så blir de litt sånn "nei, ikke si det, ikke snakk om det" på en måte, skjønner?

I: Åja. Hva da?

A: Nei, @@ det er bare noen ting. Det er litt... Jeg veit ikke. Hvis du tuller litt da. Som om, sånne ting som vi pleier å tulle med, det er sånn, litt som har med kanskje jenter og gutter å sånn der ikke sant.

I: Om sex og sånn?

A: Ja, kanskje det. Liksom, vitser eller, bare tulle litt om det og sånn. Så blir det sånn "nei nei, ikke si sånn" ikke sant.

^{lxxxix} "Det var greit å ha sex, men det er ikke noe man skulle snakke om, det er en privatsak!"

^{xc} Elif: [Iselin] blir stolt av at hun gjør det. Folk er forskjellig. Hun kom til meg, hun bare, jeg holdte på å krangle, hun bare, hun kom til meg og begynte å snakke. "Er *du* jomfru? Jeg ække jomfru". Jeg bare: "har jeg *spurt* deg eller?! Bryr du deg? Fjern deg!!" Haha! Hun er en, sånne som henne syns jeg synd på. Hun er stolt over at hun er... Det er sånn... Jeg syns synd på henne

^{xcⁱ} Elif: Når man er sammen med folk, da får du også rykte. Hvis du er muslim, og er sammen med folk. Angela har ikke /så/ dårlig rykte. Vi, hvis hun hadde vært muslim og hadde gjort det, da hadde de kalt henne hore til trynet hennes.

I: Åja?

E: Men nå sier vi bare bak henne, ikke sant.

I: Åja! Okay, det er mye bedre? @ Okay.

E: Da blir ikke hun såra i hvert fall. Hvis hun hadde vært muslim og hadde gjort det, fordi en muslim skal egentlig gjøre det. Kristne er ikke /så/ strenge på det, ikke sant?

^{xcⁱⁱ} Elif: Angela *leker* norsk da. Hun henger bare med norske. (...) Hun er sånn wannabe-norsk på en måte.

Ingunn: Åja. Hva tenker du om det?

Elif: Hva jeg tenker? Jeg, jeg syns synd på henne. Hun... Jeg syns synd på henne. Det er dumt, du, du burde ikke være sånn.

Summary

Young Norwegians: Belonging and becoming in a multiethnic high school

This PhD thesis explores how ethnicity is formed and lived in the context of a multiethnic high school in Norway, at a crossroads where four central axes meet: Norwegian equality goals, new demands for skills at school, changing ethnic relations, and youth. The thesis examines what consequences forms of ethnicity shaped at this crossroads have for high school pupils' possibilities for individual development and different senses of belonging.

The study is based on participant observation over a period of five months in a school class in first grade of high school, and in-depth interviews with 26 pupils in this class, where the majority were girls and minority ethnic pupils. The pupils were 15-16 years old. The analysis draws on postcolonial theories to grasp power and structures, and narrative theories to conceptualise aspects of identity and emotions. A theory of affective practices provides a site of analysis of lived ethnicity and aspects of power, negotiations and possibilities for change.

A central finding is that the strong, locally situated sense of ethnicity that the pupils created was entangled with, but somewhat untied from, 'race' and background countries. Being called 'Norwegian' or 'foreigner' respectively was not necessarily about ethnicity in the sense of a background culture. The pupils created 'ethnic packages' where e.g. certain skin colours, slang, specific sexuality mores and classroom behaviour were salient, but not essential resources to become a recognised member of each group.

Integral to the process of creating local ethnic collectives, was the formation of collective narratives. Typically, ethnic minority pupils would be narrated as noisy and low achievers and the girls as sexually virtuous. Ethnic Norwegians would be narrated as good pupils and the girls as sexually active. There was a strong tendency to re-narrate many aspects of life – for example ideals of gender equality, school attitude and skill, and sexuality – as having to do with ethnicity.

The school lacked clear borders in pedagogy and architecture, which demanded of the pupils an ability to contain and discipline themselves. This opened a room for a group of space-claiming, visible and noisy minority girls. These girls

performed an aggressive relational noisiness, which in form drew on gangster imagery, in need expressed frustration, disorientation from success in a perceived Norwegian school and a need for protection from indignity.

For the pupils who did not make as much noise, the combination of noisy school days, high demands and internal or external pressure was hard. Despite the school's emphasis on self-discipline, this trait was hard to find in the pupils – but where it was found, it was laced with toil and sadness. The loose school structure seemed to be geared towards pupils with a larger capacity for self-discipline and more opportunities for support from parents than the majority of its actual pupils. That the differences in school attitude and skill were conceived as related to ethnicity, might limit the pupils' possibilities for conceiving alternative trajectories for oneself.

In the particular meeting between different forms of belonging and becoming, and as a manifestation of Norway's official gender equality aim and its coexistence with changing demographics, the study describes a girl position that defies the common media image of quiet, even oppressed, ethnic minority girls. Measured against Norwegian equality aims, many ethnic minority girls challenged gendered borders in the school's classroom in terms of visibility and aggression, but they simultaneously limited girls' possibilities in terms of sexuality. For them, a perceived lack of institutional power and group homogeneity seemed to be rectified in the enactments of local power and the construction of a morally better group than the ethnic Norwegians, especially regarding sexuality. On the other hand, the most typical female ethnic Norwegian sexuality appeared more legitimate in relation to the school's teachers and curriculum.