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Bridges to Belonging

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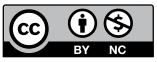

ISBN 978-3-031-89017-8 ISBN 978-3-031-89018-5 (eBook)
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-89018-5

This work was supported by University of South-Eastern Norway.

This Springer imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

Introduction

> The principles guiding my work on critical pedagogy are grounded in critique as a mode of analysis that interrogates texts, institutions, social relations, and ideologies as part of the script of official power… the language of hope goes beyond acknowledging how power works as a mechanism of domination and offers up a vocabulary in which it becomes possible to imagine power working in the interest of justice, equality, and freedom. Examples of such a discourse emerge in my analyses of schools as democratic public spheres, teachers as public intellectuals, and students as potential agents of individual and social change (Giroux, 2011, pp. 4, 5).

In *Education and Cultural Evolution in Norway's Multiethnic Society: Bridges to Belonging*, we explore the complex reasons behind the phenomenon of growing ethnic and racial segregation of schools predominantly in the capital Oslo but argue that similar mechanisms are at play in other cities in Norway also. The book is grounded in research (e.g., Thomas et al., 2016) conducted at a school that students affectionately referred to as "our ghetto school." We have explored issues such as racism, populism, belonging, and Islamophobia in relation to integration in our published research, which we have also drawn upon in this book. Informed by the principles of critical pedagogy, we seek to understand and reflect upon the theme of how education intersects with cultural diversity. Norway prides itself on its commitment to egalitarianism and equity in education. However, as educators, we are anxious about the evident erosion of this obligation in recent years, particularly highlighted by the growing issue of racially segregated schools.

Few in Norway can be comfortable with the sight of white and black/brown bodies inhabiting their own distinct spaces, like oil and water, forever separating without the possibility of cohesion. Our aim is to explore texts (official, media, etc.), institutions, social relations, and ideologies, all of which comprise the bulwark of official power. This book examines how the cornucopia of such forces shapes educational experiences in Norway's multiethnic schools and suggests ways in which education can be a transformative force for justice, equality, and freedom. Professor of Education Gary Thomas (2013) differentiates between two types of segregation in schooling. A strong segregation encompasses race-based segregation and special needs education while a weak segregation refers to that which "exists in its weak

form in more finely graded differentiations based on youngsters' attainment, a practice that goes under various names: streaming, setting, banding" (Thomas, 2013, p. 64). In other words, these forms of segregation are far from any notion of "voluntary" segregation based on so-called liberal free choice. The "invisible hand" (to paraphrase Adam Smith) of an officialdom beholden to laissez-faire market fundamentalism looms large. Thomas goes on to state:

> Harvard academic Martha Minow concludes from a major review of the research that via these means—"renewed racial segregation through academic tracking, special education assignments, and students' own divisions is as common as ever, half a century after the *Brown* judgment" (Thomas, 2013, p. 64).

Henry Giroux (2011) speaks of a "language of hope" that transcends the endeavor to understand power merely as a tool for subjugation. It instead visualizes power as an ally, something that can be marshaled in the service of justice and equality. This language of hope becomes a pivotal theme permeating the book, positioning schools as democratic public spaces, teachers as public intellectuals, and students as potential agents of both individual and social change. In this book, we seek to show how myriad secretions into the public space—particularly the media's portrayals and the narratives peddled by populist politicians—contribute to a public discourse that entangles non-white students in an inescapable web of victimhood. Within this complex "spider's web," these students are often stamped as the quintessential "other," imperiled by stereotypes that portray them as synonymous with crime, lacking academic ambition, and other negative attributes. Stuart Hall has argued for the salience of Antonio Gramsci's work as a tool in antiracist efforts because, like the threads of a spider, each thread can be different and even contradictory.

> He [Gramsci] thus helps us to understand one of the most common, least explained features of "racism": the "subjection" of victims of racism to the mystifications of the very racist ideologies which imprison and define them. He shows how different, often contradictory elements can be woven into and integrated within different ideological discourses but, also, the nature and value of ideological struggle which seeks to transform popular ideas and the "common sense" of the masses. All this has the most profound importance for the analysis of racist ideologies and for the centrality, within that, of ideological struggle (Hall, 2019, p. 53).

Antonio Gramsci's insights into ideology and power are especially useful for understanding how racism endures and functions in subtle, often inconsistent ways. For Gramsci, ideology is not monolithic or fixed; instead, it is a complicated, ever-evolving web of beliefs, prejudices, and assumptions that society accepts as "common sense." This "common sense" is seldom coherent—it blends pieces of redundant ideas, dominant cultural narratives, and developing progressive values. In the context of racism, this means that the same ideological framework that sidelines certain groups can also be embraced, even unconsciously, by those it oppresses. Gramsci's work reveals how these contradictions reinforce the system by making it appear natural and inevitable, thus inhibiting critical scrutiny.

One of Gramsci's most critical legacies is his emphasis on ideological struggle as a site of transformation. He contends that challenging racism requires destabilizing the narratives that have become etched in everyday thinking. This entails

identifying and subverting the "threads" of ideology—be they historical stereotypes, societal fears, or cultural myths—that form the web trapping minoritized groups. Gramsci believed in the potential to reshape "common sense" through education, dialogue, and resistance, making it possible to supplant oppressive frameworks with ones grounded in equality and justice. In this way, his theory offers a roadmap for empowering marginalized individuals not just to recognize the web of oppression but to actively reconfigure it into something liberating and inclusive.

As such, we are optimistic, however daunting the task may seem, that the "different and contradictory" threads of the web—Gramsci's "Stone age elements and principles of a more advanced science, prejudices from all past phases of history… and intuitions of a future philosophy" (Hall, 2019, p. 53)—that incarcerate minoritized students can be disentangled. As teachers from minoritized backgrounds ourselves, with roots in Somalia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Burundi, we aim to offer our experiences and research in the spirit of Jerome Bruner's "scaffolding" (Bruner, 1996) or a "knowledagble other" to help guide these students to their Vygotskian "zones of proximal development" in unscrambling the threads of this web spun by societal forces. The objective is to not only illuminate the way in which the web is spun—although this is crucial—but empower the students to embrace their multifaceted identities, reclaim their narratives, challenge preconceived notions, and forge paths toward their true potential untethered from societal constraints. Ultimately, this book seeks to illuminate the way out of the web, fostering resilience and self-advocacy in the face of an institutional fabric that often seeks to define them against their will.

A note about our use of literature in this book. Inspired by critical race theory's tenet of counter or subversive storytelling (Bell, 1995), we tap into the power of literary works, both classical and modern, to play a critical role in engendering understanding and empathy. We argue that timeless stories told by expert storytellers are pertinent to the task of inviting and engaging readers through a lens which can trigger personal schemas and experiences within broader societal narratives, making abstract concepts more relatable and relevant. The literary narratives we have selected, which span the gamut of countries as diverse as Argentina, France, India, Norway, Egypt, and the UK, among others, are designed to resonate with the multicultural audience who are our interlocutors. Through analyses of literary topics, students can explore the intricacies of human nature, lock horns with moral dilemmas, and reflect on their values and beliefs. In essence, incorporating literature into the education of culturally diverse student populations not only augments their learning experience but also empowers them to navigate societal labyrinths with empathy, critical thinking, and a deeper appreciation for the diverse imbrications of human experiences.

> Frederick Douglass and others created the genre of slave narratives to render in horrific detail the inhumanity of the slave system… Practitioners of the Word must assume the position of subject. We must assert our humanity by making ourselves the heroes and heroines of our tales and unashamedly employing "I" and "we" in our language. We must describe other subjects in our stories and, by presenting multiple points of view, subvert the closed, coherent, noncontradictory world that makes us objects (Lawrence, 1995, p. 341).

Chapter 1 sets the stage in outlining how educational spaces may unconsciously amplify societal prejudices in the absence of credible counter forces. We explore the dynamics of a "ghetto school" characterized by a predominantly non-white student body. We draw upon the literary allusion of Jorge Luis Borge's story about Averroes (Ibn Rushd) to highlight the elusiveness of words (and hence culture) that evade translation. Such a framework calls on both sides of the "multicultural riddle," to borrow from Gerd Baumann, to consider the manner in which notions of tragedy and comedy can articulate the intricate interplay of race, identity, and educational experience in the context of Oslo's segregated schools. We argue that through persistence and novel edcuational practices, such schools can morph into catalysts for empowerment.

We explore how minoritized individuals can become the agents of their own empowerment through authentic multicultural education. Employing case studies and personal narratives, the chapter gives expression to the struggles non-white students encounter in identifying with the educational system, reinforcing the need for a culturally responsive pedagogy that recognizes and authenticates their identities and experiences. By employing the ideas of critical theorists such as Stuart Hall and Erving Goffman, we argue for a bridging of cultural gaps in educational settings, aiming to foster a more inclusive and equitable environment for all students in Norway's multicultural landscape.

In Chap. 2, we explore the theme of lost connections in segregated schools through the lens of Rabindranath Tagore's short story "Kabuliwala." This story illustrates the possibility of friendship and understanding that can transcend societal barriers. The story offers an apt metaphor to understand the current miasma of racially segregated schools where fear-inducing stereotypes rather than face-to-face encounters preempt action. Despite these herculean obstacles, the narrative evokes the potential for meaningful relationships and empathy to thrive if given the chance, accenting the need for a re-examination of existing barriers to integration and understanding. The chapter conveys how current policies and social attitudes amplify ethnic and class segregation, echoing reactions found in history—especially drawing connections to apartheid-era South Africa. While the contexts are not directly comparable given the differing historical trajectories, the "fact of racial segregation," whether voluntary or otherwise in a majority white country, urges readers to remain vigilant against incipient patterns of segregation and prejudice in Norway, invoking a robust discussion about the implications for democracy, social cohesion, and individual identity within racially segregated settings.

Chapter 3 broaches the subject of the role of mainstream media in crafting and maintaining stigmatized narratives. Commensurate with Edward Said's critique of Orientalism, we highlight the machinations underpinning the perpetuation of the distorted view of immigrant communities, failing to provide a nuanced understanding while echoing the biases of earlier scholars. This observation reveals the patterns through which racialized narratives are propagated, emphasizing the need for critical engagement with these portrayals. Moreover, the chapter further explores the phenomenon known as "white flight," examining the stimuli goading the exodus of white families from racially diverse neighborhoods. This "quiet exodus" cements

the segregation of schools and communities, eventually leaving behind stigmatized non-white populations.

By addressing the apparatuses of white supremacy that underpin this flight, the discussion calls attention to the need for accountability in the mainstream discourse about immigration and integration, focusing on the responsibilities of the majority rather than solely blaming minority groups for social issues. In probing historical viewpoints on whiteness and racial dynamics, the chapter deliberates on the concept of "white habitus," highlighting how the cultural and social contexts in which individuals are entrenched shape their perceptions and interactions with race. Drawing on the insights of theorists like Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, it argues that understanding these patterns is essential for comprehending the ongoing challenges of racial integration in contemporary Norway.

Chapter 4 concerns itself with the impact of populist rhetoric with respect to the phenomenon of school segregation in Norway. We explore the nature of the purported threat of Islam to Norwegian identity as envisioned by populist politicians in Norway. The chapter continues with an exploration of Naguib Mahfouz's novel *Children of the Alley*, proposing that the character Arafa ibn Gahsha represents the moral ambiguity and opportunism characteristic of populist politics. Just as Arafa struggles with his self-interest while seeking recognition, populist politicians often capitalize on societal fears and discontent to consolidate power, at the expense of community cohesion. The narrative stresses that populist leaders, by framing immigrants as scapegoats, deflect attention from the systemic issues that contribute to societal malaise and aggravate existing tensions.

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Acknowledgments

I wish to extend my heartfelt gratitude to Professor Anders Breidlid, whose intellectual guidance and unwavering dedication profoundly shaped my academic journey. Professor Breidlid instilled an insatiable curiosity to question, deconstruct, and critique the entrenched regimes that govern our world. His classroom was not merely a space of learning but a crucible for transformation, where students were challenged to dismantle the scaffolding of privilege and power that so often went unquestioned.

Breidlid's work transcends the boundaries of academia, embodying a deep commitment to merging education with the empowerment of the marginalized. His tireless advocacy for the disadvantaged in the Global South, his championing of local knowledge systems, and his relentless critique of climate injustice have resonated deeply with me. He illuminated the harsh realities of a world where policies crafted in the halls of the Global North cast long shadows over the Global South, amplifying burdens already borne. His insights bring to mind the haunting poetry of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, who once wrote, "The condition of a nation is reflected in the conditions of its language." Breidlid not only understood this truth but worked to reveal how systems of knowledge—Western and Indigenous—intersect, clash, and coexist, urging us to listen to those whose stories are often drowned out by the noise of power.

Through his teaching and scholarship, Breidlid exemplified the courage it takes to "speak truth to power," a lesson he imparted with conviction. Like the griots of African tradition or the storytellers of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart,* he ensured that silenced voices found their place in the narratives of history, culture, and education. His work embodied Achebe's warning that, "If you don't like someone's story, write your own." Professor Breidlid challenged us not only to write but to rewrite—to reclaim, reimagine, and reinvent narratives that foster justice, equity, and dignity. His profound influence has left an indelible mark on my scholarship and my

worldview. This book stands on the intellectual and ethical foundations he helped to lay, reminding me always that education is a tool not just for understanding the world, but for changing it. For this, and for so much more, I am eternally grateful.

Competing Interests The authors have no competing interests to declare that are relevant to the content of this manuscript.

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About the Authors

Paul Thomas is Professor of Pedagogy with a PhD in Education from King's College, London, specializing in critical pedagogy and multicultural education. His extensive research explores themes of social justice, minority experiences, and inclusive educational practices in Norway and beyond. Through rigorous analysis and personal narrative, Thomas advocates for transformative approaches to education that address systemic inequalities and promote equity.

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Jocelyne Von Hof is Assistant Professor of Pedagogy and specializes in studying the practices of educators in multilingual settings, ensuring the inclusion of minority language-speaking children. Her research highlights the importance of educators valuing language proficiency to create supportive learning environments. Von Hof's work emphasizes inclusive practices that prioritize cultural identity and linguistic diversity.

Part I

Chapter 1
Pride and Prejudice in a "Ghetto" School in Oslo

> The night before, two doubtful words had halted him [Averroes] at the beginning of the *Poetics.* These words were *tragedy* and *comedy*. He had encountered them years before in the third book of the *Rhetoric*; no one in the whole world of Islam could conjecture what they meant. In vain he had exhausted the pages of Alexander of Aphrodisia, in vain he had compared the versions of the Nestorian Hunain ibn-Ishaq and of Abu-Bashar Mata. These two arcane words pullulated throughout the text of the *Poetics*; it was impossible to elude them (Borges, 1964, p. 181).

The excerpt above is from the short story *Averroes's Search* (Labyrinths) by the Argentine writer, poet, essayist, and librarian Jorge Luis Borges, widely regarded as one of the most influential literary figures of the twentieth century. Averroes (Ibn Rushd; 1126–1198 AD) was famed in the West as the translator and commentator of the works of Aristotle par excellence earning him the honorific "The Commentator". This title reflects his substantial contributions to the interpretation and commentary on the works of Aristotle, which had a significant influence on Western philosophy and medieval scholastic thought. Averroes's labors did much to build bridges of good will and understanding between Islamic and Western philosophies, particularly through his extensive writings on Aristotle's texts.

Despite his best efforts, however, in the excerpt above, the words "tragedy" and "comedy" baffled Averroes. These words from Aristotle's *Poetics* had no equivalent in the Arabic. While Averroes was a brilliant scholar, he could only muse at the elusiveness of these concepts which evaded his genius. At length, Averroes's musings led him to an unconventional interpretation of the two puzzling words: "With firm and careful calligraphy he added these lines to the manuscript: 'Aristu (Aristotle) gives the name of tragedy to panegyrics and that of comedy to satires and anathemas. Admirable tragedies and comedies abound in the pages of the Koran and in the *mohalacas* of the sanctuary'" (Borges, 1964, p. 187). Arabian culture was familiar with panegyrics (eulogy) that extolled the virtues of the great and the good.

In an interesting twist, Averroes (through Borges) equates a tragedy with a panegyric leaving the reader (Arabian and Western) to navigate the ambiguity: Was Averroes articulating a denunciation of the act of eulogizing leaders by equating it

P. Thomas et al., *Education and Cultural Evolution in Norway's Multiethnic Society*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-89018-5_1

with tragedy, or was he positing a more nuanced and empathetic perspective? Tragedies are renowned for their exploration of profound human emotions, suffering and complex moral dilemmas. Commensurate with such a reading, a panegyric—typically understood as a work of praise and celebration—can likewise invoke deep emotional responses, thus obscuring the lines between the two genres and casting the role of the panegyric into a tragedy in its emotional depth and gravitational weight.

In the same vein, "comedy" becomes "satire" and "anathema". Averroes surmises that a good translation in the Arabic would be "satire" and "anathema". Averroes's translation highlights the danger inherent in assuming universal and transcultural understandings of words and cultures. What may be considered "comedy" in the West could just as well carry less generous (satire) or even lethal implications (anathema). At heart is the issue of Eurocentrism. As teachers from minority backgrounds in Norway, we have experienced firsthand "Averroes's Search" at the "chalkface" level, which this book seeks to share through the lens of a culturally responsive pedagogy. We contend that the project of integration in schools with sizable student populations from the Global South, the majority of whom were born and bred in Norway, has been partially hampered by a conflicting interpretive paradigm rooted in forms of resistance towards a Eurocentric lens which Immanuel Wallerstein defined in the following manner:

> There are three main varieties of this appeal to [European] universalism. The first is the argument that the policies pursued by the leaders of the pan-European world are in defense of "human rights" and in furtherance of something called "democracy". The second comes in the jargon of the clash of civilizations, in which its always assumed that "Western" civilization is superior to "other" civilizations because it is the only one that has come to be based on these universal values and truths. And the third is the assertion of the scientific truths of the market, the concept that "there is no alternative" for governments but to accept and act on the laws of neoliberal economics (Wallerstein, 2006, pp. xi, xii).

Seen from the perspective of the West, Averroes's translation of the two words in question must have been tantamount to a distortion of Aristotle's *Poetic*. Fidelity to the original source would require a wholesale transplantation into the context of Aristotle's world of antiquity. However, Arabian scholars were more interested in adapting these ideas for their own purposes, as they were deeply engaged with the dynamic scientific, economic, and cultural advancements, often referred to as the "Golden Age of Islam", traditionally dated from the eighth to the thirteenth century (Saliba, 1994).

We will consider the conundrum sketched above through several case studies in educational settings, beginning with a "ghetto" school in Oslo. Names, the geographic location and other details have been anonymized to minimize traceability. Scholars are in agreement that non-traceability is an aspiration rather than a reality (Cohen et al., 2007). We begin with the first case. In this particular high school, over 80% of the student population were non-white, with many tracing their roots to the Global South. The students unabashedly referred to the school as their "ghetto" school. This appeared curious in our estimation given the stigma attached to the school in mainstream Norwegian society. The school figured in the kind of statistics

that often turn away more aspiring students. It took a while for the students to become comfortable enough to open up to our probing questions, but once trust was gained, responses such as the one below were not uncommon:

> I was shocked to see so many foreigners in the beginning. Norwegians don't want to come here because it is a "Black school". Some say this is the "ghetto". The Norwegians are afraid that their grades and language skills will suffer here. But after some time, I made friends here and the teachers are really good, so I feel I fit in here. It's not as bad as the media hype paints it (Male, 16, of Iraqi origin; Thomas et al., 2016, p. 217).

Figure 1.1 is entitled "Immigrants and Norwegian-born with immigrant parents in the boroughs of Oslo as of 1.1.2015, as a share of residents. In squares of 250 x 250 meters" (Statistics Norway, 2015). For years now newspaper headlines sounded increasingly concerned about the prima facie voluntary segregation patterns following a white vs. black/brown dichotomy. As the figure shows, the non-white demographic is concentrated in the center, northeast and southeast of Oslo. In 2014, the newspaper *Dagsavisen,* which serves a social democrat and working-class readership, asserted that Oslo has been characterized by class divisions since the nineteenth century. The Akerselva River has historically bisected the city, with the working class residing primarily in the east and more affluent populations inhabiting the west. As noted by Professor Thomas Hylland Eriksen, "The east side was east long before immigrants arrived" (Vestreng, Dagsavisen, 2014). In contemporary times, these class divisions are particularly evident in the suburban regions of Groruddalen (see Alna, Grorud, Stovner in Fig. 1.1). This conurbation has witnessed high rates of "white flight". Referring to these areas in 2017, one newspaper, clearly obsessed with residents' pigmentation, ran the headline: "Neighborhood emptied of ethnic Norwegians", and states:

> In the Stovner district, the figures obtained by *Aftenposten* show that 3,029 ethnic Norwegians moved out between 2008 and 2016. In the same period, 3,418 non-Western individuals moved in. In the Søndre Nordstrand district, 1,297 ethnic Norwegians moved out. 1,451 non-Western individuals moved in (Nettavisen, 2017).

In his book *The Wages of Whiteness,* race scholar, David R. Roediger (2022) builds on the concept of "the psychological wages of whiteness" first introduced by the African American scholar W.E.B. Du Bois who wrote: "White schoolhouses were the best in the community, and conspicuously placed, and cost anywhere from twice to ten times colored schools" (Du Bois, 1935, pp. 700,701). Roediger goes on to flesh out the psychological aspect of this "wages of whiteness": "As important as the specifics are here, still more important is the idea that the pleasures of whiteness could function as a "wage" for white workers. That is, status and privileges conferred by race could be used to make up for alienating and exploitative class relationships, North and South" (Roediger, 2022, p. 13). The concept of the psychological wages of whiteness is fruitful in understanding the existence and burgeoning phenomenon of ethnically segregated schools in Oslo and other major cities in Norway.

We contend that the concept of the psychological wages of whiteness can be fruitfully incorporated into the analyses of the phenomenon of white flight. Both Du Bois and Roediger examined the ostensibly irrational decision-making of poor

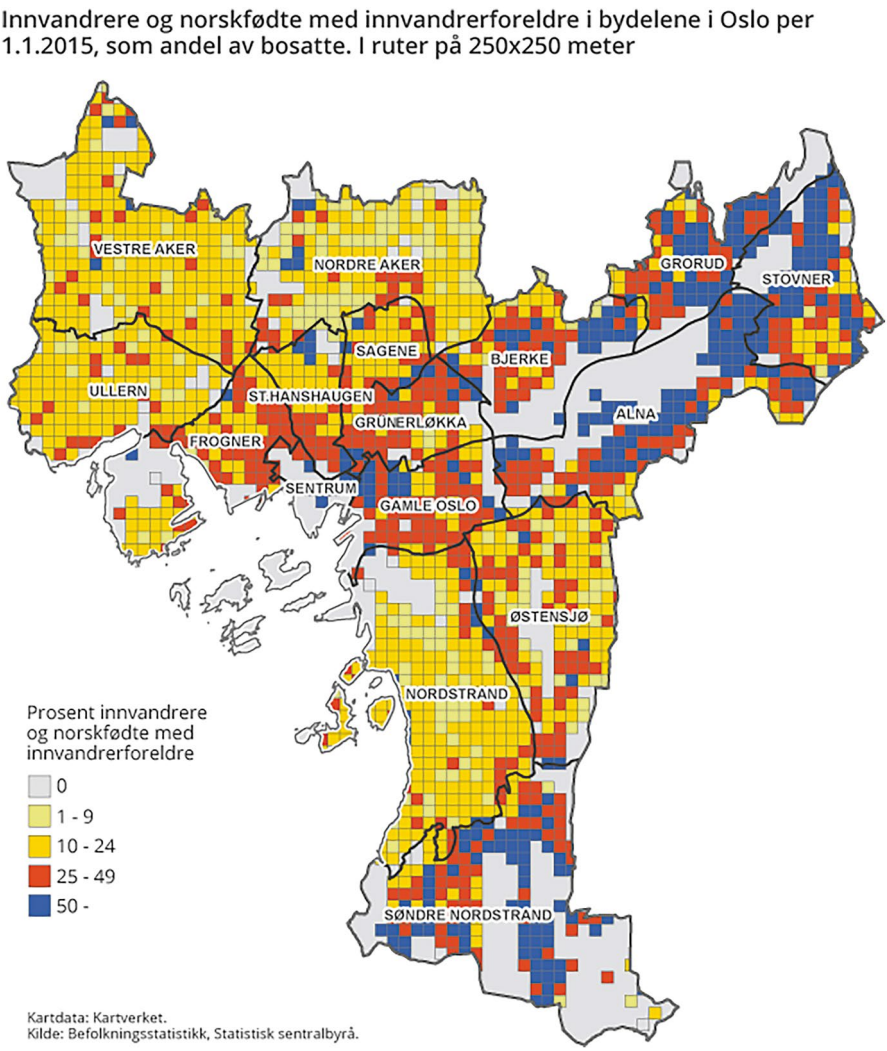

Fig. 1.1 Immigrants and Norwegian-born with immigrant parents in the boroughs of Oslo as of 1.1.2015, as a share of residents (Statistics Norway, 2015)

white working-class laborers, who chose to affiliate themselves with the exploitative class of white factory owners rather than their black working-class peers. "Race feeling and the benefits conferred by whiteness made white Southern workers forget their 'practically identical interests' with the black poor and accept stunted lives for themselves and for those more oppressed than themselves" (Roediger, 2022, p. 13). The case of one white Norwegian student who was interviewed during a break illustrates the above. She stated that her family had old, proud roots in the working milieu of the neighborhood, but her family now planned to up sticks and

relocate. With some recalcitrance she shared that the sight of too many non-white people in the district was the deciding factor. Furthermore, and very telling was her candid confession that this was all very sad because she actually had much in common with her classmates—even more than ethnic, white Norwegians. "The painful truth is that I cannot be the only white student left. I cannot be a minority in my own country", she opined. In the US context, James Baldwin castigates white flight.

> It is terribly wrong to have to say—again—it is the White flight and not the Black arrival that alters, or demolishes, property values. This arrival and departure is pure heaven for financiers and speculators: a ghetto is a source of great profit. No power under heaven can force the landlord to invest a penny in the upkeep of his property, and, if you think you can't get blood from a stone, watch salesmen of every description operating in the ghetto. Buy a *bedroom suite* in Harlem, or anything, including life insurance. Or just go shopping (Baldwin, 1985, p. 32).

Roediger's (2022) analysis reveals that some white working-class individuals, rather than allying with their economically disenfranchised black counterparts, chose to support and identify with the white majority, with whom they viewed as sharing a racial identity. This dynamic uncovers a psychological trade-off: the white working class are granted a sense of superiority and belonging that comes with their racial make-up, despite their economic hardships and shared commonality with non-white classmates. Roediger's observation, that "race feeling and the benefits conferred by whiteness made white Southern workers forget their 'practically identical interests' with the black poor", highlights how race can trump class solidarity. It demonstrates an underlying mechanism through which systemic racism operates, as it fosters divisions among the working class that ultimately serve the interests of the ruling class by preventing unified action against economic exploitation. "Fusco reminds her readers that 'racial identities are not only Black, Latino, Asian, Native American and so on; they are also white'. To ignore white ethnicity is to redouble its hegemony by naturalizing it" (Roediger, 2022, p. 69).

For this white student, the "psychological wage of whiteness" was evident in the mindset that could not accept white bodies as a statistical minority in a "ghetto" school. That would be tantamount to devaluing whiteness. In such musings of white minds, neither camaraderie nor scholastic achievements, despite their desirability, can supersede the imbibed racial superiority inscribed into white skin. In her book *The Origin of Others* (2017), Toni Morrison considers the threat that "black spaces" pose to white people. Morrison shows how Harriet Beecher Stowe bends over backwards to assure her white readers in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* that blacks are not dangerous. "Calm down, she says. Slaves control themselves. Don't be afraid. Negroes only want to serve. The slave's natural instinct, she implies, is toward kindness" (Morrison, 2017, p. 10). Despite this, Morrison argues that Stowe failed to conceal her own trepidation in regard to black spaces. "How, for example, do you make it safe in the nineteenth century to enter Black Space? Do you simply knock and enter? If unarmed, do you enter at all? Well, even if you are an innocent young boy, such as Master George, going to visit Uncle Tom and Aunt Chloe, you need excessive, benign signs of welcome, of safety" (Morrison, 2017, p. 10).

The "ghetto" school in question had fallen foul of failing to extend Morrison's "benign signs of welcome" hence the epithet "ghetto" levelled by the white majority. These "benign signs of welcome" are a raft of particular, tacit expectations required by the majority if they are to enter into Morrison's "Black Spaces" such as the "ghetto school". The "benign signs of welcome" in our research were often manifested in terms negative comparison—other schools and students behave differently and thus "fulfill" the criteria of the white-defined "benign signs of welcome". For instance, a teacher once exclaimed, "The students in school X [comparable to our "ghetto school"] appear to be much more integrated. They demonstrate better attitudes towards skiing and outdoor activities" (female teacher). These activities are considered quintessentially Norwegian and students in school X, with the same levels of ethnic diversity as the "ghetto school", were the beneficiaries of Morrison's (2017) "benign signs of welcome".

The portrayal of the "ghetto" school implies a biased diagnostic of how perceptions of educational environments are shaped by hegemonic cultural norms and the hidden expectations of the majority population. Morrison's concept of "benign signs of welcome" serves as a pivotal framework for understanding why the "ghetto school" was deemed deficient by the white majority, reflecting a broader societal averseness to engage with the realities of diversity and multiculturalism to which lip service is paid in the main. These "benign signs" entail specific behaviors and attitudes that the majority expects from minority groups (often black and brown) to create an inclusive environment; when these expectations are not met, as suggested by the negative comparisons made by educators, it reinforces stereotypes and stigmatizes the school and its students. The cited example from a teacher stressing the supposed superiority of students from another school, who are perceived to be more "integrated" because of their alleged openness towards skiing and the love of outdoor life, underscores how cultural activities are tethered to assumptions about legitimacy and belonging in Norwegian society. This couched bias operates under the assumption that achievement or merit in an educational setting is conditional upon conforming to white cultural practices, thus disseminating exclusionary narratives about schools serving chiefly minority populations. Ultimately, these machinations not only marginalize the students within the "ghetto school" but also negate the inherent value and contributions of their cultural identities, further cementing educational inequities along racial and ethnic lines.

The shared understanding of "benign signs of welcome" and the denigration of the "ghetto" school share commonalities with Benedict Anderson's concept of "imagined communities" wherein social constructs of belonging and identity are formed through shared narratives and communal sensitivities. Of particular interest and relevant to the female teacher's assertion, is Anderson's contention: "[…] nation-ness, as well as nationalism, are cultural artefacts of a particular kind" (Anderson, 2016, p. 4). Perhaps more significant, is Anderson's understanding that these cultural artefacts are never far away from notions of kinship. "It would, I think, make things easier if one treated it [nationalism] as if it belonged with 'kinship' and 'religion', rather than with 'liberalism' or 'fascism'" (Anderson, 2016, p. 5). Anderson further argues that nations are socially constructed communities,

where individuals perceive themselves as part of a larger entity despite the tenuous nature of these individuals' interpersonal connections.

> In an anthropological spirit, then, I propose the following definition of the nation: it is an imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion (Anderson, 2016, p. 6).

In the context of the "ghetto" school, the majority's expectations and standards for what constitutes a tolerable school environment are informed by an imagined community that valorizes white norms and behaviors—such as skiing and outdoor activities—as the benchmarks for inclusion. However, the idea that all white Norwegians embrace skiing or outdoor pursuits is itself an "imagined" assumption; as is the case, and to the chagrin of the imagined community of skiers and connoisseurs of the outdoor life, there are white Norwegians who eschew these activities, demonstrating that these cultural markers do not universally represent the white identity. This notion is often distilled in the often-heard aphorism, "Norwegians are born with skis on their feet". Non-white students in the "ghetto school" are subject to critical assessment based on their acquiescence to this constructed national passion for these outdoor activities. Their perceived failure to align with these expectations often results in punitive appraisals and further sidelining, illustrating how societal perceptions of belonging hinge on conforming to a constructed identity that is predominantly fashioned by the cultural practices of the majority.

This dynamic exposes the irony of imagined communities: while they are built on edifices of cherry-picked narratives, they enact inflexible canons that can unjustly alienate those who do not fit neatly within these boundaries, ultimately perpetuating systemic inequities and reinforcing divisions based on race and cultural identity. As was witnessed in the London riots this summer (August 2024), one is reminded of Anderson's nexus between race and class: "The dreams of racism have their origin in ideologies of class, rather than in those of nation: above all in claims to divinity among rulers and to 'blue' or 'white' blood and 'breeding' among aristocracies" (Anderson, 2016, p. 149). The latter applies to the white female student mentioned previously who, despite proud of her local class pedigree, could see no bonds of class solidarity with the new demographic of non-whites at the school. The Black-British historian, David Olusoga puts the cause of the London riots succinctly, "In each of the latter cases, the rioters were mobs of white men. The grievance that brought them on to the streets was the presence in their cities of non-white people" (Olusoga, 2024), and goes on to state:

> To put the violence directed at British Muslims, Black Britons and asylum seeking down to "legitimate grievances" is to fall for one of the most toxic and intentionally divisive falsehoods in the populist handbook: the myth that class and race are diametrically opposed, the assertion that non-white people have no class identity. In this distorted world view, the true working class are the "white working class", and the difficulties they face are not a consequences of political choices that affect everyone, irrespective of ethnicity, skin colour or faith, but of "elites" putting the needs of minority communities first. As if those minorities are not themselves working class. Boris Johnson's disastrous government pushed that falsehood whenever it got the chance (Olusoga, 2024).

Belonging is a psychological construct that involves the emotional experience of being an integral part of a social group or community, exemplified by feelings of acceptance, connection, and significance. It plays a critical role in individual identity configuration, social integration, and overall well-being. Guibernau (2013) delineates both a material and an emotional component to belonging.

> Material assets may include, among others: admittance to its premises (if it has some); access to information, leisure activities and events, and documents with an instrumental value, such as a passport or a membership card; as well as a range of ventures whose access is restricted to members. Non-material assets are exemplified by the emotional closeness, moral support and solidarity which generally arise among members of a group with a common goal (Guibernau, 2013, p. 28).

Statistics testify to the fact that Norway excels in regard to "granting" material belonging to non-white minorities defined by Statistics Norway with the rather cumbersome "children of immigrant parents born in Norway". The group with the highest percentage of individuals who are enrolled in higher education consists of Norwegian-born students with immigrant parents. Khrono, a Norwegian newspaper that primarily focuses on higher education, research, and academic affairs, ran the headline "Norwegians with immigrant parents pursue higher education more often than others" (Larsen, 2021). The report goes on to state that this demographic's participation rate is 10 percentage points higher than the average for the overall population and the population as a whole within the same age group. Among Norwegian-born men with immigrant parents, 27.9% pursue higher education, while the figures for females in this group is an impressive 37.1. This demographic accounts for 5.2% of all students in Norway within the 19–34 age range. Seen in light of Guibernau's (2013) belonging in terms of "material assets" such as "access to information [education]", clearly, Norway has laid the groundwork for successful integration of immigrants, a job which perhaps Norway does better than most other comparable countries. The Achilles heel of Norwegian integration, we contend, is the emotional aspect of belonging which is broached in the next segment.

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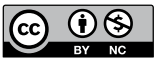

Chapter 2
Stigma to Empowerment in Schools

> Belonging fosters an emotional attachment; it prompts the expansion of the individual's personality to embrace the attributes of the group, to be loyal and obedient to it. In return, the group offers a "home", a familiar space—physical, virtual or imagined—where individuals share common interests, values and principles, or a project. Belonging provides them with access to an environment within which they matter (Guibernau, 2013, p. 28).

It would be easy to assume that the 2011 headline "Stop Apartheid" from Norway's national broadcaster, NRK, was addressing the enduring scars of Apartheid in South Africa or an issue rooted in the USA. On the contrary, and to the surprise of many, the headline was about a high school in Oslo called Bjerke, and the report stated, "Around 50 students at the school began the day by protesting against the controversial class division. This year's first-grade students have been divided according to ethnicity" (Wilden & Lie, 2011). Allocating high school students to classrooms solely on the basis of skin color fulfills all the criteria for classic racism where stigma is inscribed on non-white bodies that must be "quarantined" in ghettos, Bantustans, black sections of buses and, now in Norway, "classrooms for non-white students".

Michel Foucault discusses the concept of *tableaux vivants* in his book *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1977). In this work, Foucault analyses the ways in which power and control are employed within societies, particularly through institutions like prisons. The term *tableaux vivants* is used to describe the meticulous organization of space, activities and bodies in such a way that they become like "living pictures". In this setting, Foucault explores how individuals are made visible and are constantly monitored within these controlled environments, effectively transmuting their prearrangement and behavior into a form of spectacle that can be easily observed and controlled with allusion to Jeremy Bentham's panopticon. This concept relates to his broader analysis of how disciplinary mechanisms produce "docile bodies" that are conditioned to adhere to societal norms and expectations. The use of *tableaux vivants* exemplifies how visual ordering serves as a tool for exercising power and enforcing discipline, "[…] the base for a micro-physics of what might be called a 'cellular' power" (Foucault, 1977, p. 149). Foucault presciently extended this *tableaux vivant* to classrooms.

> Jean-Baptiste de La Salle dreamt of a classroom in which the spatial distribution might provide a whole series of distinctions at once: according to the pupils' progress, worth, character, application, cleanliness and parents' fortune… "Each of the pupils will have his

P. Thomas et al., *Education and Cultural Evolution in Norway's Multiethnic Society*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-89018-5_2

> place assigned to him and none of them will leave it or change it except on the order or with the consent of the school inspector." Things must be so arranged that "those whose parents are neglectful and verminous must be separated from those who are careful and clean; that an unruly and frivolous pupil should be placed between two who are well behaved and serious, a libertine either alone or between two pious pupils" (Foucault, 1977, p. 146).

At Bjerke school, this modus operandi of control was unmistakable in the intentional separation of students based on ethnicity, reflecting Foucault's notion of disciplinary power. He describes how classrooms historically were arranged to enforce distinctions—by progress, behavior, or even cleanliness—turning the physical space into an instrument for social stratification. Likewise, Bjerke's segregation inscribed racial differences into the classroom setup, marking non-white students as "other". This spatial organization, presumably for the purpose of managing diversity, perpetuated inequality by implanting systemic discrimination into the very fabric of the school environment. However, this attempt at control ultimately failed. Students, irrespective of skin color, resisted, refusing to become compliant bodies within the school's spatial segregation. Their protests exposed the fundamental racial biases driving such policies and triggered national scrutiny. Foucault's theory underscores the danger of using spatial arrangements to reinforce power dynamics, particularly when they marginalize vulnerable groups. Bjerke's case reveals how such mechanisms of control can backfire, underscoring the importance of fostering inclusive spaces that challenge, rather than perpetuate, systems of exclusion.

Fortunately, the Apartheid-inspired attempt at imposing a *tableaux vivant* based on pigmentation backfired. The black and white bodies refused to be docile. Some of these black and white students had grown up and attended lower secondary together before applying to Bjerke school. Once they realize what the school authorities were doing, they protested together and garnered national and international attention. The authorities had rather naively hoped to accomplish their mission without attracting any attention, however, they were soon forced to explain their actions. It is important, commensurate with our aim of fleshing out the nexus between belonging, integration and schooling in Norway to reproduce one official's rationale for the ethnic segregation of the classrooms. Our intention is not to stigmatize the perpetrators but understand their thinking and how their racially motivated biases feed into the proliferation of "ghetto schools" where students of color may react by choosing to self-segregate.

> Hanna Norum Eliassen, head of the specialization in general studies at Bjerke High School, tells *Dagsavisen* [Norwegian newspaper] that the decision to keep the ethnically Norwegian students more together was a difficult but deliberate choice. According to Eliassen, the reason is that the proportion of ethnically Norwegian students has declined over time and currently stands at around 30 percent. "Last school year, this led to the three first-year classes in the specialization having two classes with eight ethnically Norwegian students and one class with nine", she explains (Wilden, 2011).

There is, clearly, a phobia of non-Nordic bodies at play in this case and perhaps other cases where the phenomenon of white flight is evident. At Bjerke School, discussions surrounding the potential segregation of students into ethnic classrooms have prompted us to advocate for a closer scrutiny of the phenomenon of what we,

for lack of a better term, refer to as "Nordophilia". With the percentage of Nordic students falling to just 30% at Bjerke prompting "Nordophiliac" knee-jerk solutions, it is crucial to explore how such demographic alterations may unconsciously reinforce societal preferences for Nordic identities and features. In the NrK report, Professor of Law, Henning Jakhelln, is quoted as saying:

> "This is the purest form of apartheid. This is segregation and not integration in Norwegian public schools. I can tolerate many things, but this is completely unacceptable", says the professor, who specializes in human rights and education law (Wilden, 2011).

While the crystal-clear utterance from the Professor of Law is laudable, the damage was done. Several students at the "ghetto" school where our research (i.e. ghetto school) was based 2 years after the Bjerke incident, stated that this was one reason they gravitated to the "ghetto" school in 2013. The statement highlights a major moral crisis in pockets of the education system. It calls into question the ethical consequences of segregating students based on ethnicity or race and stresses the urgent need for an inclusive approach grounded in genuine equality and justice. One student responded that while it was important for the custodians of Norwegian law to pronounce their denunciations of the Bjerke case, legal adjudications could never substitute for a genuine sense of emotional belonging. "There is nothing to discuss anymore. We know when we are not wanted" (Male, 18 years-old, Pakistani background). In extreme cases of denying belonging, it should come as no surprise that visible minorities choose alienation which can spiral further downwards into destructive habits, according to Guibernau (2013):

> A sense of belonging provides the strongest antidote against alienation and aloneness. Membership of a group—be it the nation, a faith or any other type of community or organization—offers a point of reference to the individual, who is now able to transcend his or her own limited existence by sharing some common interests, objectives and characteristics with fellow-members (Guibernau, 2013, p. 65).

John Rawls' theory of justice, formulated in his seminal work "A Theory of Justice", offers a framework for crafting a just society by centering fairness as the primary principle of social cooperation. At the core of Rawls' philosophy is the concept of the "original position", where individuals choose principles of justice behind a "veil of ignorance". This veil masks knowledge of one's own social status, race, gender, or personal circumstances, with a view towards ensuring that the principles nominated are fair and equitable for all members of society. "The principles of justice are chosen behind a veil of ignorance. This ensures that no one is advantaged or disadvantaged in the choice of principles by the outcome of natural chance or the contingency of social circumstances. Since all are similarly situated and no one is able to design principles to favor his particular condition" (Rawls, 1971, p. 11).

However, in the context of the situation at Bjerke School, it can be argued that a "veil of Nordophilia" obfuscates the true original position that Rawls aspires to. Instead of making choices that valorize the common good and encourage inclusivity, the proclivities towards Nordic identities and "attributes" can lead to the segregation of students based on ethnicity. This preference for Nordic traits represents a deeper societal bias that prioritizes race over equity, effectively overriding Rawlsian

ideals of justice. This "veil of Nordophilia" suggests that the prevailing admiration for Nordic identities creates an environment where the needs and rights of non-Nordic students are overlooked. The esteem for Nordic features and culture hamstrings the moral imperative to ensure equal treatment and access to quality education for all students, regardless of background. The school's policies, which may be justified under the pretense of maintaining cultural identity, ultimately reflect a more sinister form of racism that prioritizes the experiences of white parents and students. In this light, the landscapes of ethnic enclaves in schools in Oslo and other cities are reprehensible monuments to the failure to arrive at Rawls' original position, as the very principles (original position and veil of ignorance) meant to guide decision-making are influenced by racial biases and societal preferences. Rather than fostering an educational space where all students are treated with fairness and dignity, the practices being adopted serve to reinforce divisions and perpetuate systemic inequalities.

Consequently, the argument surfaces that race, particularly in the form of "Nordophilia", eclipses the ideals of justice and equity that Rawls seeks to uphold. When policies and practices are driven by a preference for one group's identity over another, the foundational principles of fairness are thwarted. The professor's strong rebuke echoes this sentiment, urging a review of how Norway addresses issues of race and identity within its educational frameworks. There is an urgent need to strip down these veils that obscure the vision of a truly inclusive and just society, wherein every student, irrespective of their ethnic background, can thrive and feel a sense of belonging.

Erving Goffman's analyses of both "stigma" (1963) and the "performativity" or "presentation of self in everyday life" (1959) are apposite to the task of understanding the observed behaviors of the students at the "ghetto" school. To begin with, it is important to note that the students at this school proudly referred to their school as the "ghetto" school. While initially recalcitrant, given the pejorative connotation inherent in the designation, all teachers at this school would quickly learn that this was a term of endearment among the students. Statements such as the one below were common:

> I was shocked to see so many foreigners in the beginning. Norwegians don't want to come here because it is a "Black school". Some say this is the "ghetto". The Norwegians are afraid that their grades and language skills will suffer here. But after some time, I made friends here and the teachers are really good, so I feel I fit in here. It's not as bad as the media hype paints it (Male, 16, of Iraqi origin).

As a teacher engaged in participant observation at the school, it was obvious to the lead author that these students made no bones about the fact that they wanted all interlocutors to acknowledge that this school was different from other schools in Norway. In fact, during the lead author's job interview for a position at the school, the deputy head asked, "Have you seen the school playground? The students look like you". As a black man with roots in Africa, the blunt reference to the elephant in the room was perturbing given the preference for couching such "uncomfortable" facts in euphemisms and the language of colorblindness in Norway, among others.

Upon meeting the students, the directness of the deputy head was understandable. The students appeared to work consensually to "educate" newcomers about the anomalous nature of this school. There was no pretense, fanfare or hint of diplomacy. This was their "ghetto" school which they were proud of and determined to perpetuate whatever they meant by this epithet. It was clear that we were expected to follow their cue. "Regardless of the particular objective which the individual has in mind and of his motive for having this objective, it will be in his interests to control the conduct of the others, especially their responsive treatment of him" (Goffman, 1959, p. 15).

Parallel to the above performativity on the part of the students, was the displeasure, censure and frustration on the part of the overwhelmingly white teaching and administrative staff. On several occasions, teachers could be heard openly voicing their frustrations at the students and the conditions the teachers had to work under. Exasperated, one male teacher said aloud: "This school is just a storage box (Norwegian: *oppbevaringsboks*) for the parents". The students' attempts at weaving a particular performative and "transgressive" identity at the self-styled "ghetto" school met resistance in the white staff rooms. There was a constant thug of war of sorts between the two parties in pushing for a hegemonic definition of the school, and hence whether it "belonged" to these majority non-white students or white teachers. Belonging at the school was discursively forged in the interstices of the fractious forces of inclusion and exclusion, where students and staff engaged in a thorny negotiation of identity within the educational space. Goffman posits the following definition of stigma:

> While the stranger is present before us, evidence can arise of his possessing an attribute that makes him different from others in the category of persons available for him to be, and of a less desirable kind—in the extreme, a person who is quite thoroughly bad, or dangerous, or weak. He is this reduced in our minds from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one. Such an attribute is a stigma (Goffman, 1963, p. 12).

The students, particularly those identifying with non-white backgrounds, endeavored to carve out their own performative and "transgressive" identities amidst a backdrop of dominant norms levied by an overwhelmingly white teaching and administrative staff. This enacted an edgy dynamic where the students' attempts to assert their agency and express their cultural identities were met with occasional resistance from teachers who openly voiced their frustrations, exemplified by the male teacher's comment that the school serves merely as a "storage box for the parents". After all, few teachers, as custodians of the status quo, wish their school to be called a "ghetto" school. Consequently, this tug-of-war manifests itself as a struggle over the school's identity, as both parties wrestle for the right to define the school, leading to a contested space where belonging is not merely granted but must be continuously negotiated. As the students' lexes are challenged, rebutted and negotiated, they are simultaneously compelled to navigate the constraints of exclusion while seeking pathways to inclusion, ultimately shaping a complex landscape of belonging marked by resilience, resistance, and the ever-present tension between

conformity and self-assertion. It is this conceptualization of belonging that Antonsich (2010) seeks to highlight:

> I argue that belonging should be analyzed as a personal, intimate, feeling of being "at home" in a place (place-belongingness) and as a discursive resource that constructs, claims, justifies, or resists forms of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion (politics of belonging). The risk of focusing only on one of these two dimensions is to fall in the trap of either a socially de-contextualized individualism or an all-encompassing social(izing) discourse (Antonsich, 2010, p. 644).

One way in which the students felt "at home" was in employing "kebab norsk" [kebab Norwegian]. Kebab, of course, refers to variety of grilled meat dishes that originated in the Middle East and are popular in many regions around the world. "Kebab norsk" is a colloquial term used in Norway to refer to a form of Norwegian language or slang that coopts words from immigrant languages, mainly from the Middle East and North Africa. It often features a mix of Norwegian and words or phrases borrowed from other languages, along with distinct expressions, intonations, and vernacular influenced by the diverse backgrounds of Norwegian residents. The term "kebab" here is not necessarily offensive but exhibits the influence of multiculturalism in Norway, particularly in urban areas where immigrant communities have grown significantly. Kebab norsk represents the linguistic merging that arises in multicultural environments, showcasing how language evolves and adapts within diverse populations. However, the usage of the term can sometimes carry negative connotations, particularly when used by those who may view it as a dilution of "standard" Norwegian language. Teachers would frown at the cavalier use of "kebab norsk" in the school but this was the students' way of letting them know they were proud of their "ghetto" school.

The use of the term "kebab norsk" is intentional and carefully contextualized to reflect its colloquial use in Norway. We investigate its cultural and linguistic implication as a sociolect correlated with second-generation migrants, particularly those of Middle Eastern and North African descent. By situating the term within its broader sociocultural context, we acknowledge both its role in shaping identity and its potential for negative connotations. We highlight how students used "kebab norsk" as a form of community pride, even reclaiming it as a marker of their shared experience, despite the disapproval it sometimes received in institutional settings like schools.

This phenomenon is not unique to Norway. Similar sociolects have surfaced in other culturally diverse contexts, revealing how marginalized or minority groups create linguistic spaces to express their identities. For example, in Sweden, "Rinkeby Swedish" is a sociolect spoken in immigrant-heavy neighborhoods, merging Swedish with words and phrases from immigrant languages. In Germany, "Kiezdeutsch" has developed in urban areas with significant immigrant populations, absorbing elements from Turkish, Arabic, and other languages into German. In the United States, African American Vernacular English (AAVE) serves a similar role as both a cultural marker and a subject of sociolinguistic debate.

In all these contexts, such sociolects are powerful examples of how language evolves in multicultural societies, serving as both an empowering tool and a locus

of tension. By framing "kebab norsk" within this global linguistic phenomenon, we seek to approach the topic with sensitivity in regard to its nuanced role, avoiding uncritical usage and ensuring that it is understood as a reflection of multiculturalism and identity rather than a value judgment. Furthermore, throughout the book, we have extended this careful approach to other communities, such as using terms like "Sami", "Kvens", and "Forest Finns", with cultural and historical respect, and balancing people-first or identity-first language depending on the preferences of the communities discussed. These choices exemplify our commitment to inclusive, respectful, and accurate representation across diverse cultural and linguistic groups.

In the manner described above, the students at the "ghetto" school flipped the narrative imbued in the stigmatized "immigrant" school transvaluating it from a source of stigma into an emblem of empowerment. They demonstrated resilience in ignoring mainstream societal prejudices, proudly espousing and reconstructing such discriminatory labels into "badges of honor". "Instead of leaning on their crutch, they get to play golf with it" (Goffman, 1963, p. 39). Wimmer (2013, p. 57) calls this process "transvaluation"—one in which traditionally stigmatized and devalued groups become agents in reclaiming their identities. One white Norwegian student shared that he enrolled at the "ghetto" school because he taught it was "cool" that the students developed and were proud of their own subculture which some of his people would have loved to "deport" along with his classmates. Among others, this student mentioned his love for Hip Hop and the artists Magdi Omar Ytreeide Abdelmaguid and Chirag Rashmikant Patel (Karpe Diem until 2017). A sample from one of their songs demonstrates why this popular rap group were almost de rigueur at the "ghetto" school.

> Comes to your country, brings a bunch of crap
> Sells hash and kebab to your child
> They live where you live, and it's starting to get dangerous
> Because yesterday your daughter came home with someone named Ali
> He had a BMW, and it was quite shiny
> Hair parted with gel and Buffalo shoes
> You do what you should and throw him out the door
> Because you can't imagine your daughter going with a veil
> It's wild times in Tigerstaden [the tiger city, Oslo]
> And if you're a little bit brown, you're a little bit Bin Laden
> (Karpe Diem; *The art of being an Indian*, from the album *Glasskår* (shards of glass), 2004)

Such is the influence of Karpe Diem that an entire master's thesis explored the themes of belonging and hybridity that characterizes these artists' own backgrounds and lyrics. In her thesis with the title *Alle setting, alle koder, alle rom: A study of cultural hybridity in Karpe's "Kunsten å være inder and Iboprofen"* (2022), Ingrid Johanne Tøftvang writes:

> In this way, the "descendants" gain access to cultural references that are part of their identity but that they might not see or hear much of elsewhere in society. Karpe demonstrates how multicultural belonging is brought to the forefront as a natural part of "Norwegian" culture, making non-native slang in the Norwegian language "cool" at the same time (Tøftvang, 2022, p. 10).

At the heart of Goffman's (1963) theory of stigma is the work that stigmatized individuals resort to in order to manage social identities that have been devalued by mainstream society. Interestingly, and with due respect for the sensitivities of the stigmatized, Goffman (1963) uses the metaphor of "disability". Allowance must be made for the fact that Goffman was writing in the 1950s and 1960s.

> The blind, the deaf, the crippled can never be sure what the attitude of a new acquaintance will be, whether it will be rejective or accepting, until the contact has been made. This is exactly the position of the Negro, the second-generation immigrant, the socially mobile person and the woman who has entered a predominantly masculine occupation (Goffman, 1963, p. 25).

Rather than strive to hide their "disabilities" inflicted by the white majority, the students create a "safe space" in the "ghetto" school where Karpe Diem, Kaveh and other rap artists become their role models and voice their frustration through the medium of rap music. More importantly, the "cool" music injects a newfound sense of "kebab power" or "brown power" elevating the oppressed immigrants through solidarity with Black American culture which has burst the banks of its confines in the "ghettos" of the USA and become a global cultural phenomenon. Rather than kowtowing to societal prejudices ("yes masa"), they embrace their identities and use their art as a means to reclaim narratives, transforming stigma into a source of pride and empowerment. This act of reclamation is critical, as it suggests that individuals have the agency to rewrite their stories, redefining the terms of their identities in a society that may otherwise ostracize them.

Of particular interest in this process of transvaluation (Wimmer, 2013) was a 15-year-old Albanian girl who had phenotypically Nordic features. As the students began to socialize during an excursion and become acquainted in the first year, many were taken aback to hear this girl proclaim rather loudly that she was Albanian, and not Norwegian. Once again, and paradoxically, as Goffman (1963) observes, an individual's true group often comprises those who share analogous stigmas, generating a bond through common experiences of marginalization, while at the same time transmuting that very stigma into a source of strength. "This control is achieved largely by influencing the definition of the situation which the others come to formulate, and he can influence this definition by expressing himself in such a way as to give them the kind of impression that will lead them to act voluntarily in accordance with his own plan" (Goffman, 1959, p. 15).

While caution must be exercised, there are some, limited parallels in the dynamics behind the appropriation of the word "ghetto" among these students and "nigger/nigga" as employed among African Americans in the USA. The latter has historically been deployed as a deeply derogatory racial slur, piggybacking on centuries of white hatred of black bodies encapsulated in slavery, Jim Crow and contemporary police brutality. While it obviously highlights a legacy of racism and dehumanization, the epithet has also been reappropriated within some segments of the Black community. The makeover into "nigga" serves as a colloquial term among peers, representing a sense of camaraderie and solidarity. This reclamation of language grants individuals the right to assert their agency and redefine their identity,

endeavoring to dissociate the term of its repressive roots and recontextualize it within a framework of empowerment. Blacks took a word that signified worthlessness and degradation and rendered it impotent (Vershawn, 2007).

In summary, it was clear that the "ghetto" school itself became a synecdoche of refuge, respite and empowerment for the non-white marginalized youth. They not only crafted a unique cultural identity but also converted a source of potential stigma into a symbol of pride and defiance not dissimilar to the poet T.S. Eliot's (1969, p. 30) "Cousin Nancy":

> Miss Nancy Ellicott
> Strode across the hills and broke them,
> Rode across the hills and broke them –
> The barren New England hills –
> Riding to hounds
> Over the cow-pasture
>
> Miss Nancy Ellicott smoked
> And danced all the modern dances;
> And her aunts were not quite sure how they felt about it,
> But they knew that it was modern.
>
> Upon the glazen shelves kept watch
> Matthew and Waldo, guardians of the faith,
> The army of unalterable law.

Cousin Nancy represented something new, unconventional and threatening to the old New England order embodied in Matthew Arnold and Ralph Waldo Emerson, who can only stand passively and watch "Cousin Nancy" stride across the hills and break them. The focus is not "Old England" but the "New England" hills of USA, "the new world". Here was a woman heralding the dawn of the contemporary modern era, smoking and dancing all the modern dances. Clearly, something similar has been happening at the "ghetto" school in Oslo. The old guard, represented by the Arnold's and Emerson's of the Norwegian "old order" are reduced to spectators. The students stride assertively in their own culturally hybrid landscape, transforming stigma into pride and creating a new narrative of empowerment. In both cases, modernity throws up uncertainty for purists, who can only watch as new identities and expressions forge a path forward, challenging and restructuring the very foundations of cultural norms.

Perhaps one concrete token of the presence of "Cousin Nancy" was a day when the sport of Cricket came to the "ghetto" school. One English adviser at the school, knowing that many of the students' parents came from India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, among others, decided to arrange a Cricket competition with another school with a similar demographic. Serendipitously, the principal of the other school was also an Englishman and played Cricket. The big day came. The lead author had the advantage of attending an Anglo-boarding school in India and was captain of his Cricket team. It was not long before the teams were laboring to outcompete the other measured in runs, wickets and run outs. It soon dawned on us that we forfeited the cheers of the Norwegian staff because they had no clue what was happening. One came up to the author later and said, "Perhaps you members of the British

Commonwealth should have given us a crash course on what 'how's that' means and when we should have clapped".

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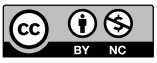

Chapter 3
Beyond Sarees and Samosas: Authentic Multicultural Education

Once or twice a year, many schools in Norway with sizable minority background students celebrate their cultural diversity. While this is laudable, some of the activities and events that are supposed to promote diversity paradoxically descend into caricatures of the cultures. Belly dancing, for instance, a popular fixture in such shows becomes a superficial, tokenistic portrayal of Middle Eastern culture—the "diversity" taken to new levels with a white, Norwegian belly dancer in one school. For the discerning spectator earnestly striving to broaden horizons of learning, the sensuous hip gyrations set to the rhythm of Arabian drumbeats can only serve to further reify prejudices about "lusty Arabs" and "72 virgins in paradise". Edward Said (1978) reminds us that Orientalism was first invented in academia. "Anyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient—and this applies whether the person is an anthropologist, sociologist, historian, or philologist—either in its specific or its general aspects, is an Orientalist, and what he or she does is Orientalism" (Said, 1978, p. 2).

Obviously, schoolteachers do not fall under the strict category of Orientalists but can inadvertently contribute to reinforcing stereotypes that are Orientalist. How many in the Arab world would name belly dancing in a list of top five cultural symbols representative of their diverse and rich heritage? While the entrance of a belly dancer might be seen as a fitting entertainment choice at a Lebanese restaurant in Oslo, its introduction in educational settings is quite different, as students approaching puberty might feel uncomfortable with the associated sexual innuendos. This is not to disparage belly dancing but to argue that when schools include belly dancing as a detached ingredient of multiculturalism, it risks reducing rich and diverse cultures to simplistic, exotic stereotypes. There is a place where the depth and significance of the art form can be appreciated, but the coupling of belly dancing to multicultural education is unfortunate. By turning it into a spectacle for Western audiences, the dance may be stripped of its authenticity and value, operating simply as an exoticized act that shores up clichés rather than fostering genuine cultural appreciation and understanding. Said defines Orientalism:

P. Thomas et al., *Education and Cultural Evolution in Norway's Multiethnic Society*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-89018-5_3

> Taking the late eighteenth century as a very roughly defined starting point Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient—dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it, in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient (Said, 1978, p. 3).

Inadvertently, the schools then become complicit in the act of producing a particular image of the Orient, as Said argues building on Michel Foucault's notion of knowledge and power. "In brief, because of Orientalism the Orient was not (and is not) a free subject of thought and action" (Said, 1978, p. 3). It is for this reason that the government set up organizations such as IMDi, The Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi) in Norway with a mandate to work towards and promote integration and diversity across the country. Their primary role is to implement government policy relating to the integration of immigrants and improve inclusion within Norwegian society. IMDi assists in the development and implementation of initiatives that support employment, education, and community participation for immigrants, thereby facilitating their successful integration. Minority-background advisers have been positioned in some of these schools where minority-background students are now a majority—a phenomenon which has seen seismic growth in recent years. This agency undoubtedly has done much praiseworthy work in its stated aim of improving the integration of immigrants. Our research group *Minorities and Education* have often invited one of their advisors to our annual seminar to enrich our work. However, even IMDi falls into the trap of reproducing Orientalism:

> IMDi's 59 diversity consultants (formerly minority consultants) are deployed in secondary schools, some junior high schools, and adult education centers across all counties in the country. The diversity counsellors support young people and adults who are, or are at risk of becoming, or subjected to negative social control and/or honor-related violence, including forced marriage and female genital mutilation. An important part of the diversity advisers' mandate is to enhance the competence of school staff and other services (IMDi, 2023, p. 5).

There is the embedded trope of social negative control of children and females in minority cultures among many Norwegians. By mentioning these very same issues as its first order of business, the stereotypes are further cemented in the public eye when IMDi lends gravitas to these issues. Would IMDi state something similar in relation to majority white Norwegian schools? By focusing primarily on these specific issues, the agency might kowtow to a narrative that frames schools such as our "ghetto" school as largely facing problems such as forced marriage and female genital mutilation. This emphasis can overshadow the diverse experiences and positive contributions of these communities, reducing them to a set of challenges rather than celebrating their rich cultural diversity and successes. There is the added fear that such a problematic lens may further essentialize and hence racialize such issues as intrinsically non-white, commensurate with Gyatri Spivak's "White men are saving brown women from brown men" (Spivak, 1994, p. 93).

Another caricature of so-called "diversity day" celebrations was a "cat-walk" where students could don and display national costumes from the countries of their parents' origin. Students were cheered on wildly as they "strutted their stuff" with

Sarees from India, *Salwar Kameez* from Pakistan, Eritrean women's *Zuria* national costume and the Chinese *Hanfu*, to name a few. While a case can be made for the exhibition of national costumes to be more "educational" than belly dancing, there were no attempts at education in the form of explaining the origin of the costumes. While such celebrations aim to celebrate diversity, they once again sadly reenact Orientalist practices by reducing the rich histories of countries to simple visual displays. This approach often neglects the rich histories and meanings behind these garments, and can reinforce stereotypes by presenting an oversimplified and exoticized view of cultural identities.

When the cheering students were asked where the costumes were from, most didn't have a clue and shared that they were more interested in seeing their friends flaunt their attire. Such stage shows risk turning cultural traditions into mere spectacle, accenting their "otherness" rather than fostering deep understanding and respect. This echoes classic Orientalist tendencies, where the "East" is depicted as exotic and different, often disconnected from its context and depth. To counter this, schools could integrate educational elements that explore the meaning and origins of the apparel, as well as the contemporary lives and contributions of these cultural groups, ensuring that diversity is celebrated in a way that honors the full narrative and complexity of each culture. By doing so, schools can move beyond shallow displays and cultivate a more authentic appreciation of multiculturalism. Habib and Ward (2020) point out how predetermining young people's identities and sense of belonging to set labels just doesn't capture who they really are.

> As Habib and Ward (2019) have previously argued, young people today experience many "diverse and contradictory discourses as they come to understand place and their own positionality; they both ascribe to narratives and construct counter-narratives" (p. 276), which are, of course, never fully realized as the process is continual. Or, putting it more precisely, Marcu (2014) states that "the world is constantly changing, and thus our sense of home and belonging is constantly readapting and readjusting to the new realities" (Habib & Ward, 2020, p. 39).

Breidlid's (2012) critique targets the ways Western epistemology, through its colonial heritage, continues to marginalize and "Other" non-Western cultures by determining what counts as knowledge or culture. *In Education, Indigenous Knowledges, and Development in the Global South* (2012), he considers how hegemonic frameworks refute the diversity and validity of alternative epistemologies, turning them into caricatures or fragments that fit into Western narratives. In this light, the use of belly dancing in schools—disconnected from its broader cultural significance and historical context—becomes symbolic of what Breidlid terms the "Othering" process. It positions Middle Eastern culture as exotic and static, offering students a distorted view that aligns with Orientalist stereotypes rather than challenging them.

Breidlid's critique echoes with Edward Said's insights in Orientalism, where Said highlights how the West constructs the Orient as a site of sensuality, irrationality, and backwardness. Likewise, the performance of belly dancing in an educational setting can be seen as perpetuating these stereotypes, reducing a rich and diverse cultural heritage to a crude, sexualized trope. For Breidlid, such

interpretations are not neutral; they emerge from and contribute to a broader system of epistemological domination that privileges Western ways of knowing and representing the world. In his exploration, these practices alienate individuals from their own cultural roots by reconfiguring them into objects of entertainment or spectacle for a Western audience.

> This inferiorization or Othering was done in terms of race, gender, knowledges, and education systems, whereas hegemonic epistemology was, in the wake of modernity, hailed as the savior and the only means with which to achieve progress and development. The Othering not only alienated students in school but also defined what kind of development to pursue in the reconstruction of the South after the demise of colonialism (Breidlid, 2013, p. 7).

To transcend such tokenism, Breidlid (2012) urges a deeper interrogation of the narratives that underpin educational practices. He advocates for an approach that recognizes the validity of multiple epistemologies, fostering a more inclusive and equitable understanding of cultural diversity. Schools, in this vision, would become spaces where students critically engage with their own and others' cultures, challenging the stereotypes and power dynamics embedded in hegemonic frameworks. The inclusion of activities like belly dancing would need to be contextualized within a broader exploration of Middle Eastern history, art, and identity, shifting the focus from performance to understanding.

In his book *Familiar Stranger* (2017) the eminent Jamaican-born British sociologist, Stuart Hall writes about his gradual discovery that identity and belonging are fluid, shifting concepts contrary to society's attempts to interpellate (Althusser) individuals into personally or genetically predetermined identities. It is a myth to perceive identity as "taking us back to our roots" like "a set of fixed attributes, the unchanging essence of the inner self" (Hall, 2017a, 2017b, p. 16). Rather, "Identity is always a never-completed *process* of becoming—a process of shifting *identifications,* rather than a singular, complete, finished state of being" (Hall, 2017a, 2017b, p. 16). Belly dancing and the "catwalk of national costumes" morph into lazy attempts to "take the students back to their roots". No one asked the students whether they identify with these "roots". Stuart Hall (2017a, 2017b) mentions how he, along with other intellectuals such as V.S. Naipaul, "first became *West Indian* in London" (Hall, 2017a, 2017b, p. 449).

Stuart Hall's subtle insights into the plasticity of identity echoes Foucault's concept of power as both fruitful and productive. When Hall asserts that identity is a never-completed process of becoming he highlights the fact that our identities are shaped by interactions with others rather than being fixed or predetermined. This dynamic is further illustrated by the fact that the term "West Indian" was a hegemonic imposition upon Hall and V.S. Naipaul by majority white society, rather than being a label they chose for themselves. Such impositions reflect a power structure that attempts to define and restrict identities based on societal norms and expectations. In a similar vein, belly dancing and the "catwalk of national costumes" also become Foucauldian attempts at straightjacketing fluid identities into receptacles of pre-selected sizes and shapes. These chimeric symbols of culture assume a static view of identity, portraying it in carnival-like terms without engaging with the

complexities of individual experiences or self-identification. By reducing diverse backgrounds to simplistic cultural performances, these practices mirror Foucault's assertion that power not only represses but also tries to enclose and define—creating categories that individuals must navigate, often disregarding their own nuanced identities. In asking whether the planers consulted with the students we are echoing the sentiments expressed in Amin Malouf's (1996) views:

> One's first reflex is not to flaunt one's difference but to try to pass unnoticed. The secret dream of most migrants is to be taken for "natives". Their first temptation is to imitate their hosts, and sometimes they succeed in doing so. But more often they fail. They haven't got the right accent, the right shade of skin, the right first name, the right family name or the proper papers, so they are soon found out. A lot of them know it's no use even trying, and out of pride or bravado make themselves out to be more different than they really are (Malouf, 1996, pp. 38, 39).

Foucault challenges us to think about power not as a brutal force that merely dominates and torments but as something deeply intrinsic to the systems and symbols that shape how we understand ourselves and others. He argues that power operates by creating categories and norms that seem natural but are actually constructed. These categories, such as the labels imposed on identities or the structured presentations of culture, serve as tools for organizing and regulating people's lives. Take, for example, cultural displays like belly dancing or national costumes. They might appear festive and innocent but often serve as instruments of power, reducing complex, fluid identities into rigid, pre-approved symbols. Foucault helps us see that such practices aren't just harmless manifestations of culture; they are ways power works to define what is "acceptable" or "authentic". By framing identities in this way, power makes it harder for individuals to express the full scope of who they are, straightjacketing them into roles or narratives chosen by others. In this sense, Foucault reveals how power not only shapes but also confines identity, often without us even realizing it.

If belly dancing and fashion shows fail to serve as appropriate depictions of multicultural education, what robust and meaningful strategies can we propose as alternatives? In what follows, we have been inspired by the work of the "father of multicultural education", James Banks. Banks (2009, p. 15) introduced the Dimensions of Multicultural Education to aid educators and researchers in conceptualizing and fostering practices, theories, and frameworks related to multicultural education. The five dimensions are: (1) knowledge construction; (2) the knowledge construction process (3) prejudice reduction; (4) an equity pedagogy; and (5) an empowering school culture and social structure (Fig. 3.1).

Knowledge construction deals with how teachers help students to understand, investigate, and determine how the implicit cultural assumptions, frames of reference, perspectives, and biases within a discipline influence the ways in which knowledge is constructed. As a teacher in the "ghetto" school, the lead author in one class received feedback from the students to the effect that the English short stories featuring in the textbooks portrayed non-Westerners and non-whites in a derogatory manner. To begin with, this seemed far-fetched and unwarranted. Why would the selection of short stories intentionally promote prejudice against non-white people?

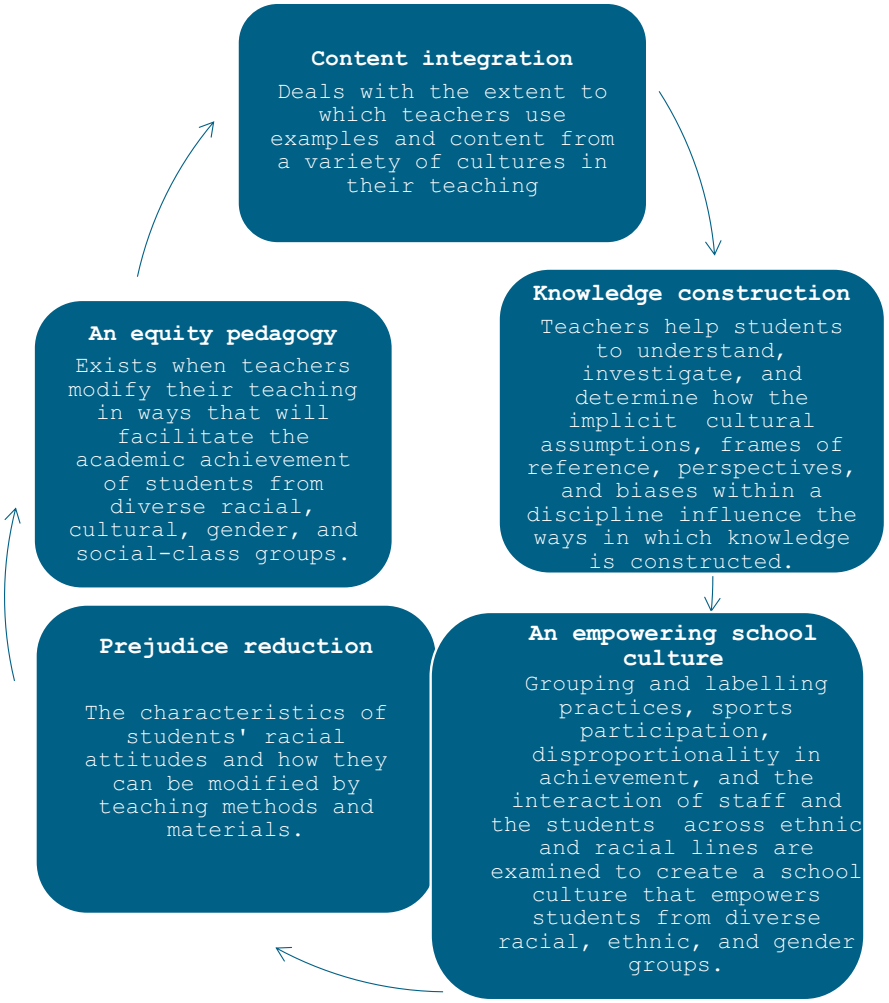

Fig. 3.1 Banks's five dimensions of multicultural education

That would be counterproductive. However, a brief perusal through the stories confirmed the students' concerns, which they claimed was one reason for their lack of motivation. Such was the scale of the challenge that the lead author conducted scientific research on the topic which resulted in the publication of a peer-reviewed article published in *Cogent Education* (Taylor & Francis)[1] with the title "The portrayal of non-westerners in EFL textbooks in Norway" (2017). A few examples

[1] Thomas, P. (2017). The portrayal of non-westerners in EFL textbooks in Norway. *Cogent Education*, *4*(1), 1275411.

will be considered to build on the theme of Orientalism and show how the short stories indeed upend Banks's (2009) ideal of knowledge construction.

In "The Palmist" by Andrew Lam, an elderly Chinese-American man, the palmist, offers a free palm reading to a cynical American teenager on a bus, accenting their contrasting worlds. Lam taps into this meeting to illustrate themes of age versus youth, cultural differences, and the tension between rationality and mysticism, portraying the palmist as a pathetic, archaic figure struggling with modern life. Through this interaction, Lam reinforces prejudice by representing the palmist as a passive, inert figure within a hegemonic narrative, thereby perpetuating stereotypes about Eastern identities. Said (1978) reminds us that "Almost without exception, every Orientalist began his career as a philologist" (Said, 1978, p. 98). The domain of philology concerns itself with examining the evolution of languages, linguistics, literature, and the cultural context surrounding texts. Equally important is the analysis of texts, their meanings, and the historical context in which they were produced. Said (1978) goes on to add:

> From the outset, then, Orientalism carried forward two traits: (1) a newly found scientific self-consciousness based on the linguistic importance of the Orient to Europe, and (2) a proclivity to divide, subdivide, and redivide its subject matter without ever changing its mind about the Orient as being always the same, unchanging, uniform, and radically peculiar object (Said, 1978, p. 98).

Returning to Banks's (2009) knowledge construction, here (i.e. The Palmist) we are dealing with not so much the omission of such multicultural texts, but the distortion or Orientalist coloration of the selected texts. The content to be integrated becomes the channel for disseminating knowledge that cements stereotypes and hegemonic narratives about Eastern cultures.

In the context of Lam's story, Lam becomes the Orientalist philologist, analyzing the language and representations used in the interaction between the Chinese palmist and the teenager. Despite the psalmist living in the USA for a long time, he is portrayed as if he stepped off the proverbial "boat" the day before, amplifying his otherness. By focusing solely on the exoticism and inscrutability of Eastern identities without acknowledging the complexities and realities of those cultures, he risks framing Eastern societies as the unassimilable "Other" perpetuating a one-dimensional view that aligns with colonial attitudes. This approach marginalizes authentic voices from Eastern cultures and reinforces a Western-centric perspective, which Said critiques as a form of cultural imperialism.

So how did the lead author grapple with the conundrum of biased representation raised by the students? Inspired by the postcolonial genre of the *Empire Writes Back,* it was decided, in consensus with the students, that they would write counter-narratives where the denigrated would now become the heroic protagonists—a contrapuntal pedagogy. "Singh and Greenlaw (1998) draw on Said (1994) to suggest a contrapuntal pedagogy as a counterpoint addressing the challenges thrown up by Orientalism in textbooks. Contrapuntal has its origin in music where polyphonic sounds, diverse in rhythm and contour, mesh harmoniously. The objective is to read Eurocentric literature with a postcolonial lens" (Thomas, 2017, p. 3).

In *For Self-examination* (1851), Danish existentialist philosopher Søren Kierkegaard draws on Socratic themes in mentioning the "simple wise man of antiquity" who was accused before the people and handed a beautiful defense by a skilled orator. The man politely returned the oratory and responded:

> The thoughts, ideas, and concepts that I, known by everyone, ridiculed by your comics, regarded as an eccentric, daily attacked by the "anonymous" (it is his word), in the course of twenty years (it was that long) have developed in conversation with the first person to come along in the market-place—these thoughts are my life, have occupied me early and late. And even if they have occupied no one else, they have occupied me endlessly, and when I have sometimes been able to stand a whole day staring into space (something that has attracted your particular attention), it was these thoughts that occupied me—therefore I also believe that if I intend to say anything at all on the day the verdict is pronounced I can say a few words without the help of artful orators and oratorical arts, and the circumstances that I most likely will be sentenced to death make no difference (Kierkegaard, 2000, p. 394).

The Chinese man in Lam's story would respond much like Kierkegaard's "wise man of antiquity", firmly rejecting Western attempts to study, characterize, analyze, justify, critique, condemn, or vindicate the authentic life of the Orient. In the face of these exterior pressures, the palmist would in a reimagined version personify a reflective resilience and wisdom, ruminating and speaking from a place of lived experience rather than conforming to the expectations or interpretations imposed by others. Just as Kierkegaard's wise man articulates the richness of his own thoughts, which have occupied him deeply and personally, so too would the palmist draw on a lifetime of experiences that cannot be reduced to mere stereotypes or simplified narratives. Kierkegaard's wise man, despite meeting derision and dismissal from those around him, proclaims the value of his reflections, emphasizing that they are the distillation of years of introspection and interaction with the world. This would echo the palmist's position, where he confronts the distrust of the American teenager and broader Western society with a quiet but firm confidence in his own insights. He is persuaded that his outlook is not only legitimate but also essential, despite the scorn or disbelief it may provoke.

This contrapuntal exchange highlights a critical point: what is truly needed in knowledge construction, as Banks (2009) suggests, is not Westerners endeavoring to defend or explain the East through their own biased frameworks. Instead, it is the straightforward authenticity of Eastern voices that must be valorized. The palmist's insights, rooted in his rich cultural heritage, provide a counter-narrative to the exoticism and simplification often associated with Orientalist perspectives. His experiences and realities reflect a complexity that contests neat classification and requires a genuine engagement with his life and identity. Moreover, the palmist's refusal to conform to the expectations of the dominant narrative underscores the importance of self-authorship in the face of cultural appropriation and oversimplification. In a world that often seeks to define and confine, both Kierkegaard's wise man and Lam's palmist emerge as embodiments of inner truth, turning the spotlight away from outside judgment and towards the authenticity of their own existence.

The genre of the *Empire Writes Back* takes seriously the importance of the self-authorship of the subaltern. In postcolonial studies, the term "subaltern" refers to

groups or peoples that are marginalized, exploited, or rendered voiceless within the setting of colonial or imperial power structures. The concept is often associated with the works of Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci (Forgacs, 1988), who employed "subaltern" to describe social groups that are dislocated from the hegemonic power structure and do not have a voice in the dominant historical narratives. Gramsci's resolve and mission is succinctly captured in the statement, "Karl Marx is for us a master of spiritual and moral life, not a shepherd wielding a crook. He is the stimulator of mental laziness, the arouser of good energies which slumber and which must wake for the good fight" (Gramsci, 1988). In the contrapuntal rendering of the story of the nameless, faceless Chinese-American man, the students were invited to use their fantasy to give a voice to this subaltern who "must wake for the good fight" and wrestle back the narrative without the Orientalist filter of Western interpretation. In this manner, the students at the "ghetto" school advocated for a counter discourse that embraces diversity and complexity, allowing Eastern voices to surface as powerful agents of their own narratives rather than inert subjects always compelled to align with centuries-old imbrications of occidental imaginations.

Antonio Gramsci's insights into power and marginalization help us see how the stories of the subaltern—the "other" or excluded—are shaped by structures that privilege the voices of those in control. For Gramsci, the levers of power operate not just through dominance but by managing cultural and historical narratives, cunningly secreting ideas of who "belongs" and whose stories matter. This means the subaltern are not only disregarded but are often spoken for, their voices filtered through the perspectives of the powerful. Gramsci's work challenges this by championing the creation of counter-narratives—alternative stories that defy imposed definitions and reclaim identity on the subaltern's terms.

In this context, introducing students to the subaltern theme invites them to examine the dynamics of voice and representation. Gramsci's vision emphasizes that reclaiming a voice is not merely about speaking but about reshaping the structures that determine who is heard and how. For the students at the "ghetto" school, visualizing the viewpoint of a silenced individual became a way of opposing these dynamics directly. This process is not just about reinstating agency to the subaltern but about disrupting the systems that sustain their marginalization. Gramsci's ideas remind us that empowerment involves more than writing new stories—it requires challenging the foundations of who gets to tell them and why.

The theme of the subaltern was introduced to the students at the "ghetto" so they would have some familiarity with the context of colonization, Orientalism etc., and the need to "write back" and reclaim one's identity and voice, commensurate with the work of the Subaltern Studies Group with luminaries such as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Ranajit Guha. Spivak articulates the above in her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988) where she explores the intricacies involved in any attempts at empowering and representing the subaltern because all such good-intentioned efforts inadvertently speak over the subaltern. The act of writing about people inevitably runs the risk of depriving them of a measure of their autonomy and authenticity which Kierkegaard's (1851) "simple wise man of antiquity" wished to preserve and sustain.

To summarize, knowledge construction (Banks, 2009) of different cultures asks of us to strive to approximate the authenticity of other cultures and not a caricatured version through an Orientalist lens. At heart is the issue of authenticity. In one sense, the existential quest for genuine self-expression in the midst of adversity was foundational to the work of Scandinavian writers such as Kierkegaard and Knut Hamsun. The protagonist in "Hunger" experiences a form of marginalization not unlike the subaltern condition, though not in a postcolonial sense. He is marginalized by society due to his poverty and progressively erratic behavior. His struggles highlight the alienation and voicelessness he feels, as he drifts further away from the societal mainstream and becomes increasingly ghost-like or misunderstood by those around him. The novel depicts the protagonist's penetrating inner life and his visceral struggles to convey his thoughts and feelings. His efforts to create and maintain his identity as a writer, despite debilitating hunger and dreadful circumstances, resonate with the theme of existential self-expression. Commensurate with Kierkegaard's emphasis on the importance of *tenkefrihet* (freedom of thought), the protagonist's fight is as much about maintaining his intellectual and creative autonomy as it is about physical survival. Finally, exhausted by his trials and tribulations, the protagonist stakes his future abroad.

> Of course! I answered, overjoyed. And I repeated that we could part company in England if it didn't work out. Then he put me to work. Once out in the fjord I straightened up, wet with fever and fatigue, looked in towards the shore and said goodbye for now to the city, to Kristiania, where the windows shone so brightly in every home (Hamsun, 2016, p. 217).

Hamsun's protagonist personifies a rupture from stifling narratives, much like the need for Eastern voices to redefine themselves beyond the boundaries of Western stereotypes. Just as Hamsun's protagonist embarks upon new horizons, there is a parallel call for a genuine amalgamation of diverse perspectives, urging a move beyond reductive tropes and towards a broader recognition of complex identities.

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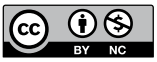

Chapter 4
Beyond Belly Dancing: Uncovering Muslim Legacy in Education

In what follows we will focus on James Banks's (2009) *content integration* of multicultural education. We will do this by centering the educational context on the contribution of what is referred to as the "Golden Age of Islam" between the eight/nineth and fourteenth centuries AD. Given that the majority of the over 80% non-white students at the "ghetto" school were Muslim—with many from the Middle East—the lead author would often incorporate the biographies and references to figures and their contributions of the "Golden Age" from the fields of science, mathematics, philosophy, politics and law, among others, to pique the students' interest and motivate learning. Once, after a class session where the above was implemented, a father of one of the students originally from Iraq expressed his surprise and gratitude that the name of the great Iraqi scientist Ibn al-Haytham (965–c. 1040), among others, had been mentioned in his son's classroom. The father explained that he was a teacher with a postgraduate degree in Iraq during Saddam Hussein's regime but worked as a cleaner in Norway. "Ibn al-Haytham is the 'father' of both the scientific experimental method and optics. Everyone in Iraq and the Middle East knows this but I haven't come across anyone in Norway who has heard about him. This makes me sad", the father remarked ruefully. A good place to begin is a definition or description of the "Golden Age".

> From the ninth century on, scientists in Islamic lands acquired through translations into Arabic, a treasury of Greek, Indian, Persian, and Babylonian philosophic and scientific thought. They proceeded diligently to assimilate and systemize this intellectual legacy, all the while enriching it with innovation and invention, particularly in the areas of mathematics, optics, medicine, and astronomy. Their ultimate achievement was an unprecedented and harmoniously synthesized body of knowledge—the world's first truly international science (Turner, 1995, p. 2).

It was often the case that the moment the names of these scientists were mentioned, several of the students would raise their heads, focus their attention and begin taking notes. In particular, the students who were proficient in mathematics were visibly surprised and turned to look at their peers when the lead author mentioned that the Persian (Iranian) mathematician and polymath, Al-Khwârizmî, is considered the

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"father of algebra". One student, incredulous at this statement went so far as to politely ask if the teacher was certain. From our perspective as educators and trainers of postgraduate-level teachers, the pertinent question remains: Why do such alarmingly high levels of ignorance persist in the West regarding the contributions of the "Golden Age", which served as fundamental catalysts in shaping the modern world we inhabit today? In relation to al-Khwarizmi, Turner writes:

> Not only was he instrumental in converting Babylonian and Hindu numerals into a simple and workable system that almost anyone could use, he originated both the terms "algebra" and "algorithm". Along with the concepts behind them. Algebra, or *al-jabr*, denotes a transposition—a restoration of balance (*muqbala*) or equilibrium—through adding or subtracting the same quantity on both sides of an equation (Turner, 1995, p. 47).

It is a rare occasion when one student in a class of fifty at the University is aware that the word "algorithm" is the Latinized form of the name of Al-Khwarizmi. Turner (1995, p. 47) writes, "Algorithm, the term itself derived in Medieval Latin from al-Khwarizmi's name, has come to denote any systematic computation or system of step-by-step instructions for solving a problem or pursuing some goal". In the spirit of John Dewey's focus on experiential learning, we relate algorithms to the contemporary jargon youth are familiar with from the world of Facebook, Tik Tok, Instagram and similar social media platforms. When people say that algorithms lead to seeing more of certain content, they are highlighting how these algorithms personalize feeds based on user behavior, such as likes and comments. This can create a feedback loop that prioritizes popular content, often resulting in a parochial perspective that limits exposure to diverse ideas and viewpoints.

Regrettably, several students at the "ghetto" school were not preoccupied with books. One must keep in mind that this phenomenon is not the reserve of students from the Global South but perhaps typical of a generation of youth who have come of age in the era of the internet and screens. Nevertheless, and commensurate with theories of learning and academic success such as Pierre Bourdieu's (2018) cultural capital, we operate from the assumption that an aversion or disinterest in books and similar academic material impoverishes learning and undermines cultural capital. Cultural capital, according to Pierre Bourdieu, encompasses non-financial social assets that serve as re-investable capital enabling individuals to secure advantages in society. Cultural capital includes but is not limited to knowledge, skills, education, and any cultural proficiency that serve as catalysts to promote social mobility and influence social dynamics. Of significance is Bourdieu's argument that cultural capital is often undetected in its transmission from parents to their offspring.

> It follows that the transmission of cultural capital is no doubt the best hidden form of hereditary transmission of capital, and it therefore receives proportionately greater weight in the system of reproduction strategies, as the direct, visible forms of transmission tend to be more strongly censored and controlled (Bourdieu, 2006, p. 108).

Bourdieu posited the existence of three forms of cultural capital: embodied (personal skills and knowledge), objectified (cultural goods such as books and artworks), and institutionalized (academic qualifications and credentials). Cultural capital highlights how cultural capital contributes to the reproduction of social

inequality, as individuals with higher cultural capital can navigate social institutions more effectively, thereby enhancing their social status and opportunities. Cultural capital's enormous explanatory power has grown in importance across the world as evidenced in measures to even out or ameliorate the gap in cultural capital where such disparities exist. For instance, some Norwegian schools offer free tuition classes after school hours to students, as was the case at the "ghetto" school.

We only labor the above to make the following observation. As was previously mentioned, "the father of multicultural education", James Banks's dimensions of multicultural education emphasize the importance of incorporating content from diverse cultural sources that reflect the international and cosmopolitan nature of education. How does the insufficient acknowledgment of the contributions from the "Golden Age" diminish students from the Middle East and similar backgrounds in their access to an essential component of their cultural capital? How might awareness of the existence of one of the world's greatest libraries, the *Bayt al-Hikma* (House of Wisdom) in Baghdad, awaken the dormant intellectual potential of students whom their predominantly white teachers have labeled as future "navere" (Norwegian slang for social clients)?

> Al-Ma'mun not only continued the translation movement begun by his grandfather [Harun al-Rashid], he expanded it. He funded an extensive group of scholars , physicians, and astronomers, and their works were assembled in state-funded library known as *bayt al-hikma,* the House of Wisdom. The library was the a center for translations from Greek to Arabic, and it was said to be the intellectual hub of the empire (Karabell, 2007, p. 53).

Students at the "ghetto" school shared on occasions that all they see as they turn the pages of their textbooks is not only the previously mentioned prejudicial disparagement of non-whites, but the absence of non-whites in general. The psychological effect of regularly encountering primarily white, often elderly male figures cannot be skirted in influencing the juvenile psyches of students who perceive this representation as emblematic of scholastic authority and knowledge. Such constant exposure to white cultural capital, particularly when it is decoupled from the recognition and validation of non-white contributions, bolsters a hegemonic narrative that negates the intellectual heritage of diverse cultures. This dynamic can lead to feelings of inadequacy and inferiority among these students, shaping their self-perception and academic engagement. As they internalize the dominant representations as the norm, it becomes increasingly challenging for them to valorize their own cultural backgrounds and contributions, potentially resulting in a harmful psychological deficit that impedes their overall educational experience and personal development.

To expect to see people who look white like you in textbooks, the media and similar arenas qualifies under "white privilege", according to Peggy McIntosh (1989). McIntosh's concept of the "invisible knapsack" is salutary in this regard. She defines white privilege in this manner: "I have come to see white privilege as an invisible package of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was 'meant' to remain oblivious. White privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas,

clothes, tools and blank checks" (McIntosh, 1989). Those who are the beneficiaries of such privileges may also be conscious of these benefits but choose to play along with a system that works in their favor. Of concern is the omission of racial and ethnic diversity within educational materials, including books and academic resources. This absence of diverse representations is particularly relevant to the aforementioned discussion of the psychological impact on students, especially those from marginalized backgrounds. On her lengthy checklist of white privilege is the following: "I can easily buy posters, postcards, picture books, greeting cards, dolls, toys, and children's magazines featuring people of my race" (McIntosh, 1989).

Consider this statement in light of the students at the "ghetto" school. James Baldwin recounts his experiences in Leukerbad, a small and remote Swiss village, during the summer of 1951. The residents were fascinated by Baldwin's blackness, as they had never encountered a black man before. Baldwin writes in *Notes of a Native Son*:

> These people cannot be, from the point of view of power, strangers anywhere in the world; they made the modern world, in effect, even if they do not know it. The most illiterate among them is related, in a way that I am not, to Dante, Shakespeare, Michelangelo, Aeschylus, Da Vinci , Rembrandt, and Racine; the cathedral of Chartres says something to them which it cannot say to me, as indeed would New York's Empire State Building, should anyone here ever see it (Baldwin, 1955, p. 169).

Clearly, the students whose "racial radar" register and imbibe a discourse of othering and whitewashing of the common reservoir of global knowledge and wisdom, struggle, like James Baldwin, to feel any bonds of kinship with "Dante, Shakespeare, Michelangelo, Aeschylus, Da Vinci, Rembrandt, and Racine". On one occasion, the lead teacher asked the students to name the biological father of the American entrepreneur and inventor, Steve Jobs, best known as the co-founder of Apple Inc. The discovery that Steve Jobs's father is a Syrian named Abdulfattah Jandali evoked a palpable sense of surprise and elation that resonated deeply within the context of identity and cultural heritage for these youth who clearly were starved of attention and recognition. This revelation not only sparked a lengthy discussion and newfound interest in the often-unexplored narratives surrounding successful figures such Jobs but, and more importantly, it was very satisfying to hear the students speak in terms of being the next Steve Jobs. One student put it this way: "So there is much more than just ISIS that came out of Syria?" How come the "father of optics" and the experimentation method, Ibn Haytham (Alhazen) from Basra, Iraq, is never featured in Western school textbooks in science?

> Of all known medieval scientific texts, his [Ibn al-Haytham] his most comprehensive *Kitab al-Manzir* (Book of Optics) is perhaps the most distinguished example in terms of its experimental and mathematical arguments, as well as in its presentation of new and original theory… Little attention , however, appears to have been paid to Ibn al-Haytham's *Kitab al-Manzir* until the thirteenth century (Turner, 1995, pp. 196, 197).

That the contributions of the "Golden Age" have been suppressed but are now gaining the attention they rightly deserve as evident in the excerpt below with the title *Ibn al-Haytham: Testing is Believing* worth reproducing at length:

> In the centuries that followed, however, many scholars outside the Islamic world let Ibn al-Haytham's contributions slip below the horizon as they focused on the likes of Bacon and his teacher, Robert Grosseteste, who pursued both science and theology to explain natural phenomena. Up to the 20th century, El-Bizri says, most Western historians of science attributed the experimental method to Grosseteste. But today, scholarly circles across the globe look increasingly to Ibn al-Haytham, including even the UK-based Ordered Universe Project, which focuses on Grosseteste's legacy. Now, says El-Bizri, who is himself affiliated with the group, "they are fully convinced that whatever they have thought about Grosseteste is indicative of their not being aware of earlier approaches to experimentation. … They have now moved that milestone by two centuries to the work of Ibn al-Haytham" (Lawrence, 2023).

The revelation of Steve Jobs's Syrian heritage and the mention of the contributions of geniuses whose names and backgrounds conflate with the "ghetto" students evoke the celebrated moment in Marcel Proust's novel *In Search of Lost Time*, where the taste of a *petite madeleine* cake unlocks a flood of memories from the narrator's childhood and arouses deep feelings of homesickness and connection to his past. Just as Proust's *madeleine* triggers dormant memories of scenes from home and childhood, evoking emotional resonance and a sense of belonging, the discovery of the names of geniuses with whom they share names and kinship ties, can significantly enhance children's motivation and emotional engagement in educational settings. When students associate personal histories and cultural heritage to their education, they acquire a healthy sense of identity, advancing an intrinsic motivation that can drive academic excellence. For example, understanding that a figure like Steve Jobs emerged from a multicultural background can inspire students to take pride in their own heritage, recognizing that diverse narratives are integral to the broader story of innovation and success.

Teachers can harness this emotional faculty by integrating stories, histories, and cultural symbols relevant to their students' lives, such as the significance of technology like the iPhone as not just a status symbol but also a testament to the diverse influences and backgrounds that shaped its creation. By valuing and incorporating students' home experiences and cultural contexts in the curriculum, educators can create rich, engaging learning experiences that resonate on a personal level, much like Proust's *madeleines.* The nexus between cultural identity and intrinsic motivation takes on added significance when yoked to the mission of genuine multicultural education as Banks's (2009) envisions. Rather than an alienating curriculum or syllabus, students feel respected and valued which is an important criterion (affective) for igniting curiosity and passion for knowledge. Proust's *petites madeleines* bridged the past with the present. Content integration which features names such as Ibn al-Haytham, Al Khwarizmi, Ibn Sinna, Ibn Rushd etc., can transform the educational journey, making learning a more meaningful and motivating experience for every child.

> She sent for one of those squat, plump cakes called *petites madeleines*… But at the very instant when the mouthful of tea mixed with cake-crumbs touched my palate, I quivered, attentive to the extraordinary thing that was happening to me… Where could it have come from—this powerful joy?... And suddenly the memory appeared. That taste was the taste of the little piece of madeleiene which in Sunday mornings at Combray… my Aunt Léonie

> would give me after dipping it in her infusion of tea of lime-blossom (Proust, 2002, pp. 47–49).

Thus far we have thrown down the gauntlet to the majority, white establishment that wields power and has been critiqued for promoting a flawed multicultural education. While our efforts overall were targeted towards the empowerment of the students who were victims of structural factors, we would not be doing justice to the overall picture of the complexities involved at the "ghetto" school if the particular challenges the students "brought" to the school remained untouched. This is commensurate with Banks's (2009) dimension: "An empowering school culture. Grouping and labelling practices, sports participation, disproportionality in achievement, and the interaction of staff and the students across ethnic and racial lines are examined to create a school culture that empowers students from diverse racial, ethnic, and gender groups." We do so with caution as we are aware our views could be cynically coopted by some populists for whom the very presence of black and brown bodies in Norway triggers "psychosomatic" problems for white Norwegian, in the words of one prominent politician, Øystein Hedstrøm, who once stated:

> The proposer refers to the high risk of spreading dangerous diseases through immigration and expresses the impression that Norwegian authorities are pursuing a policy that could directly encourage HIV-infected individuals to come to Norway, as their chances of staying and receiving good treatment are significant. The economic and health consequences of such a policy could be catastrophic.
>
> Furthermore, the proposer points out that it is a little-discussed phenomenon that Norwegians develop psychosomatic illnesses due to frustration, anger, bitterness, fear, and worry caused by immigration.
>
> — Parliamentary Bill drafted by MP Øystein Hedstrøm (1994/95).

One day, a 17-year-old girl from a Somali background solicited the help of the lead author who is also from the same ethnic background. The student exhibited obvious emotional distress as she conveyed that, despite her commitment to her studies, her fiancé was insisting that she withdraw from school. His interpretation of Sharia law dictated that she ceases from interactions with male students, thereby creating a significant conflict between her academic ambitions and his expectations. The lead author obviously was taken aback by this and advised the girl to prioritize her studies and ignore her fiancé's rather selfish preoccupation with a parochial interpretation of religious texts. Quite suddenly, the girl left with a look of surprise without volunteering an explanation. The school adviser was notified, prompting a new effort to find the student and support her in her educational aspirations. Regrettably, the girl came up with a completely new version of the story stating that she was asking on behalf of a friend of hers, and not herself. Baffled by this contradiction, we nevertheless did our utmost to influence the girl, while Simone de Beauvoir's question resurfaced with heightened intensity.

> Biology alone cannot provide an answer to the question that concerns us: why is woman the *Other?* The question is how, in her, nature, has been taken on in the course of history; the question is what humanity has made of the human female (Beauvoir, 2009, p. 48).

We would be amiss to state that such incidents were rare, but neither were they common occurrences either. What is indisputable, however, is that there was no room for such behavior, especially in the context of schooling. The crystallization of such otherwise "clandestine" beliefs and practices that disempower females occasionally firstly does untold damage to the female victims and, secondly, provides ammunition for Islamophobes and xenophobes to discredit much of the good effort exerted by many who seek to empower minorities. Once the media gets wind of such incidents, which they did not at the time, the entire school is tarred with a broad brush as "the ghetto" school in a renewed attempt to claw back the original derogatory connotation of the epithet. We contend, aligned with Banks's (2009) pedagogy of empowerment, that the very circumstances faced by students at the so-called "ghetto" school dictate that they engage critically with the foundational principles of democracy, including the rule of law, freedom of speech, tolerance, women's rights, and religious freedom, among other liberties outlined in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights. Such exposure is crucial not only for their individual empowerment but also for promoting a more inclusive understanding of citizenship and social justice. By confronting these ideals, students can develop a nuanced grasp of their rights and responsibilities within a diverse society, equipping them to advocate for themselves and their communities.

Empowerment, democracy and women's right go hand in hand. The very edifice of democracy, which although solid in Norway, becomes precarious if educators shy away from grappling with the case of the Somali teenager whose right to study was undermined by parochial interpretations of religious texts. It will be worth the while to remember that religion isn't the only driver of controversial interpretations that collide with the edifice of modern democracy. A name no less illustrious than that of Sir Winston Churchill initially disapproved of the thought of granting voting rights to women. Certainly, no one would accuse Churchill's obstinance on the issue of women's suffrage of being rooted in any sort of Christian devotion. Churchill was a product of his time—nineteenth and twentieth century convictions where patriarchy and conservatism frowned upon the notion of changing traditional gender roles. Not least, as a shrewd politician, Churchill and his acolytes were wary of enfranchising women as this would disrupt the balance of power. Addicted to predictable electoral outcomes and hence power, conservatives were averse to a new status quo where men would have to pay serious attention to the needs and aspirations of women on par with those of men. The "natural order"—for men, that is—was to be preserved at all costs. Emmeline Pankhurst notes the following in regard to Churchill's evolving and contradictory position on the topic:

> Mr. Churchill, after making a conventional anti-suffrage speech, in which he said that women did not need the ballot, and that they really had no grievances, attacked the Conciliation Bill because the class of women who would be enfranchised under it did not suit him. Some women, he conceded, ought to be enfranchised, and he thought the best plan would be to select "some of the best women of all classes" on considerations of property, education and earning capacity (Pankhurst, 1914, 2015, p. 161).

We argue that the task of safeguarding democratic ideals in schools in Norway is under threat as schools in the capital and other major cities segregate along

ethno-racial lines. Every year, media headlines appear to outdo each other in sounding the alarm, which appears to fall on deaf ears. According to one study which compared school segregation levels in Oslo, Milan and Barcelona: "The primary schools in Oslo are relatively strongly segregated socially, ethnically and economically compared to other cities in Europe. Researchers and authorities are working together to do something about this" (Lambrou, 2023). If Banks's (2009) dimension of an empowering pedagogy is to have any meaning, then appropriate attention in the form of resources creative thinking must be prioritized. Few can deny that the most benevolent ideals and aspirations for education will flounder if values and attitudes that are oppositional to democratic ideals are allowed to fester and preponderate.

We state the above cognizant of the fact that ethnically segregated schools cannot be blamed on vulnerable students from minoritized backgrounds. We are also cognizant, and simultaneously denounce, right-wing populistic opportunism that scapegoats minorities while conveniently overlooking structural racism and similar factors that give rise to, not only the "ghetto" schools, but also function to uphold an unspoken preference for racially homogenous schools—i.e. white ones. The Norwegian anthropologist, Marianne Gullestad , coined the term "ideal of sameness" (*likhetsidealet*) to encapsulate the dynamics which distil this boundary-management process. Gullestad contends that a specific and standardized form of socialization causes Norwegians to be hesitant in adjusting to individuals who do not adhere to the norms established by this form of socialization, which Norwegians typically begin to experience early in kindergarten.

> For the sake of simplicity I call it "imagined sameness". It is not only tied to the term likhet, but also to a whole range of other expressions such as "to fit in together" (*å passe sammen*) and "to share the same ideas" (*ha sammenfallendesynspunkter*). Often it implies that there is a problem when others are perceived to be "too different". Then the parties often avoid each other. Open conflicts are seen as a threat to other basic values, such as "peace and quiet". (Gullestad, 2002, p. 47).

While this may be a boon in fostering cohesive social relations in Norway built on this "ideal of sameness" or "imagined sameness" to paraphrase Benedict Anderson, it is not amenable to challenges posed by a changing demographic where adaptability and tolerance for difference become paramount. The oppressive exclusion associated with racially segregated schools was once again on display in the following example. In the third year of high school, the lead author was responsible for teaching the subject of religion. Of the 27 students present in the classroom, only one was what in Norway is euphemistically called "ethnic Norwegian" or white Norwegian—underscoring the fear of naming skin color in Norwegian discourse. The students were trained and encouraged to engage in serious, academic critique of all religions. For example, the Christian doctrine of the Trinity was critically analyzed, with some students elucidating the intrinsic philosophical tensions and perceived incongruities in reconciling the triune nature of the Godhead with the monotheistic canons that are fundamentally embedded in Islamic and Judaic theological frameworks. The students did an outstanding job. Regrettably, the moment the one female "ethnic Norwegian" student raised the question of polygamy in

Islam, there was a chorus of belligerent voices drowning out her question, with some resorting to ad hominem verbal attacks.

Several students received behavioral remarks in the school register for further review or action by school authorities. One student who refused to back down was expelled from the school for the day. Sadly, none of the lead author's actions impacted on the white Norwegian female's decision, which had been in the offing for some time prior, to leave this school and enroll in a white school. She looked at the author with pain in her eyes and said, "I cannot be a foreigner in my own country". She left the school the following week. Reich (2005, p. 209) draws attention to the dilemma inherent in liberal multiculturalism. "When the state seeks through collective rights to improve the status of minority groups and their members with respect to the larger society, it can also undermine the status of the weaker members within the group… group rights often reinforce the subordination of women within groups". We are aware that we are treading upon "landmines of cultural sensitivity" and proceed carefully when we state that this charge of what has been called "the paradox of multicultural vulnerability" (Shachar, 2000) is manifest in our "ghetto" school. Critiquing the "right of exit" strategy of the theories of Margalit and Halbertal who defend Jewish Ultra-Orthodox culture and yet claim to remain liberal despite "incarcerating children within a cultural group", Reich (2005) asks.

> But we can imagine far worse scenarios. If the norms of a cultural group continually reinforce a message that girls and women were sources of evil, sexual temptresses, or merely unequal in all respects to men, would Margalit and Herbaltal defend schools that taught these lessons? If the norms of a cultural group aim systematically to disable the ability of boys to think critically except with relation to the Talmud, or to accept unerringly the dictates of elders, would Margalit and Halbertal defend an educational system designed to further this end? (Reich 2005, p. 215).

The broader inferences of this scenario echo Reich's inquiry into liberal multiculturalism, which postulates that efforts to recognize and uplift minority group rights can inadvertently weaken individual rights within these groups. The student's poignant statement, "I cannot be a foreigner in my own country", captures the internal conflict experienced by those who feel marginalized, even in spaces designed for inclusion—the victims of "the paradox of multicultural vulnerability" (Shachar, 2000). It gives expression to a profound sense of alienation that exists within the asserted ideal of a cohesive society. Attempts to honor cultural collective rights can backfire on liberal democracies when such rights are exploited to reinforce universalize illiberal power dynamics.

The cases of the Somali student facing pressure to withdraw from school and the white Norwegian student endeavoring to pursue a liberal education exemplify the shortcomings and complexities inherent in multicultural education. "What this means, in my view, is that the liberal state should be reluctant to grant rights to separate schooling or to permit broad exemptions from educational requirements… to foster the development of autonomy in children, as well as some civic virtues, such as tolerance and civility" (Reich, 2005, p. 226). True cohesion requires not only the recognition of diversity but also the active cultivation of spaces where all voices can be heard and valued.

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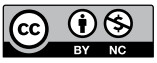

Chapter 5
The N-Word Dilemma in Segregated Schools

> In Cleveland not long ago the author found at the Western Reserve University something unusually encouraging. A native of Mississippi, a white man trained in a Northern University and now serving as a professor in one, has under him in sociology a Negro student from Georgia. For his dissertation this Negro is collecting the sayings of his people in everyday life—their morning greetings, their remarks about the weather, their comments on things which happen around them, their reactions to things which strike them as unusual, and their efforts to interpret life as the panorama passes before them. This white Mississippian and black Georgian are on the right way to understand the Negro and, if they do not fall out about social equality, they will serve the Negro much better than those who are trying to find out whether Henry VIII lusted more after Anne Boleyn than after Catherine of Aragon or whether Elizabeth was justly styled as more untruthful than Philip II of Spain (Woodson, 2023, p. 30).

The excerpt above from the book *The Mis-Education of the Negro* (1933) by the African American educator Carter G. Woodson serves as an apt point of departure to understand the recent controversy involving white teachers at a high school in Norway, who became embroiled in a "teaching scandal" where the N-word was featured during a lesson. This incident highlights the urgent necessity for substantive and genuine intercultural exchange, as the repercussions of neglecting such engagement in an increasingly pluralistic Norway could result in profound misunderstandings and the reinforcement of detrimental stereotypes. We will first share the broad outlines of what we call the teaching of the "N-word scandal". The high school, the teachers and all interlocutors in this conflict have been made public in various media reports in the public domain. The first salvo was fired by an opinion piece signed under by 36 teachers from Oslo Katedralskole in the daily national newspaper *Aftenposten.* We will be employing some citations from this opinion piece in discussing this dilemma.

> Is it possible to perceive reading literature that discusses racism as an act of racism? We, the authors of this piece, are staff and teachers at Oslo Cathedral School. Recently, we faced accusations on the Instagram account "Racism in Norway" for allegedly creating an unsafe school environment. The basis for this claim? Our use of a text that includes the "N-word" (Teachers at Oslo Katedral Skole, 2024).

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The context of the incident is as follows. A teacher at this school decided to conduct a lesson with the aim of combating racism. The teacher chose a poem written by the writer Brynjulf Jung Tjønn who was adopted from South Korea as a child. In the poem with the title "White Norwegian Man", Brynjulf reflects on the racism he encountered growing up as a child in Norway mentioning how he often wished he was a white Norwegian man. He states in his poem that he often felt like Arve Beheim Karlsen, an adoptee from India who fell to his death in 1999 while being chased by two white Norwegian youth yelling "Kill this negro" (Moen, 2001). The Norwegian youth were never brought to justice. Here is an excerpt (Neral, 2022):

eg er den brune guten som spring over brua eg er den brune guten som spring under brua eg er den brune guten som spring ut i elva eg er den brune guten som seinare blir funne i vatnet	I am the brown boy who jumped over the bridge I am the brown boy who jumped under the bridge I am the brown boy who jumps into the river I am the brown boy who later is found in the water
dei ropte drep denne negeren	They shouted kill this negro
men det var ikkje meg eg er ikkje brun, eg er gul	but it wasn't me I am not brown, I am yellow.

Brynjulf and Arve never met each other. Brynjulf takes artistic freedom to reflect on his identity and the social challenges faced by himself and others like him. He recounts the ominous chants of violence directed at him and his friend Arve Beheim Karlsen, who is adopted from India, echoing a grim history of racial violence. While chased by the racist white youth, the two boys find themselves running together to escape the hostile environment, ultimately seeking refuge in the water of a deep fjord. The imagery stirs up both beauty and danger as they face the cold, dark waters, symbolizing their bond as racially marginalized individuals. Ultimately, in the face of adversity, the narrator, Brynjulf, realizes he is the only one who rises, suggesting a struggle for survival and self-assertion amid societal prejudice. Brynjulf's poignant poem is true to the reality of patterns of racialization in Norway: whites vs. non-whites. There are no shades of in between. One is either white, yellow or a "neger".

The teachers at Oslo Katedralskole state in their opinion piece that they intentionally wanted to get the attention of the students in reading poem. "'The N-word' is repeated no less than five times. When the poem was read, students reacted in all classrooms. Fortunately. It was precisely this poem that was important for us to read. The boys who shouted those words at Arve on that cold night 25 years ago were not prosecuted under the anti-racism law. The goal is to highlight the racism that exists around us. Is it racism to teach about racism?" (Teachers at Oslo Katedralskole, 2024). The teachers got more than they bargained for unfortunately. One non-white student, whom the other white students turned to and giggled when the N-word was repeated decided to take action by sending the content of the lesson to a website which agitates on behalf of those who experience racism. The only problem was that a video clip which had nothing to do with this particular lesson

was dispatched and shared on Instagram where over 50,000 followers viewed the content and responded angrily to Oslo Katedralskole.

By the time this error was rectified, and the video removed, the damage had been done and the "N-word scandal" had gone viral. These events spawned the need to write the opinion piece and absolve the school of what the teachers perceived as a distortion of their intent and commitment to fostering a genuine dialogue about racism and its historical context. They aimed to clarify that their educational approach was not an endorsement of racial slurs, but rather an effort to address and confront the realities of racism through literature and discussion in a responsible manner. Ultimately, the teachers sought to emphasize the importance of understanding the complexities surrounding race and the necessity of creating a safe space for critical conversations in an increasingly diverse society. The scholar of race and racism George M. Fredrickson describes racism:

> My theory or conception of racism, therefore, has two components: *difference* and *power*. It originates from a mindset that regards "them" as different from "us" in ways that are permanent and unbridgeable. This sense of difference provides a motive or rationale for using our power advantage to treat the ethnoracial Other in ways that we would regard as cruel or unjust if applied to members of our own group (Fredrickson, 2002, p. 9).

In the case of the teachers at Oslo Katedralskole, we the authors settled upon supporting their efforts wholeheartedly—this includes two authors who are black Norwegian Africans. Once again, we as academics who have published widely in the field of racism and as lecturers who train teachers in Norway, are cognizant of the explosive and checkered history of the debate surrounding the N-word and tread very carefully. The lead author has done a meticulous study on the trajectory of the N-word in Norway culminating in the peer-reviewed article "*Papa, Am I a Negro?" The Vexed History of the Racial Epithet in Norwegian Print Media (1970–2014)* (Thomas, 2016). The analysis and discussion that follows is guided by lessons drawn from this research.

We return to the citation from Woodson (2023, p. 30): "For his dissertation this Negro is collecting the sayings of his people in everyday life—their morning greetings, their remarks about the weather, their comments on things which happen around them, their reactions to things which strike them as unusual, and their efforts to interpret life as the panorama passes before them". As far back as 1933, Woodson applauded the efforts of a white professor of sociology from Mississippi and his black student from Georgia. We argue that a potentially fruitful collaboration of mutual learning and enlightenment in the machinations of perhaps the most controversial word in the English language was lost when trust broke down when between the white teachers and the black student at Oslo Katedralskole. First, a few words on the N-word itself. Black Professor of Law at Harvard, Randall Kennedy, who also wrote the book *Nigger: The Strange Career of a Troublesome Word* (2003), states the following: "The journalist Farai Chideya describes nigger as 'the all-American trump card, the nuclear bomb of racial epithets'" (Randall, 1999–2000, p. 87) and cites a ruling from a court in the USA which, while dismissing a black parent's objection to his child studying Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* where "nigger" is

mentioned 215 times, nevertheless acknowledges the epithets devastating potential: "the Ninth Circuit described nigger as 'the most noxious racial epithet in the contemporary American lexicon'" (Randall, 1999–2000, p. 87).

The N-word is a highly provocative racial slur with a complex history, as explored by Randall Kennedy. Initially used descriptively in the seventeenth century, the term evolved into a deprecating slur by the nineteenth century, used to degrade and ostracize black individuals in society. While some contemporary artists (e.g. the rap and Hip-Hop genre) and comedians (e.g. Richard Pryor, Chris Rock, Dave Chappelle) attempt to reclaim the word through reappropriation or ironic usage, Kennedy emphasizes the historical pain it carries and the capacity for misunderstanding. He argues that education is crucial for comprehending the word's weight and impact, highlighting that even if used without malicious intent, it can still trigger strong negative reactions. Kennedy urges those who find the word abusive to communicate their feelings and educate others about its hurtful history, emphasizing that personal experiences are powerful in understanding the word's emotional weight. "Some maintain that use of the N-word by blacks is a testament to the power of white racism to insinuate itself within black minds. There is something to this argument. It is undoubtedly true that in some instances blacks' use of nigger is indicative of an antiblack, self-hating animus" (Kennedy, 1999–2000, p. 90). In response to those who demand a blanket ban of the word irrespective of the context or circumstances, Kennedy responds.

> Cosby, Shipp, and others contend that nigger should have no place in contemporary American language. Does it mean that the title of this article, or perhaps the article itself, should have no place? Or, does it mean that people should follow the lead of educators such as John Wallace who recommend that high schools exclude from their curriculums such books as *Huckleberry Finn* and *To Kill a Mockingbird* because they contain the N-word? If so, one can only shudder to think of the bowdlerization that might await Richard Wright's *Black Boy,* Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, Malcolm X's Autobiography, Dick Gregory's *Nigger!* Or H. Rap Brown's *Die! Nigger Die* (Kennedy, 1999–2000, p. 91).

Randall concludes, "Sometimes it can be used humorously to see the comedy routines of *Def Comedy Jam*—and sometimes it can be used as a tool of antiracist education" (Kennedy, 1999–2000, pp. 93, 94). This analysis is not merely an academic exercise; rather, it highlights the broader implications of the term as it relates to race, identity, and social dynamics within American society and now Norwegian society. The N-word exemplifies a historical legacy steeped in dehumanization and violence, yet it also serves as a point of departure for discussions about reappropriation, identity, and the complexities of racial discourse. Additionally, and in alignment with the central thesis of this book, we contend that the astute reflections offered by Randall Kennedy concerning the N-word exemplify the imperative for both white and black individuals to work in partnership in advocating for an authentic anti-racist educational framework. Kennedy's scholarship reveals the intricate ways in which language can perpetuate systemic racism while concurrently holding the potential for change through critical engagement. This binary highlights the necessity of creating spaces for open dialogue where the historical weight of the

N-word can be explored and understood in a manner that transcends mere lexical analysis.

Furthermore, authentic anti-racist education necessitates a concerted effort from individuals across racial lines to lock horns with uncomfortable truths about the past and present of racial dynamics. This collective undertaking must involve a sincere scrutiny of privilege, power, and the historical contexts that shape our contemporary understanding of race. By working together, individuals from diverse backgrounds can cultivate a deeper awareness of the socio-political implications of the N-word, ultimately dismantling the barriers that thwart meaningful conversations about race. The opinion piece authored by the white teachers at Oslo Cathedral School furnishes a compelling argument for the imperative to counter the increasing segregation of schools in Norway to conflate with pigmentation. The "N-word scandal" highlights the critical need for inclusive educational environments that promote diversity and collaboration among students of various backgrounds. The teachers' grievances underscore the socio-educational consequences of marginalization and the importance of advancing an equitable learning atmosphere that values cultural plurality. Once again, we applaud the genuine efforts of these white teachers, however Panglossian their optimism may appear to those who think otherwise. The "father of structural racism" Eduardo Bonilla-Silva identifies white young females as the new John Brown, Thaddeus Stevens, Charles Sumner, Lydia Maria Child and Grimké sisters in *Racism Without Racists* (2022).

> Interview data from the 1997 Survey on Social Attitudes of College students and the 1998 Detroit area Study suggest young, working-class women are the most likely candidates to be racial progressives. This finding contradicts the claims of most of the media and scholars (from Theodor Adorno's *The Authoritarian Personality* onward) who contend "racists" are poor or working-class Whites (Bonilla-silva, 2022, p. 174).

Oslo Cathedral School (Oslo Katedralskole), established in 1153, is one of the oldest schools in Norway and has a long-standing reputation for academic excellence. Located in the heart of Oslo, it is a prestigious institution that offers a comprehensive education, including the Norwegian high school curriculum and a focus on humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. The white, predominantly female teachers could have opted to avoid the risk of getting it wrong on such a sensitive topic and focused on other less controversial topics. Rather, and fortunately, the teachers engaged in a "pedagogy of risk"—an educational framework that valorizes the importance of taking risks within the learning process. A pedagogy of risk pivots on the premise that pupils flourish when faced with challenging experiences that nudge them to navigate beyond their comfort zones, ultimately leading to the cultivation of resilience, critical thinking, and deeper understanding.

The "pedagogy of risk" which is inspired by Paulo Freire's (1970) educational philosophy, profoundly underscores the importance of problem-posing as a central element in effectuating transformative education through praxis. Contrary to the traditional "banking model", which interpellates students as passive recipients of information, Freire's approach advocates for a collaborative process where real-world problems are explored collectively. This framework allows learners to

critically engage with their lived experiences, confront systemic inequalities, and explore the fears and uncertainties that arise from such explorations. By creating an educational space that encourages dialogue, questioning, and critical reflection, the pedagogy of risk promotes intellectual and emotional risk-taking, facilitating the cultivation of a student body who are active agents in their educational journey.

So, what went wrong in the teachers' efforts at Katedralskole. We contend that the racially segregated landscape in Oslo must share blame for failing to create the kind of atmosphere Freire (1970) envisaged for a genuine pedagogy of risk to transpire. Despite their good intentions and best efforts, the scandal demonstrates the complications involved. The new Norwegian curriculum has introduced the concept of life skills (livsmestring). The Norwegian term "livsmestring" translates to "life mastery" or "mastery of life" in English. It refers to the skills, knowledge, and strategies that individuals develop to cope with life's challenges, make advised decisions, and navigate personal and social situations effectively. This concept often comprises areas such as emotional resilience, problem-solving, interpersonal skills, and the ability to manage stress and adversity. In educational contexts, livsmestring is frequently associated with programs aimed at promoting personal development and well-being among students. It is clear that the teachers at the school took this mandate seriously. Educators who embrace the pedagogy of risk recognize that uncertainty is an inherent aspect of learning and actively encourage students to confront it. Such an approach advances the development of problem-solving skills and adaptability, equipping students to navigate the complexities of the real world.

> It is painful to examine sales posters for Africans from the slave trade, read religious texts that condemn homosexuality and assert that women are subordinate to men, view Adolf Hitler's propaganda videos, or explain what happened in Rwanda in 1994. The students react with anger and dismay. Nevertheless, or rather for that reason, these are very important topics to teach about (Teachers at Oslo Katedral Skole, 2024).

In addition to problem-posing, Freire (1970) challenges us to recognize the entangled and symbiotic relationship between the oppressed and the oppressor, positing that true liberation can only occur when both parties engage in a pedagogical process characterized by love and mutual respect. He contends that the oppressors must recognize their own dehumanization, and the wounds inflicted by their actions, while the oppressed must reclaim their agency and ability to enact change. Within the context of this pedagogy of risk, this notion becomes particularly significant.

> This, then, is the great humanistic and historical task of the oppressed. To liberate themselves and their oppressors as well. The oppressors, who oppress, exploit, and rape by virtue of their power, cannot find in this power the strength to liberate either the oppressed or themselves. Only power that springs from the weakness of the oppressed will be sufficiently strong to free both (Freire, 1970, p. 26).

The teachers at Oslo Katedralskole extended their hands to their students with the above in mind. They wrote in the opinion piece: "The goal is for us, together with the students, to be able to address such atrocities and injustices with an analytical distance. Why did racism arise? What caused people not to be treated with equal worth? What drives former neighbors and friends to kill each other? What is a

hateful expression?" (Teachers at Oslo Katedral Skole, 2024). As interlocutors in a Freirean praxis of mutual liberation, the teachers were willing to engage in jointly examining societal injustices. As such, they not only challenge their own positions of white privilege and power but also invite those in positions of privilege to understand the complexities of oppression. Freire's vision of a pedagogy of love emphasizes that authentic education requires compassion and solidarity, distilling an environment where both the oppressed and oppressors can critically cooperate in the pursuit of justice. Through this synergetic relationship, the pedagogy of risk evolves into a powerful tool for creating transformative learning experiences that nurture critical consciousness and inspire collective action, ultimately leading to a more equitable and just society.

Therefore, the N-word scandal should be viewed as a powerful catalyst compelling both white and non-white communities to briefly cease their relentless march toward their respective "Bantustans", evocative of the segregated realities of Apartheid South Africa, or the traumatic mass migrations that accompanied the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947. It is incumbent on all stakeholders in education to confront the upsetting truths about our divisions and to engage in a crucial dialogue about our shared humanity, before we continue along the path of cultural and linguistic compartmentalization. It is a poignant reminder that the fences we construct—be they of race, history, or prejudice—must not blind us to the urgency of understanding one another's experiences and see the wisdom of embracing in a pedagogy of love and risk. Freire (1970) considers this a duty of the oppressed in particular.

> Who are better prepared than the oppressed to understand the terrible significance of an oppressive society? Who suffer the effects of oppression more than the oppressed? Who can better understand the necessity of liberation? They will not gain this liberation by chance but through the praxis of their quest for it, through their recognition of the necessity to fight for it. And this fight because of their purpose given it by the oppressed, will actually constitute an act of love opposing the lovelessness which lies at the heart of the oppressor's violence even when clothed in false generosity (Freire, 1970, p. 27).

We have not recounted and critically discussed the incident at this school to castigate the non-white student who took offence and leaked the story. On the one hand, we lament the failure to engage with this "teachable moment" or "point of encounter" and the potential for setting a precedent that answers to the five dimensions of James Banks's model of multicultural education. Who knows what new and revolutionary model the teachers and students at the school could have crystallized which could have served as a guiding light for other schools in Norway plagued by the debilitating condition of "see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil" which seems to be the unspoken rule. As the teachers put it in their opinion piece:

> It would have been much more comfortable to refrain from doing so. It would have been safer for us to avoid the controversies. No one films us when we talk about property rights, planned economies, or "cultural weeks". But if we allow our teaching to consist solely of topics that do not provoke controversy, we have failed in our mission. We will not expose the injustices that people have inflicted upon one another (Teachers at Oslo Katedral Skole, 2024).

It is our hope that the teachers at Oslo Katedralskole continue to engage in a pedagogy of risk. By refusing to succumb to the fear of distortion to dictate educational content, the school not only champions the richness of its curriculum but also upholds its mission to confront and illuminate the racial injustices that have shaped societal relationships. Therefore, it is our hope that the teachers at Oslo Cathedral School continue to embrace this pedagogy of risk, tenaciously stepping outside their comfort zones to engage their students in dialogues that challenge assumptions and encourage a deeper exploration of social issues. Such engagement has the potential to cultivate a generation of critically aware individuals equipped to confront inequities and inspire change within their communities. Noel Ignatiev was a white academic who called boldly for whites to "die to whiteness" understood as the ideology of white supremacy and not skin color. In his controversially entitled book *Treason to Whiteness is Loyalty to Humanity* (2022), he writes:

> We seek to draw upon that tradition, as well as—we do not deny it—an even older tradition, which declares that a person must die so that he or she can be born again. We hold that so-called whites must cease to exist as whites in order to realize themselves as something else, to put it another way: white people must commit suicide as whites in order to come alive as workers , or youth, or women, or whatever other identity can induce them to change (Ignatiev, 2022, p. 235).

This drastic idea of "suicide as whites" is not a literal endorsement of self-destruction but rather an allegorical call to demolish the social constructs and beliefs that maintain white supremacy. In the context of the happenings at Oslo Katedralskole, the teachers aimed to invoke an analogous kind of shock—one that compels students and educators alike to confront the ugly truths of racial and historical injustices. By tackling these difficult issues head-on, they wanted to catalyze a collective awakening, breaking down the barriers of racial illiteracy and avoidance that have long allowed bigotry to simmer and fester unopposed. The desire for such defiance aligns with Ignatiev's militant vision: a necessary upheaval that heralds liberation. The teachers' intent reflects an urgent need to stimulate this "death" of racial prejudices, an acute cleansing that may enable new identities rooted in empathy, solidarity, and a shared commitment to remedying historical wrongs. Fortunately, the teachers at the school have chosen to engage in a pedagogy of risk. There is hope for change.

> We will continue to read poetry that contains words that evoke disgust. We will also not hide primary sources that contain racist statements or ignore horrific genocides. However, we promise to do everything in our power to place the painful aspects in context so that students understand the connections and are able to engage with the expression in an analytical context (Teachers at Oslo Katedral Skole, 2024).

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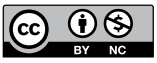

Part II

Chapter 6
Tagore's Kabuliwala: Lost Connections in Segregated Schools

> Mini's mother is unfortunately a very timid lady. Whenever she hears a noise in the street, or sees people coming towards the house, she always jumps to the conclusion that they are either thieves, or drunkards, or snakes, or tigers, or malaria or cockroaches, or caterpillars, or an English sailor. Even after all these years of experience, she is not able to overcome her terror. So she was full of doubts about the Kabuliwallah, and used to beg me to keep a watchful eye on him.
>
> I tried to laugh her fear gently away, but then she would turn round on me seriously, and ask me solemn questions.
>
> "Were children never kidnapped?"
>
> "Was it, then, not true that there was slavery in Kabul?"
>
> "Was it so very absurd that this big man should be able to carry off a tiny child?"
>
> I urged that, though not impossible, it was highly improbable. But this was not enough, and her dread persisted. As it was indefinite, however, it did not seem right to forbid the man the house, and the intimacy went on unchecked
>
> — *Kabuliwala* Rabindranath Tagore (1892, 2015, pp. 35, 36).

The Indian poet, philosopher and artist, Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) had the distinction of becoming the first ever non-European in 1913 to win the Nobel Prize in literature for "Gitanjali", a compilation of profoundly spiritual and meditative poems. The excerpt above is from one of his most popular short stories *Kabuliwala* (1892) which explores themes of friendship, humanity, and the bonds that transcend cultural and geographical boundaries. Tagore's daughter Mini is a 5-year-old lively girl who is initially frightened by the exotic appearance of the Kabuliwala, a peripatetic seller of wares. Kabuliwalas were both admired and feared in Tagore's Bengal. The Kabuliwala "wore the loose soiled clothing of his people, with a tall turban; there was a bag on his back, and he carried boxes of grapes in his hand" (Tagore, 2015, p. 33). Mini had managed to inadvertently catch the attention of the Kabuliwala when she excitedly shouted "A Kabuliwala! a Kabuliwala".

> At which exact moment the Kabuliwala turned and looked up at the child. When she saw this, overcome by terror, she fled to her mother's protection, and disappeared. She had a blind belief that inside the bag, which the big man carried, there were perhaps two or three children like herself (Tagore, 2015, p. 33).

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What began as an unlikely encounter filled with terror soon morphed into a most improbable friendship between Mini and the Kabuliwala transcending barriers of distrust inculcated through adults. "One morning, however, not many days later, as I was leaving the house, I was startled to find Mini, seated, on a bench near the door, laughing and talking, with the great Kabuliwala at her feet. In all her life, it appeared; my small daughter had never found so patient a listener, save her father" (Tagore, 2015, p. 33). The prima facie unbridgeable differences of age, nationality, class and gender, among others, dissipated in this encounter transcended by the human craving for bonding and understanding, regardless of societal divisions. Tagore's narrative about the implausible friendship between his 5-year-old daughter Mini and the Kabuliwala serves as a gripping metaphor for the possibilities inherent in the currently racially segregated educational landscape in Oslo and other cities in Norway. This story illustrates the capacity for meaningful ties to crystallize between individuals from backgrounds that may appear to be fundamentally incompatible, thereby highlighting the need for a re-evaluation of the barriers that contribute to segregation in education.

The school leadership's frustration with the acute behavioral issues prevalent in the "ghetto" school was clearly articulated during the interview discussed in the previous chapter, in which the lead author was specifically asked if he had noticed the skin color of the students. On another occasion in the staff room, one white teacher unapologetically stated, "This school is black and white: the staff room is white while the rest of the school is black" (apparently the lead author's "blackness" was immaterial to the broader, general observation). The scale of the problem of ethnic segregation in Oslo, which was briefly outlined in the previous chapter, can be gauged from one research which states.

> Among Oslo's 136 primary and secondary schools, there are currently minority-language students in the majority at 50 schools. Of these, 19 schools have a minority percentage of over 80 per cent, and 9 schools have over 90 per cent. At the same time, the proportion of schools with a minority percentage of under 10 percent is also increasing. Today, this applies to 23 schools (Utdanningsnytt, 2020).

In one study, historian and author, Ida Søraunet Wangberg (Utdanningsnytt, 2020) unpacks euphemisms steeped in race and racism that label certain schools as "good schools" and others as "bad schools". She argues that the differences between these schools had little to do with the quality of education and everything to do with the racialized characteristics of the students enrolled. "What she found was an increasingly class- and ethnically segregated school environment, with a rising proportion of both 'blendahvit' (snow white) and 'fully brown' schools" (Utdanningsnytt, 2020). The term "blendahvit" initially appeared in the Norwegian press in 1957, originally used to refer to objects correlated with cleanliness, such as laundry and teeth. By 1997, "blendahvit" began to be applied to skin color. This moniker has since evolved to imply a racial categorization that reflects broader societal views, especially in political discourse, where it has been used to critique the lack of diversity among representatives (Gooding, 2020).

It is essential to recognize that the towering high-rise buildings that characterize the racially segregated neighborhoods of Oslo, home to the "ghetto" schools,

emerged in the wake of World War II. Given the pressing need for urban reconstruction and affordable housing, the socialist government, led by the Labor Party leader, Prime Minister Einar Gerhardsen, embarked on a bold social and urban development program. Gerhardsen, who has been dubbed the "father of modern Norway", was riding high in the polls and campaigned for an all-embracing welfare state that included affordable housing, healthcare, and education as fundamental rights for all citizens. The satellite towns with their high rises and affordable flats were in a sense incarnations of the socialist ideal of self-sufficient communities that combined residential areas with green spaces and local amenities.

The government prioritized constructing high-rise buildings to efficiently utilize land and maximize housing availability. Often characterized by modernist architectural trends, these structures symbolized the ideals of egalitarianism and social welfare. The design aimed to foster a sense of community and improve the quality of life for residents, reflecting the socialist values that were prevalent during this period. The ideals of egalitarianism and social welfare were epitomized in these modernist architectural trends—edifices attesting to the omnipotent benign hand of socialist technocrats.

> The housing was to be good, but modest. The guidelines were based on analyses and surveys conducted nationally and internationally before and during the war, primarily reflecting the views of functionalist and socialist-oriented architects. They emphasized a rational and scientific approach, with a strict prioritization of essential needs (Nedrelid, 2019).

Hansen (2006) asks the question: why are satellite towns stigmatized and struggle to shake off a poor reputation in the housing market? The media and even academics have done their part to constantly portray these satellite towns as the reserve of immigrants and crime and hence perpetuate their ongoing devaluation. Significantly, these dynamic underscores the vexed nature of structural racism and white supremacy in shaping perceptions and experiences among different racial groups. While the Norwegian welfare state is embedded in notions of equality and social justice, these principles frequently dither when applied to real-world circumstances, specifically within the housing market. The premeditated focus on the undesirable facets of satellite towns, coupled with white trepidation about increasing diversity, leads to the sidelining of the residents who live there, reinforcing a polarizing narrative that puts a wedge between "us" and "them". In reality, these satellite towns enjoy a much higher standard when compared to other urban areas in European cities. One reason is the high rates of home ownership among non-whites in satellite towns. Put differently, high home ownership rates would mean modest to high levels of employment and owners who would invest in the upkeep of their property. None of this is commensurate with the classic understanding of ghettos. There is clearly a mismatch between the reality in these much-maligned satellite towns than what the public discourse would suggest.

The issues of social environment, crime, and insecurity are frequently mentioned in debates about living conditions, which can trigger negative stereotypes. For instance, when it is reported that satellite towns are dominated by non-whites and have the poorest living conditions in the country, this cements the notion that these neighborhoods are off-bounds for white people. Gordon Allport's (1979) contact

theory has been significant in social psychology positing a framework for numerous interventions with a view towards reducing prejudice and promoting social harmony. Allport posited that interpersonal contact is an effective way to ameliorate prejudice and improve relations between groups. For this to transpire though, certain criteria must be met. In addition to there being common objectives, the interlocutors must enjoy equal status. Furthermore, the parties must feel that social norms and the pertinent authorities are supportive of efforts to foster understanding, empathy and meaningful interactions between the groups. Such genuine acquaintances lessen prejudice, diminish anxiety, and foster more positive intergroup relations. (Allport, 1979).

> Prejudice (unless deeply rooted in the character structure of the individual) may be reduced by equal status contact between majority and minority groups in pursuit of common goals. The effect is greatly enhanced if this contact is sanctioned by institutional supports (i.e. by law, custom or local atmosphere), and provided it is of a sort that leads to the perception of common interests and common humanity between members of the two groups (Allport, 1979, p. 281).

Clearly, the aspiration of wholesome contact between whites and non-whites flounders at the very first criterion: equal status. The whites who have fled the now racially segregated schools in east and southeast Oslo and pockets of other cities such as Drammen (Fjell), belong to the working class. As such, Allport's (1979) criterion of equal status—at least in socioeconomic terms—was in place. Unfortunately, class solidarity proved to be an inadequate foundation upon which to construct the broader framework of social harmony. Marx and Engels envisioned a day when the workers of the world would discover their status and common destiny as workers: the proletariat. This transnational consciousness would engender efforts towards a common purpose. Noel Ignatiev (2022) is convinced that white supremacy was the undoing of this discovery of equal status and a common destiny among the workers of America which he posits is the reason for socialism's failure in the USA. Ignatiev (2022) outlines the machinations of what he calls the "sweetheart agreement". It is worth citing this "sweetheart agreement" in its entirety as we will flesh out the various components later.

> The US ruling class has made a deal with the misleaders of American labor and through them with the masses of white workers. The terms of the deal, worked out over the three-hundred-year history of the development of capitalism in our country, are these: you white workers help us conquer the world and enslave the non-white majority of the earth's laboring force, and we will repay you with a monopoly of the skilled jobs, we will cushion you against the most severe shocks of the economic cycle, provide you with health and education facilities superior to those of the non-white population, grant you the freedom to spend your money and leisure time as you wish without social restrictions, enable you on occasion to promote one of your number out of the ranks of the laboring class, and in general confer on you the material and spiritual privileges befitting your white skin (Ignatiev, 2022, p. 47).

It is clear that white supremacy and privilege, as Ignatiev (2022) outlines, has been the Achilles heel of Marxism. The fissures inherent in the "global proletariat" become painfully ostensible as more black and brown people emigrate to historically white nations, a fact that Marx and Engels could only see through a glass

darkly in an era when white Europeans emigrated to the USA. This tension or contradictions within Marx's theory in regard to race and class was informed by the specific historical realities of nineteenth-century Europe, in which the issues of race were often eclipsed by class struggle, as there was an assumption the working class they referred to was white and European. Contemporary demographic shifts in the West have thrown a monkey wrench into the spanner works of Marxism. It is for this reason movements for social justice, such as Black Lives Matter, demonstrate how race intersects with class, and accentuate the inextricable link between economic inequalities and systemic racism.

Theorists on the left and other activists understand the limitations of classical Marxism and have sought to account for contemporary challenges by integrating intersectionality among others to highlight the plethora of ways in which multiple identities, including race, ethnicity, gender, and class, feed into the social dynamics that reflect the realities of today's "global proletariat". The phenomenon of "white flight" can usefully be understood through the previously mentioned prism of W.E.B. Du Bois's (1935) concept of "double consciousness" and David Roediger's (2022) idea of the "wages of whiteness". Socioeconomic perks are created and policed through the management of non-white bodies. Du Bois's concept of "double consciousness", which in its original context psychoanalyzes the condition of being an African American, is inverted in this context, as the increasing presence of non-white individuals heightens the awareness among certain white individuals of their own visibility and discomfort in becoming a minority.

Why are whites fleeing the satellite towns in droves? Du Bois's concept of double consciousness refers to the inner turmoil racialized minorities experience in navigating between their own identities and a public discourse which stigmatizes and devalues these identities. We argue that something similar occurs when working class whites, especially those in lower-income brackets, experience when they become a minority in their own country, as the female student in the previous chapter stated. From the majority white perspective outside the "ghetto" there is the suspicion that the whites who are left behind are either too poor to leave or have "gone native". Writing in the US context, Allport contends:

> We can lay it down for certain that it is not the Negro, but the white, who wants (or thinks he wants) segregation in housing and elsewhere. As in the study just mentioned it generally turns out that fully three-quarters of the white population say that they do not want to live in the immediate neighborhood of Negroes. If, then, integrated housing is proposed as a policy we must expect protests from whites in advance (Allport, 1979, p. 273).

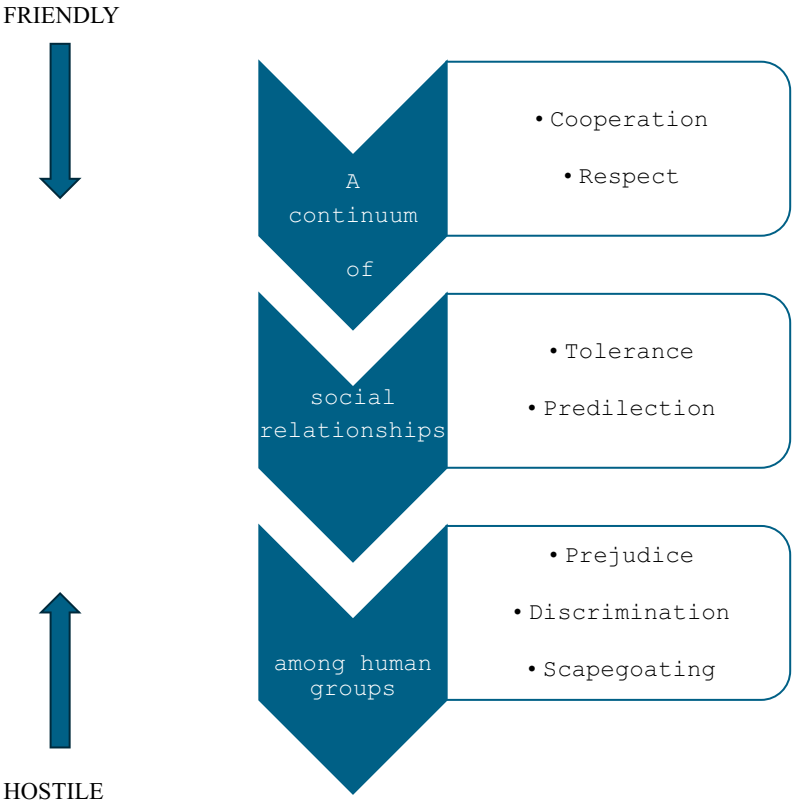
There evidently exists a desire to maintain a sense of superiority and social status among some of the whites who "flee" the "ghetto". This can manifest in a fear of being "tainted" by proximity to black and brown bodies, leading to a preference for living in mainly white neighborhoods. The psychological stresses associated with being in racially diverse spaces, often unfairly stereotyped as "ghettos", contribute to the decision of many white families to flee urban areas. "The white workers are this conditioned to believe that every step toward racial equality necessarily means a worsening of their own conditions. Their bonus is cut. Production rates go up.

Their insurance is harder to get and more expensive. Their garbage is collected less often. Their children's schools deteriorate" (Ignatiev, 2022, p. 101). Roediger's idea of the "wages of whiteness" speaks to the unmerited social and psychological paybacks that accrue to white individuals simply by virtue of their race. In a manner not dissimilar to Peggy MacIntosh's notion of the "invisible knapsack" of white privileges, the wages of whiteness and the very knowledge of the perceived superiority of white skin, is unspoken, but tacitly communicated. In this context, the "wages" can be perceived as the privilege of not having to grapple with the complexities of living in racially integrated communities. For poorer whites, such wages denote not only societal acceptance but also a perceived safeguard against the dilution of their racial identity in the eyes of the white majority who perform and enact whiteness through such behaviors as circumventing racially integrated spaces, participating in exclusive social networks, and upholding community standards that choose homogeneity over diversity. It becomes a matter of preserving an immaculate image of whiteness, which is often prioritized over geographical convenience or proximity to employment opportunities.

As educators, we are exercised by the above for a plethora of reasons—most of them obvious and uncontroversial. However, the terrorist attacks of the 22nd of July 2011, conducted by Anders Breivik, underscored the urgency of grappling with a discourse which gradually progressed from prejudice against non-whites to scapegoating. In his Manifesto with the chilling title *2083: A European Declaration of Independence*, Anders Breivik writes the following:

> Partly, I also convinced myself originally that I was first and foremost against Islam, and that writing about skin color (or multiculturalism, for that matter) would only complicate this fight… But above all, if you believe that non-white racism exists, it is actually immoral not to deal with the problem and its victims. I am convinced that not just non-white, but especially anti-white racism is real and a very underestimated phenomenon (Anders Breivik, 2011, pages not numbered).

In his *ABC's of Scapegoating*, Allport (1948, p. 9) defines scapegoating as a "phenomenon wherein some of the aggressive energies of a person or a group are focused upon another individual, group, or object; the amount of aggression and blame being either partly or wholly unwarranted". Breivik's toxic anti non-white ideology was theorized in a posh, upper scale part of Oslo. In the absence of any significant contact with non-whites and goaded by the xenophobic and racist fantasies of the white extremist milieu he was immersed in, it was a matter of time before the scapegoating of Muslims, non-whites, women, leftists and other diffuse actors (e.g. adherents of the conspiratorial theory of Eurabia) would endanger lives. Allport (1948, p. 8) operates with a "continuum of social relationships among human groups".



Allport (1948, p. 15) asks the question, "Is race prejudice an instinct?" In response, he asserts, "The common scene of small black and white children playing together proves that a difference in color need not produce lasting fear. Furthermore, the attitude of many children, on meeting a member of a different race for the first time, is not one of fear but of friendly curiosity". We return to Rabindranath Tagore's daughter and the dreaded Kabuliwala from the remote mountains of Afghanistan. The story ends rather sadly. The Kabuliwala, no doubt carrying the weight of his stigma reacts violently to a customer who owed him money for a "Rampuri shawl, but had falsely denied having bought it, and that in the course of the quarrel, Rahmun [Kabuliwala] had struck him" (Tagore, 2015, p. 37). While being led away by the police, Mini asked him if he was going to the house of the father-in-law which was a euphemism for prison, "the place where we are well cared for, at no expense to ourselves" (Tagore, 2015, p. 35). Eight years would pass before the Kabuliwala would be released from prison. The years of incarceration and separation from Mini disrupted their unusual bond rendering them awkward strangers to each other. Mini was a young lady and she no longer remembered the eccentric Kabuliwala. The day the Kabuliwala was released from prison and desired to meet Mini was the day of her wedding. Tagore sacrifices some of the money for the wedding arrangements to

send the Kabuliwala back to his native Kabul and be reunited with his little girl who was also a grown lady by then.

The opportunity for black and white children to genuinely bond and develop meaningful relationships is often upended by the blight of segregation, which can only engender further misunderstanding and fear rather than curiosity and friendship. Allport (1948) challenges the notion that racial prejudice is instinctual by observing that children, notwithstanding race, often demonstrate a natural leaning toward play and companionship when given the opportunity. The image of small black and white children playing together illustrates that differences in skin color do not inherently generate fear; rather, initial encounters frequently elicit friendly curiosity. This fundamental insight highlights the lost potential for promoting intercultural friendships among children when societal structures impose divisive barriers.

The poignant conclusion of Tagore's story serves as a metaphor for the broader consequences of racial and cultural segregation. It tenderly shows how valuable opportunities for bonding, empathy, and genuine understanding between individuals of different backgrounds can be squandered. The failure to allow children the chance to network freely and openly results in a perpetuation of fears and stereotypes, much like those that burden Mini's mother and the society at large who could only envisage a Kabuliwala as the exoticized "Other". Schools appear to be the last bastions of hope if a racially diverse demographic—which characterizes an increasing number of Western countries—is to develop intercultural and inter-ethnic competence. It would be both too late and too risky to anticipate that such competence would develop successfully in workplace environments.

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Chapter 7
Bantustans in Norwegian Education

> T]he Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act of 1949; the Immorality Act of 1950 prohibiting sexual relations between white and black people; the Group Areas Act of 1950 making residential separation between the races compulsory; the race-based separation of public facilities enshrined in the Separate Amenities Acts of 1953 and the Bantu Education Act of 1953, which Hendrik Verwoerd justified on the basis that, it served no useful purpose to teach a black child a curriculum that was traditionally European. He went on to say that it would be unnecessary and even absurd to teach a black child mathematics, because he would never use it in practice (Scher, 2014, p. 333).

The excerpt above serves as a haunting testament to the draconian apartheid laws of South Africa (1948 until the early 1990s), which unremittingly endeavored to splinter and isolate the tapestry of human existence, incarcerating individuals within rigid confines determined solely by the shade of their skin. We will attempt to draw attention, and a few lessons hopefully, in this section from apartheid South Africa to warn about the dreadful consequences and costs of a racially segregated landscape in Norway. We do not contend that the circumstances in the two countries are in any way comparable; nonetheless, we seek to present a distinct perspective with the intention of provoking critical reflection and awakening a heightened sense of awareness. Obviously, while apartheid coerced segregation along racial lines, contemporary racial segregation in Norway exhibits elements of voluntary choice. We emphasize "elements of voluntary choice" because socioeconmic factors significantly constrain the options of many minorities even in egalitarian Norway. By way of empirical data, we will present cases from our own practice as teachers that highlight the alarming consequences of segregation in micro (individual) and macro (national) terms.

Case 1: ***An English lesson in high school.*** Students were informed that they were to work in groups of five. The assignment was as follows: Each group was expected to select a media source (TV, newspaper, etc.) from one of the five Anglophone countries—United kingdom, United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand). Next, students were expected to collaborate in selecting one story that covered one aspect of the country's affairs—e.g. politics, culture, sports, etc., after which they were given a set of questions tailored to their selected topic. Several of the students in this majority-minority ethnic classroom configuration expressed some discomfort at the project and inquired whether they could select other English channels such as Al Jazeera or Al Arabiya, for instance.

P. Thomas et al., *Education and Cultural Evolution in Norway's Multiethnic Society*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-89018-5_7

It was evident that the students were taken aback when they learned that the news channels, they preferred were not applicable to the assignment. The project was on the verge of derailing. The students were assured that while these channels maintained high standards of English proficiency (several news anchors were former BBC or CNN reporters), the aim of the assignment was to acquire some familiarity with the history, culture and similar conditions exemplifying Anglophone countries. Al Jazeera, for instance, is based in Doha, Qatar, and is dogged by concerns about the degree of the network's editorial independence, given its connection to the Qatari government.

The Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa, provided a loan of QAR 500 million ($137 million) to sustain Al Jazeera through its first 5 years, for instance, according to the journalist Hugh Miles in his book *Al-Jazeera: The Inside Story of the Arab News Channel That is Challenging the West* (2006). Critics suggest that this relationship may affect the framing of news stories, particularly those involving Qatar or its allies. Likewise, Al Arabiya is owned by the Saudi-based MBC Group which influences its editorial direction, often providing news coverage aligned with Saudi Arabia's political and cultural perspectives, leading to critiques of bias, particularly regarding its reporting on regional politics and conflicts.

The issue of racial segregation in schools in Norway clearly presents formidable risks to the inculcation of democratic values such as freedom of speech, particularly when probing the reactions of students within a racially and culturally divided educational environment. When students were gently challenged with the reality that their selected news channels were not applicable to the educational assignment, they exhibited palpable surprise and discomfort. This moment underscores the broader implications of their experiences in a racially segregated system, where exposure to oppositional perspectives may be limited and where the curriculum may not adequately reflect the complexity of global narratives. As educators, we were not fully aware of the degree to which these students held a negative disposition towards engaging with content from Western news media; this skepticism extended beyond political issues, encompassing even non-political topics such as sports. One is reminded of black South African anti-apartheid activist and the founding leader of the Black Consciousness Movement, Steve Biko's concern about the fragmentation of the non-white demographic in the heyday of apartheid:

> What in fact is happening is that the black world is beginning to be completely fragmented and that people are beginning to talk sectional politics… they accept that the rest of South Africa is for whites. Also, none of them sees himself as fighting the battle for all black people. Xhosas want their Transkei, the Zulus their Zululand etc. Colored people harbor secret hopes of being classified as "brown Afrikaners" and therefore meriting admittance into the white laager while Indian people might be given a vote to swell the buffer zone between whites and Africans… and in the meantime the enemy bestrides South Africa like a colossus laughing aloud at the fragmented attempts by the powerless masses making appeals to his deaf ears (Biko, 2017, p. 39).

The project's near derailment highlights a critical point: when students are segregated into echo chambers of thought—whether due to racial segregation or cultural insularity—they risk losing the ability to critically engage with and understand

perspectives beyond their immediate environment. The assurance given to these students that their media preferences, despite their high standards of English proficiency, did not quite meet the educational goals of the project indicates a disconcerting propensity to prioritize familiarity over critical engagement. This approach is concerning in a democratic society where varied perspectives and free expression are foundational elements. Chantal Mouffe (2013) asserts that conflict is a fundamental aspect of democracy, serving as a necessary counterpart to Jürgen Habermas's emphasis on consensus. According to Mouffe, democracy flourishes on the acknowledgment and existence of opposition and dissent, as these elements foster a dynamic and pluralistic political landscape. She asserts that efforts to achieve a friendly consensus alone can silence genuine political discourse and marginalize dissenting voices, leading to a stifling of democratic engagement.

> There is a distinction which I take to be crucial for grasping the specificity of modern democratic politics: the distinction between antagonism and agonism. A relation of antagonism is one that takes place between enemies, while a relation of agonism takes place between adversaries. Against the two dominant models of democratic politics (the "aggregative" one that reduces politics to the negotiation of interests, and the "deliberative" or "dialogic" one which believes that decisions on matters of common concern should result from the free and unconstrained public deliberation of all). I envisage democratic politics as a form of "agonistic pluralism" (Mouffe, 2013).

As teachers concerned for this minority background students' future in Norway, it was clear to us that our role was to promote an "agonistic pluralism" where these students, who were let down by forces beyond their control, were challenged with learning material that triggered discomfort. "This is precisely the function of the left/right distinction. The left/right opposition is the means through which legitimate conflict is given form and institutionalized. If this framework does not exist or is weakened, the process of transformation of antagonism into agonism is hindered, and this can have dire consequences for democracy" (Mouffe, 2013, p. 161). Mouffe stresses that robust democratic practices should embrace an "agonistic" approach where competing viewpoints are openly confronted and contested rather than stifled in favor of a false sense of unity. This perspective allows for a richer and more vibrant political culture, recognizing that legitimate disagreements can drive social change and prevent the homogeneity that often accompanies consensus-driven models.

On the one hand, the students' partiality towards channels from the Middle East were welcome opportunities to discuss democracy and human rights. However, and at the risk of appearing patronizing, it was soon clear that any legitimate criticism of the countries in question was met with denials and accusations of western bias. Qatar has faced significant international criticism regarding its human rights record, particularly in the context of hosting several world class events and culminating in the FIFA World Cup in 2022. There has been critique about the suppression of women's rights, as Qatari law and societal norms impose restrictions on women's freedoms, including guardianship laws that limit women's autonomy in various aspects of life. Furthermore, Qatar has been criticized for its stance on LGBT+ rights, as homosexuality is criminalized, and there is little acceptance of LGBT+

individuals within the legal and cultural frameworks. Moreover, the exploitation of migrant workers' rights has been a prominent issue, with reports highlighting abusive labor practices, including poor working conditions, wage theft, and insufficient legal protections, particularly for those from poorer countries who were instrumental in constructing World Cup infrastructure. According to Human Rights Watch:

> Qatar's laws require women to have a male guardian's permission to marry, regardless of age or former marital status. Once married, she can be deemed "disobedient" if she does not obtain her husband's permission before working, traveling, or if she leaves her home or refuses to have sex with him, without a "legitimate" reason (Human Rights Watch, 2021).

We only labor the above to draw attention to the conundrum teachers face in racially segregated schools, a growing phenomenon in some major cities in Norway. Our aim is not to demonize countries or media sources. On the contrary, we are convinced that the existence of such contradictions, commensurate with Chantal Mouffe's "agonistic pluralism", offers a vital opportunity to enter into a dialogue and deliberation with these students. Unfortunately, and central to our argument in this book, racially segregated schools undermine the curricular mandate to promote democratic values. If students are educated within a segregated framework that mirrors these biases—favoring certain narratives while silencing others—they are inevitably deprived of a balanced understanding of the world. This becomes, to borrow from Mouffe (2013, p. 157) "a politics without adversary". Mouffe defines the "adversary": "A pluralist democratic order supposes that the opponent is not considered as an enemy to be destroyed but as an adversary whose existence is legitimate and must be tolerated. We will fight against her ideas, but we will not put into question her right to defend them." In racially segregated classrooms, there is potential for productive dialogue through the presence of differing convictions and opinions. However, there is also the adverse reality that an overriding adversarial consensus, which we view as antithetical to democratic values, unexpectedly silences teachers. This formidable consensus throttles the diversity of perspectives that Chantal Mouffe (2013) argues is vital for a thriving democracy. Instead of furthering constructive debate, such an environment suppresses dissenting voices and contracts the role of educators as facilitators of critical discourse, thereby hindering the development of students' democratic engagement and understanding.

It will be a brave teacher who locks horns with a sea of voices antagonistic to democratic values which are taken for granted in non-segregated schools. In a racially segmented educational context, there is a risk that minority students, much like the viewers of these channels, could be marginalized further, denying them the opportunity to voice their own experiences or to engage with differing perspectives. This environment not only stifles freedom of speech but also threatens to instill a sense of apathy or resentment among students who feel alienated from the wider discourse. The inability to grapple with diverse ideas can hinder the development of critical thinking skills essential for participation in a functional democracy. Ultimately, the hazards of racial segregation in schools extend beyond scholastic success; they intersect profoundly with the principles of democracy and freedom of speech. By creating an environment where only select narratives are acknowledged

and others are eschewed, we run the risk of nurturing a generation ill-equipped to challenge prevailing power structures or advocate for themselves and their communities. This exclusion not only undermines individual student growth but also weakens the democratic fabric of society, limiting opportunities for both dialogue and progress.

We provocatively ask, however outlandish the thought, if there could come a day when the powers that be declare that non-white students in "ghetto" schools in Norway be exempt from studying democracy on grounds similar to the Bantu Education Act of South Africa in 1953 which "Hendrik Verwoerd justified on the basis that, it served no useful purpose to teach a black child a curriculum that was traditionally European. He went on to say that it would be unnecessary and even absurd to teach a black child mathematics, because he would never use it in practice" (Scher, 2014, p. 333). The Bantu Education Act in South Africa functions as a historical example of how education systems have been used to impose racial segregation and constraint the intellectual growth of ostracized groups. By systematically denying black students access to quality education, particularly in subjects like mathematics, the apartheid regime sought to retain control and suppress democratic aspirations.

We reiterate that while Norway and apartheid South Africa are fundamentally different in their historical and social contexts, it is crucial to acknowledge the distinctions between them; apartheid was a state-sanctioned system of racial segregation and oppression, designed to disenfranchise and control the black majority in South Africa. Norway, on the other hand, is a modern democracy. Norway has frequently been ranked as the top country in the United Nations Human Development Index (HDI). It consistently scores highly due to its strong economy, high standard of living, comprehensive welfare system, excellent healthcare and education services, strong commitment to equality, and sustainable development practices. As a result, Norway often serves as a benchmark for other nations aiming to improve their own levels of human development. We emphasize the value of vigilance in Norway to foil any drift towards further segregation, starkly contrasting its democratic and equitable foundations with conditions conducive to practices that may be reminiscent, even slightly, of the oppressive apartheid system of South Africa. Despite Norway's exemplary global status in human development, we must remain alert to the perils of smugness, ensuring that our achievements in equality and integration are not undermined by elusive shifts toward conflict-ridden practices.

There were some white teachers who had resigned themselves to believe that some countries and ethnic groups would never embrace democratic values. We disagree and suggest, commensurate with theorists of race and racism, that such views are themselves racist because some non-white peoples' anti-democracy stance is attributed to racial properties. There is no room for essentializing anti-democratic views which is tantamount to failing these vulnerable students under the guise of a perverse cultural relativism.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar (1891–1956) was an outstanding Indian jurist, economist, and social reformer who played a key role in drafting India's Constitution, serving as the first Minister of Law and Justice of independent India. He was a leading

advocate for the rights of marginalized communities, particularly the Dalits, and worked tirelessly to stamp out social discrimination and promote equality. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar grew gradually disenchanted with Mahatma Gandhi due to deep differences in their approaches to seeking redress for the social inequalities faced by Dalits, formerly known as "untouchables". Ambedkar criticized Gandhi for his paternalistic attitude and ambivalence in regard to the annihilation of the caste system; Ambedkar was particularly dissatisfied with Gandhi's preoccupation with ameliorating Hinduism from within rather than backing more radical measures. Ambedkar believed that political and social rights through legal and constitutional reforms were imperative, ultimately leading to a rupture in his relationship with Gandhi to pursue a separate and more forceful path for Dalit empowerment, including the historic Poona Pact negotiations in 1932 and ultimately converting to Buddhism as a means of rejecting the Hindu caste framework. Paradoxically, while the anglicization of education in India may have disadvantaged many, it also empowered the so-called untouchables such as Dr. Ambedkar.

> The colonial experience is so dense with layers of engagement that the English-speaking articulate class cannot fathom the news of celebration of Macaulay's birthday by Dalit activists. Thomas Babington Macaulay, as we all know, is credited for the official introduction of English education in colonial India. The appropriation of the "Western ways" in their favor by the Depressed Classes (Dalits in contemporary India) is resonant with the clue left by Ambedkar. Unabashed, he recorded that the establishment of the rule of the East India Company allowed his forefathers to break away from the hereditary caste occupation and that, his father also could follow suit to seek service in the Army of the Company (Kundu, 2018, p. xi).

Macaulay, it is fair to say, at least from a postcolonial perspective, has gone down in history as the quintessential colonialist with his *Minutes on Education* in 1835, which encouraged the introduction of English as the medium of instruction in Indian education. His *Minutes*, dripping with racial hubris, declared the superiority of Western literature and sciences over traditional Indian knowledge systems, arguing that education should create a class of anglicized Indians who would serve as intermediaries between the British rulers and the Indian populace. This approach both entrenched colonial dominance and undermined indigenous cultures and languages, leaving a lasting impact on India's educational and cultural landscape, often critiqued for promoting cultural inferiority and facilitating colonial control. A sample of Macaulay's crude racism follows:

> I have no knowledge of either Sanskrit or Arabic. But I have done what I could to form a correct estimate of their value. I have read translations of the most celebrated Arabic and Sanskrit works. I have conversed, both here and at home, with men distinguished by their proficiency in the Eastern tongues. I am quite ready to take the oriental learning at the valuation of the orientalists themselves. I have never found one among them who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia. The intrinsic superiority of the Western literature is indeed fully admitted by those members of the committee who support the oriental plan of education (Macaulay, 1835).

Just as Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and the "untouchable" Dalits adroitly navigated the tyrannical boundaries of the caste system by embracing the English language—an

inadvertent "gift" of colonialism that allowed them to articulate their plight and challenge the status quo in the language and discourse of the superpower of the day—we argue that students in "ghetto" schools can similarly capitalize on Western democratic values and traditions to empower themselves rather than refuse to engage with the BBC, CNN and similar sources. We see parallels between Ambedkar's experience and the contemporary circumstances faced by modern-day "Dalits" in segregated educational environments.

Ambedkar's skilled use of the English language was not simply an act of vacuous mimicry; it was a profoundly premeditated maneuver that enabled him to communicate the injustices committed against the Dalits on both a national and international stage. By adopting a language that was once a tool of colonial oppression, he transformed it into a medium for liberation, using it to crystallize a vision of social justice and equality. This appropriation of the colonizer's language and tools of reasoning (e.g. liberalism) facilitated the diffusion of his ideas and provided a platform for advocacy, effectively undermining the very societal structures that sought to render him and his community invisible. Ambedkar's writings and speeches brought visibility to the struggles of the untouchables, fostering a sense of collective identity and agency.

In a similar vein, students located within "ghetto" schools often cope with a twofold layer of marginalization: the socioeconomic factors that limit them to segregated educational settings and the corollary stigmatization that piggybacks on their identities within these spaces. However, rather than rejecting Western ideals and democratic traditions—which prima facie characterize the values of the majority that have historically oppressed them—these students have the capacity to engage critically with these concepts. By doing so, they can carve out a space for themselves in the public discourse, using the weapons of democratic engagement, such as debate, advocacy, and dialogue, to confront and dismantle the prejudices that have marginalized them. This approach demands cognizance not only of the systemic forces that secrete discourses that cement their disenfranchisement but also of their intrinsic agency to speak truth to power. Lingering in the realms of cultural relativism or snubbing the very framework that could enable their upliftment risks perpetuating their "incarceration"—a term that indicates both physical and psychological internment within societal and educational structures. By actively participating in the discourse surrounding democracy and equality, these students can challenge hegemonic narratives and assert their rights, much like Ambedkar did.

Additionally, this exercise in emancipation through "agonistic pluralism" (Mouffe, 2013) invites a deeper analysis of the educational practices within "ghetto" schools. The curriculum should not merely analyze Western values but should also inspire critical thinking and encourage students to question, scrutinize, and ultimately redefine what democracy means within their contexts. This will entail creating an educational environment that empowers students to speak for themselves, utilizing the very structures that have historically marginalized them as platforms for their voices. While we salute the famous dictum attributed to Audre Lorde, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House" (Lourdes, 1984), it is essential to recognize that figures such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X

were able to challenge and critique the configurations of oppression precisely because they grasped and deployed the very tools of communication that were available to them. King's powerful oratory and use of rhetoric allowed him to inspire and mobilize masses, emphasizing a vision of nonviolent resistance and justice that resounded across America, transcending racial divides. Similarly, Malcolm X's compelling speeches and commanding presence fostered a strong sense of identity and empowerment among African Americans, effectively articulating the frustrations and aspirations of minoritized groups.

There exists a pragmatic necessity of engaging with existing systems and structures—Lourde's "the master's tools"—to effectuate meaningful change. While it is true that these tools may reinforce the status quo, they can also be recruited towards the objective of empowerment and transformation. For instance, students from the "ghetto" schools can ply the tools of language, media, and political systems not merely as instruments of compliance but as arenas for amplifying their voices and advancing their causes. Just as Ambedkar repurposed the English language from a colonial tool of oppression into a weapon for liberation, students in "ghetto" schools have the opportunity to wield Western democratic traditions as catalysts of empowerment. By embracing and engaging with these traditions, they can combat the stigmatizing prejudices of the majority, retrieve their narratives, and pave the way for meaningful change within their communities. This active engagement not only challenges existing societal norms but also lays the groundwork for a more inclusive and equitable future, transforming what was once seen as a limitation into a powerful catalyst for social justice.

Additionally, it can be argued that while some may view the master's house as a limited or flawed source of support, it is also a site of power and influence that can be strategically navigated. By engaging with these systems, marginalized individuals can create coalitions, gain resources, and influence public perceptions and policies, fostering social change that might not be achievable solely through resistance. Thus, instead of rejecting the tools outright, a more nuanced approach involves recognizing their potential to serve transformative purposes while remaining vigilant to their limitations. In this sense, wielding the master's tools does not equate to an endorsement of the master's house; rather, it reflects a strategic engagement with the realities of the world in pursuit of genuine change. Lourdes (1984) states:

> Those of us who stand outside the circle of this society's definition of acceptable women; those of us who have been forged in the crucibles of difference—those of us who are poor, who are lesbians, who are Black, who are older—know that survival is not an academic skill. It is learning how to take our differences and make them strengths. For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change. And this fact is only threatening to those women who still define the master's house as their only source of support (Lourdes, 1984, p. 2).

While we empathize with Lourdes and acknowledge the particular context, one shining example of a man who repurposed the tools of the master, was Bishop Desmond Tutu. Rather than resigning themselves to a life of subjugation under the guise of divine will, many black South Africans utilized Christianity as a tool for

resistance. They redefined the messages of liberation and justice found in the scriptures, thus transmuting the same faith that had been employed to warrant their oppression into a source of strength and hope for liberation. Movements such as the Black Consciousness Movement and the liberation theology espoused by many African clergy demonstrate how religious frameworks can be reinterpreted to advocate for equality, human rights, and social justice. "Black consciousness sought to awaken in us the sense of our infinite value and worth in the sight of God because we were all created in God's image, so that our worth is intrinsic to who we are and not dependent on biological irrelevancies such as ethnicity, skin color or race" (Tutu, 1996, p. xxv).

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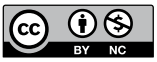

Chapter 8
Sleepwalking into Segregation?

> US-style ghetto segregation in Britain "could be getting worse", the former head of the Commission for Racial Equality, Lord Ousley, said today. Lord Ousley—whose report into race relations in Bradford was published after riots in the city in 2001—made the warning as the current CRE chairman, Trevor Phillips, prepared to call for controversial measures to prevent Britain from "sleepwalking" into racial and religious segregation. On Thursday, Mr Phillips will tell the Manchester Council for Community Relations that the "nightmare" of "fully fledged ghettos"—similar to those in New Orleans whose existence was highlighted by Hurricane Katrina—could emerge in this country (The Guardian, 2005).

It must be made clear at the outset that a historical comparison between Norway (population ca. 5.4 million in 2024) and the United Kingdom (ca. 69 million in 2024) with respect to the educational integration of immigrants is limited. The lion's share of immigration to the United Kingdom since World War II can be attributed to Britain's colonial legacy and the massive influx of East Europeans following the Schengen Agreement and subsequent European Union's 2004 and 2007 waves of enlargement. The largest demographic of immigrants to Norway come from European countries, particularly those in the European Union, drawn by economic opportunities and family reunification. Following this, significant numbers of individuals from the Middle East and North Africa sought refuge from conflict and persecution, while Sub-Saharan Africans migrated chiefly for asylum and family connections, with smaller numbers from Asia and Latin America moving for employment and education opportunities (Table 8.1).

While the historical trajectories of the two countries may differ, we argue that there are parallels in regard to the patterns of racial segregation. One major difference perhaps is the absence of any comparable communal/ethnic riots in Norway—e.g. the Brixton riots (Afro-Caribbean) of 1981 and the Oldham riots (British Pakistanis). In exploring the phenomenon of racial segregation within schools in Norway, it is relevant to draw parallels to the caution expressed by former heads of the Commission for Racial Equality in Britain, who employed the controversial "sleepwalking" metaphor towards segregation over two decades ago. In recent years, politicians on the center and left have hesitatingly espoused the rhetoric and

P. Thomas et al., *Education and Cultural Evolution in Norway's Multiethnic Society*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-89018-5_8

Table 8.1 Immigrants and Norwegian-born to immigrant parents

Europe	536,431	49.17%
Africa	149,501	13.70%
Asia	357,625	32.78%
North America	13,706	1.26%
Latin America and the Caribbean	31,061	2.85%
Oceania	2710	0.25%

Source: SSB (2023)

measures first articulated by populist and right-wing parties due to the increasing levels of crime among youth from immigrant backgrounds. Neighboring Sweden has become synonymous with a paralysis in being tough on gang-related crime with the pejorative "svensketilstander" [Swedish conditions]. The term has increasingly been used in Norway to refer to the societal conditions and challenges arising from high levels of gang-related crime, particularly those associated with groups of Middle Eastern descent, especially Kurds. This usage often emphasizes concerns over a rise in violent crime, drug-related issues, and retaliatory violence, which some argue reflect a deterioration in social order and safety similar to the problems faced in some Swedish cities.

With the approach of the 2025 election year, political parties are engaging in reciprocal denigration by invoking the term "svensketilstander" to suggest that their rivals have permitted conditions of anarchy and social disorder. This tactic aims to strike fear among voters, alleging that the opponent party has failed to fulfill its responsibilities and thus lacks the credibility required to govern effectively. Just as Lord Ousley articulated concerns about ghetto-like conditions emerging as a result of persistent poverty and discrimination in ethnic communities, Norway is grappling with its own forms of spatial and social segregation, particularly in education. This dynamic mirrors theories of systemic racism and social capital, which suggest that marginalized communities, often bereft of adequate resources, may become concentrated in specific areas—resulting in schools that reflect and perpetuate these inequalities. For instance, the leader of the populist Progress Party, Sylvi Listhaug, a party that polls among the top three in Norway, states:

> Unfortunately, in Norway we have a prime minister who does not recognize that we have problems. He tries to play down an explosive growth in youth crime. Kripos [The National Criminal Investigation Service] chief Kristin Kvigne says the police only have the resources to go after 40 of the 100 criminal networks they follow in Norway. When the Progress Party raises concerns about Swedish criminal networks and contagion from Sweden in the area of crime, Støre [Norwegian prime minister] replies that the debate belongs in the Swedish Parliament. It is frightening, writes Listhaug (Fosse, 2023).

The term serves to highlight fears about social cohesion, integration, and the competence of law enforcement in dealing with organized crime that has reared its brutal head in Sweden with fears of a spillover into Norway. By invoking "svensketilstander", the sentiment echoes a growing anxiety among some segments of the Norwegian public about the potential for similar patterns of crime and social disarray to emerge in Norway, thereby fueling debates about immigration, integration

policies, and public security. Returning to the metaphor "sleepwalking into segregation", former CRE chairman Trevor Phillips had warned of the dangers of communities becoming isolated and "marooned outside the mainstream", which resonates deeply within the context of Norway's segregated schooling systems. Research indicates that minority students in Norway often attend schools that lack diversity, reinforcing stereotypes and limiting exposure to differing viewpoints, which we have discussed thus far.

In Norway, considerable changes have occurred regarding the degree of free school choice across various regions, particularly in Oslo. The city introduced free, grade-based admissions in 1997, which changed to a model incorporating 50% regional and 50% grade-based admissions in 2005, and reverted to only grade-based admissions in 2009. A committee evaluated alternative admission arrangements for schools in Oslo (Inntaksutvalget, 2020). While a more liberal approach to school choice, championed by the Conservative Party, was likely to enhance student performance or, at the very least, not diminish it, according to one study (Sandsør, 2020) it has also led to increased segregation based on ability, socio-economic background, and ethnicity, which can have deleterious consequence for students, schools, and local communities.

The study suggested that measures could be implemented to counteract such segregation by influencing school choice, such as specifying intake areas or introducing additional points or quotas for certain groups. The government established that national regulations would be set, requiring counties to either implement free school choice throughout the entire region or within designated intake areas, allowing for a maximum of six such areas. These regulations apply to students applying for admission starting in the spring of 2022. The government emphasized the importance of granting students greater freedom to choose their upper secondary schools, citing a commitment to empowering young individuals to make significant decisions about their educational paths. Curiously, the same parties on the right have recently been at the forefront of calls to do something about the increasing racial segregation of schools in Oslo among others, the result of a policy they championed while in government from 2013 to 2021.

Researchers in another study (Lambrou, 2023) found that the tendency for children to attend schools predominantly composed of peers with similar social and economic statuses undermines their social development and educational opportunities, which is harmful not only to deprived groups but also to children from more privileged backgrounds. As segregation becomes more manifest, especially as schools mirror the city's residential patterns, the educational environment is undermined, restricting children's exposure to diverse perspectives. The findings underscore that while free school choice might offer more individual options, it paradoxically aggravates disparities and weakens the benefits of a mixed educational setting, which has been shown to enhance both academic performance and social cohesion. As such, the study calls for policy interventions that promote more integrated school environments, emphasizing the need for better public information about the advantages of diverse schooling to combat the forces driving segregation.

Contra conservative and populist attempts to frame the current slide into racially segregated schools as "free choice" commensurate with liberal values, we argue that the framework of Critical Race Theory (CRT) can provide valuable insights here, as it asserts that the intersection of race, power, and education perpetuates systemic inequalities, which ultimately colors the educational journeys of students from black and brown backgrounds. In *Racism Without Racists* (2022) Bonilla-Silva states:

> And now comes the hard part. As I stated already, if racism is systemic, then we all take part in it. If you are a White reader, you belong—and please know this is mostly beyond your control—to the White team. You were born into that team, raised as a member of that team, and navigate what I call in this book the "White habitus", factors which contribute to the solidification of your White subjectivity (Bonilla-Silva, 2022, p. xviii).

Commensurate with Bonilla-Silva's argument, we contend that the policy of a so-called "free school choice" advocated by Conservatives and populists is a euphemism that masks white habitus which collectively gelled into a white subjectivity. It is only natural that the affluent and highly educated elite within a predominantly white society like Norway would fervently champion the cause of free schools, seeing it as a safeguard against their children being trapped in the dreaded "ghetto" schools. They trust that their children will effortlessly attain the grades necessary to gain entry into the most prestigious institutions, which are overwhelmingly white. Thus, the passionate calls for "free schools" serve as a veiled demand for the preservation of exclusive white enclaves, cloaked in the guise of educational reform. There are parallels with the American context where affirmative action for instance is attacked on the grounds of undermining the principles of "fairness" and "equality" while conveniently overlooking centuries of black dehumanization and suppression through structural and systemic inequalities, such as the legacy of slavery, Jim Crow laws, civil rights movement of the 1960 and police brutality and high incarceration rates blighting our contemporary era.

Bourdieu defined habitus as a system or prism of durable and transposable dispositions through which individuals perceive, think, and act in the world (Bourdieu, 2006). It comprises the embedded habits, skills, and dispositions that individuals attain through their life experiences, especially through socialization in their family, education, and cultural environment. Habitus reflects the ways in which individuals navigate their social worlds based on their social contexts, allowing them to respond to situations in ways that harmonize with their class background and cultural context. This conceptual framework suggests that individuals are not merely passive recipients of cultural norms; rather, they actively construct their identities and navigate their social realities through a set of internalized dispositions. Bonilla-Silva (2022) elaborates on white habitus.

> Think. Most things in your life (e.g., your friends, neighborhood where you reside, school you attend, things you watch and read) help configure your cognitive, aesthetic, and even emotional whiteness. How can you deeply empathize with people of color when everything in your life revolves around whiteness? This is not a personal indictment, and I hope you can be analytical and not let "white fragility" prevent you from understanding my claim. Systemic racism is not about you as a person, but simply, and terribly, about the way

> systemic racism is expressed in you as an individual living in a racialized society (Bonilla-Silva, 2022, p. xviii).

White habitus is formed through socialization processes that are distilled within predominantly white spaces, such as the media, neighborhoods, schools, and social circles. These environments often reinforce racial identities and norms that privilege whiteness and perpetuate racial stereotypes. Individuals who imbibe a white habitus may hold preconceived perceptions or prejudices about people of color that are often obscure or unacknowledged. These implicit biases inform their views on race, leading to the maintenance of racial inequality. It is this white habitus that Bonilla-Silva identifies which is capitalized upon to "cordon off" white areas from black and brown encroachment, as the proliferation of "ghetto schools" in Oslo and other cities attest to. White habitus involves the accumulation of cultural capital that benefits white individuals in educational, economic, and social contexts. This includes language, behaviors, and attitudes that align with dominant societal norms and are often valued over those of marginalized racial groups.

Urie Bronfenbrenner's (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) ecological theory highlights the myriad systems that influence human development from cradle to grave, suggesting that individuals are shaped by their interactions within various environments, including their family, educational institutions, and community settings. In Norway, this framework can be applied to understand how individuals are socialized into a white habitus, where their experiences are filtered through a lens of privilege that reinforces racial homogeneity. As Bourdieu (2006) defines habitus as a system of durable and transposable dispositions, it becomes evident that Norwegians navigate their lives—whether in kindergarten, schools, or elderly care—with a set of internalized norms and behaviors that align with their predominantly white surroundings.

We have previously mentioned the Norwegian anthropologist Marianne Gullestad who coined the term "ideal of sameness" (likhetsidealet) to capture the dynamics at play in identity management within Norwegian society. She argues that a specific and standardized form of socialization leads Norwegians to be cautious in intermingling with individuals who do not conform to the norms established by this socialization—norms that are typically internalized from an early age in kindergarten. She referred to this phenomenon as "imagined sameness", which not only evinces parallels to the concept of equality (likhet) but also encompasses various expressions such as "to fit in together" (å passe sammen) and "to share the same ideas" (ha sammenfallendesynspunkter). This ideal suggests that any perceived deviation from the norm is often viewed as problematic, prompting individuals to avoid those they consider "too different." Moreover, open conflict is generally regarded as a threat to fundamental values, such as "peace and quiet," reinforcing social cohesion at the expense of genuine diversity and engagement (Gullestad, 2002, p. 47). This reluctance to embrace difference ultimately shapes interactions and relationships within a society striving to maintain an illusion of uniformity. We argue that Gullestad's (2002) "ideal of sameness" must include white skin color and the ideology of whiteness.

Whiteness, as an ideology, is not limited to the mere phenotypical characteristic of having white skin but extends to encompass a system of beliefs and perceptions that attribute inherent virtue, moral superiority, and cultural dominance to individuals identified as white (i.e. Nordic white in Norway). This ideology positions whiteness as the standard or norm against which all other racial and ethnic groups are measured, often associating white skin color with attributes such as goodness, civility, and intellectual or cultural superiority. Imagine, for a moment, the imbricated layers of meaning couched in a simple inquiry—a question we, [two back authors] encounter not infrequently: "Do you ski, love outdoors life, or own a cabin in the mountains? So and so [an African acquaintance] loves these activities. He is so integrated" While many white Norwegians themselves might not partake in these activities, the very matter-of-fact way of posing such questions to us speaks volumes. It reveals a distinctly white habitus in Norway, where these cultural practices are leveraged as a "litmus test" for those of us who are non-white, challenging our authenticity and belonging. This unspoken metric measures our compliance to a cultural norm that quietly reinforces lines of exclusion and inclusion, illustrating the ubiquitous boundaries of identity and acceptance within the society. Scholars of race and racism in Norway call for more research into structural/systemic racism in the country but are in agreement about the nexus between being Norwegian and whiteness.

> We now know that Norwegianness is linked to whiteness, and that the recognition of people with a minority background as Norwegian is not automatic. The idea of Norwegianness as rooted in history and ancestry appears resilient and probably has a lot to do with what psychologists call implicit bias. And although both politicians and managers in various organizations try to follow up policies on diversity and non-discrimination, there is a low representation of minorities in leading positions and discrimination in a number of areas in society (Andersson, 2022, p. 197).

It is only in recent years that Norwegian academics began employing terms such as race and racism which were previously considered taboo. The often cited culprit is color blindness. "There has long been a hegemonic consensus that Norway is a country which does not discriminate on the basis of skin color or ethnic affiliation, and I venture to assert that many Norwegians consider themselves color blind… Nevertheless, we would be amiss to think that racism does not exist as long as we do not care about skin color" (Ramirez, 2022, p. 385). The irony of color blindness is unambiguously evident as the mainly white majority pledges unwavering allegiance to this "sacred creed", yet the unsettling emergence of black and brown segregated schools dotting the educational landscape pierces through the shrouds of disavowal, forcing visibility and sparking necessary critique and debate.

In his seminal article entitled *Serving Two Masters: Integration Ideals and Client Interests in School Desegregation Litigation* (Bell, 1995), "the father of critical race theory", Derrick A. Bell Jr, was critical of blacks who celebrated the desegregation of schools in the iconic US ruling *Brown vs. Board. Brown v. Board* of Education was a landmark 1954 Supreme Court case in which the Court unanimously ruled that racial segregation in public schools violated the constitution, nullifying the "separate but equal" doctrine established by *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896). This

decision was pivotal in the American civil rights movement, as it acknowledged that segregated educational facilities were inherently unequal and mandated the desegregation of schools across the United States. Bell was sceptical of lawyers who believed that litigation was the way forward in ensuring the legacy of *Brown Vs. Board* would deliver better education for black children. To his mind, blacks were attempting to appease two irreconcilable masters: securing better education through desegregation of schools and having faith in the power of the law and legal action to eradicate racism. Speaking of the first, Bell writes:

> In essence, the arguments are that blacks must gain access to white schools because "equal educational opportunity" means integrated schools, and because only school integration will make certain that black children will receive the same education as white children. This theory of school desegregation, however, fails to encompass the complexity of achieving equal educational opportunity for children to whom it has been denied so long (Bell, 1995, p. 7).

Employing Bell's counterargument to examine Norway's "ghetto" schools uncovers a disturbing resemblance to the educational challenges faced in the United States, indicating that the issue goes beyond national boundaries and historical contexts. Both nations exhibit a pattern where black and brown students are disproportionately represented in schools that struggle with low performance metrics, such as admission scores, dropout rates, and behavioral problems. This shared phenomenon signals a systemic flaw in which certain schools, saddled with the "failing" label, predictably correlate with non-white student populations, despite being situated in traditionally white-dominant societies. The tenacity of these inequalities compels us to question the underlying structures and policies that allow such inequities to blossom. It challenges us to confront the uncomfortable truth that these patterns are not mere correlations but rather markers of deeply rooted biases and institutional failures. Historical differences between the USA and Norway, whether in civil rights movements or immigration policies, offer no refuge from the reality that systemic racism can infiltrate educational systems under the guise of color blindness, neutrality or meritocracy. Bell presciently takes aim at the root cause of the problem of desegregated schools:

> […] but neither the NCAAP nor the court-fashioned remedies are sufficiently directed at the real evil of pre-*Brown* public schools: the state-sponsored subordination of blacks in every aspect of the educational process. Racial separation is only the most obvious manifestation of this subordination. Providing unequal and inadequate school resources and excluding black parents from meaningful participation in school policymaking are at least as damaging to black children as enforced separation (Bell, 1995, p. 10).

In probing the landscape of Norway's "ghetto" schools through the prism of Bell's critique, we can draw poignant parallels to the systemic issues faced by pre-Brown public schools in the United States. Bell asserted that remedies like those pursued by the NAACP or directed by courts have often failed to address the fundamental problem of state-sponsored subordination, where black students were marginalized not merely through racial separation but through deeper and more sinister forms of inequity. We have alluded to some of these machinations from conservative and populist political parties who conceal the ambitions of a white habitus under

slogans such as "free school choice" only to perversely make a U-turn before the elections and launch scathing attacks against the very same schools for becoming "hotbeds of radicalism and crime". Within the context of Norway's educational system, similar patterns of subordination can be identified, where resources and policy decisions disproportionately disadvantage minority populations.

In digging deeper, we must consider how these educational environments affect the students trapped within them—including the ones who have embraced their stigmatized schools and play golf with the stigma (Goffman, 1963). They are not just academic institutions but also crucibles that shape prospects, self-understandings, and societal contributions. The stigmatization of schools as "failing" prompts a vicious cycle, where limited resources, low expectations, and social stigmas reinforce each other, inhibiting genuine progress and nurturing environments conducive to success. This cycle perpetuates marginalization, hindering the potential of myriad young minds who deserve fair access to quality education and the opportunities it affords.

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Chapter 9
Be *Longing* to Belong

> Here the rule of the race of Hector will last for three hundred long years until Ilia the priestess queen, heavy with the seed of Mars, shall give birth to twin sons. Then Romulus shall receive the people, wearing with joy the tawny hide of the wolf which nursed him. The walls he builds will be the walls of Mars and he shall give his own name to his people, the Romans. On them I impose no limits of time or place. I have given them an empire that will know no end. Even angry Juno, who is now wearying sea and land and sky with her terrors, will come to better counsel and join with me in cherishing the people of Rome, the rulers of the world, the race that wears the toga. So it has been decreed. There will come a day, as the years glide by, when the house of Assaracus will reduce Achilles' Pthia and glorious Mycenae to slavery and will conquer and rule the city of Argos. From this noble stock there will be born a Trojan Caesar to bound his empire by Oceanus at the limits of the world, and his fame by the stars. He will be called Julius, a name passed down to him from the great Iulus (Virgil, The Aeneid, 1990, pp. 10, 11).

The Latin epic poem, the Aeneid, composed by Virgil in the first century BCE, is much more than a tale of adventure; it is a pivotal foundational myth that established a bridge of continuity between Rome and the legends of Troy, weighed in on the Punic wars, celebrated the virtue of *pietas* (duty and religious devotion) which Aeneas the ancestor of the Romans personified and resonated deeply in the Roman psyche, and legitimized the Julio-Claudian dynasty as the progeny of the founders, heroes, and gods of Rome and Troy. Aeneas's mission and aim is not merely for personal glory or prosperity; it is rooted in a sense of commitment—to both his fallen companions in Troy and the future foretold to him by the gods.

This tragic hero's expedition is marked by struggles that encompass not just physical encounters but also emotional turbulence, particularly in his relationship with Dido the queen of Carthage. His betrayal of her love for the prophesied destiny of founding a new city illustrates the tensions between personal desires and fidelity to communal responsibilities. This act of sacrifice drives home the poignant theme of belonging—a longing to find a home and a place where one's identity is affirmed and recognized. We draw parallels between Aeneas's quest for a prophetic destiny and the contemporary battles of immigrants and minorities within an embryonic and growing pluralistic society like Norway. The translator of the Aeneid, and Professor of Latin, David West (1990), acknowledges his debt to the other scholars with the words "To the great dead who will not die" and goes on to write in the introduction:

> The Aeneid is still read and still resonates because it is a great poem. Part of its relevance to us is that it is the story of a human being who knew defeat and dispossession, love and the

P. Thomas et al., *Education and Cultural Evolution in Norway's Multiethnic Society*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-89018-5_9

> loss of love, whose life was ruled by his sense of duty to the his gods, his people and his family, particularly to his beloved son Ascanius (West, 1990, viii).

There are clearly layers of shared experience intrinsic to the concept of belonging. Just as Aeneas is driven towards a romanticized Rome, immigrants often undertake journeys filled with hope for a better future amidst the backdrop of displacement (political, ethnic, religious etc.) and anxiety. Many, among others two of the authors, arrived in Norway as refugees over three decades ago, having experienced the destruction of their "Troys" and the idealized vision of finding a new "Rome", greater than the "Troy" they left. The excerpt from The Aeneid put emphasis on the lineage and glory that will surface from Aeneas's trials, especially with the birth of Romulus, the founder of Rome, and Jupiter's promise of an empire "that will know no end".

This visionary prospect is analogous to the aspirations of today's immigrants—who seek to contribute to and shape the fabric of their new societies, even when those societies have yet to fully form. In her book *Belonging: Solidarity and Division in Modern societies* (2013) Professor Montserrat Guibernau argues that the power of belonging stems from the potential to generate an emotional attachment capable of fostering a shared identity, loyalty and solidarity among members of a particular community:

> "Loyalty by choice" involves the emotional commitment and identification with a person, a cause, a community or a group. At present, one of the most potent triggers of loyalty is a strong sense of belonging to the nation as the "emotional" community able to muster the highest levels of identification from its members through antinationalist mobilization. However, this has not always been the case and, for centuries, religion took precedence and generated the most passionate examples of loyalty, as well as treason, on behalf of a wide range of people across the world (Guibernau, 2013, p. 179).

The Peace of Westphalia, signed in 1648, brought an end to both the Thirty Years' War and the Eighty Years' War, laying the groundwork for modern international relations. This historic treaty ushered in an era where concepts such as state sovereignty, diplomatic mediation among nations, and the principles of diplomacy itself—all of which took inspiration from its texts over 350 years ago, became de rigueur. Some theorists of secularism and secularization posited that religion would lapse, become diluted and perhaps even disappear with the onslaught of modernization. The discussion surrounding the secularization thesis (ST) advances that as societies transform, there is a trend towards secularization—religion does not occupy as prominent a place as it did earlier. This is especially true in regard to the public significance of religion while still preserving some personal belief systems. Modern ideologies chip away at the ancient edifice of religion forcing the latter to reform and adapt incrementally. Advocates of the ST, including sociologist Steve Bruce (2013), argue that this change is driven by key aspects of modernization—which includes economic and technological changes—and leads to the relegation of religion to the private realms of faith, where individual beliefs become a matter of personal choice rather than a shared communal enactment and experience.

The thesis proposes a distinction between secularization and secularism, accenting the former as an involuntary process rather than a considered ideological shift. Critics, on the other hand, claim that the ST inadequately accounts for the growth of radical and conservative religious movements globally, asserting that secularization is not a universal trend and that religious vitality perseveres, principally in the U.S. Nonetheless, the ST succeeds in articulating the subtle, often inadvertent ways in which modernity restructures religious life, suggesting that even ostensibly pulsating religious lexes may be part of a broader trend towards secularization rather than a dichotomous opposition against it. Ultimately, while secularization appears to be an inevitable process in contemporary society, the question lies in how individuals and communities navigate this development without losing the essence of their faith.

What connection can there possibly be between the Aeneid, belonging, the secularization theory, religion and racially segregated schools in Norway in 2024? What would the Aeneid be without the pantheon of gods who never let Aeneas forget his mission to establish Rome? The *pietas* of Aeneas was constantly monitored and reinforced by the gods when for instance he forget his mission and settled in Carthage with Dido. Mercury's rebuke and injunction is a case in point: "What do you hope to achieve by idling your time away in the land of Libya? If the glory of such a destiny does not fire your heart, spare a thought for Ascanius as he grows to manhood, for the hopes of this Iulus who is your heir. You owe him the land of Rome and the kingdom of Italy" (Virgil, 1990, p. 77). In a similar vein, and as has been our and every teacher's experience working in "ghetto" schools in Norway, minority background students coopt the power of religion, especially Islam, in the process of their identity construction. In sharp contrast to the chiefly white schools where the divine seems to have been banished, "ghetto" schools appear as vibrant oases of faith, brimming with spiritual vitality and largely shielded from the impinging tide of secularism and secularization. To the initiated, these schools stand as sanctuaries where the presence of God flourishes, defying the prevalent narratives of a world increasingly detached from the sacred. Consider the following case that garnered headlines in Norwegian media in 2011 at Ulsrud high school which also has a majority-minority configuration. Ulsrud is a neighborhood located in the eastern part of Oslo, the capital city of Norway.

> School students pray in the parking lot. The management at Ulsrud upper secondary school refuses students to pray on the school grounds. They believe that prayer can be experienced as exclusionary for the other students. After the students at Ulsrud upper secondary school were refused to pray on the school grounds, they have found themselves forced to pray in a car park near the school. "It is very cold. I am freezing and it is incredibly difficult to concentrate on the prayer when it is so cold" (Ibrahim El Kadi). Last week, El Kadi was told by the principal that they were not allowed to pray on the school grounds. In the absence of a quiet room, around 40 students gathered in front of the library and prayed in protest. It did not go down well with the rector. The Education Agency writes in an email to NRK Østlandssendingen.
>
> "Nobody has a statutory right to practice religion during working hours, neither employees nor pupils, and that it is up to the individual school whether they wish to provide space for

> religious practice for the pupils." Nor does the school council want a prayer room. School councilor Torger Ødegaard does not think that a quiet room is a good idea.
>
> I don't think it is natural for the Oslo school to provide a prayer room or quiet room, but that is something each school can assess locally. Where there is already such a space, it must be open to all religions, says Ødegaard (NrK, 2011).

Students at Ulsrud High School were compelled to pray in an adjacent parking lot after being prohibited from praying on school campus. The school's administration perceives the Muslim students' demands for a prayer room as parochial and contrary to tenets of inclusive behavior Ibrahim El Kadi and his Muslim friends want to pray during their breaks but are not allowed to pray on school's grounds. They have asked for a quiet room for prayer through the student council, proposing it be available for all religions, given the school's diverse cultural backdrop. When about 40 students protested by praying outside the school library, the principal ordered them to move, mentioning criticisms from other students who felt excluded. The principal was in talks with the students, but the education board stated that there was no legal right to religious practice during school hours, leaving it to the discretion of individual schools to adjudicate on the matter. School Commissioner Torger Ødegaard was not in favor of the idea of a prayer room, arguing that schools are educational, not religious, institutions; though, if a quiet room for prayer and reflection should exist, it should cater to all religions. Despite the cold, students like Aslihan Bozkurt and Rahma Adem remained determined to keep praying outside until a prayer room was provided.

It is revealing that the school authorities stated that prayer is perceived as exclusionary for the rest of the school. This implies a hegemonic understanding where equality is synonymous with the absence of faith in the public space and is reminiscent of the French *Laïcité* approach. In vivid contrast to the predominantly white schools which have seen the demise of the gods in recent decades, "ghetto" schools arise as lively oases of faith, brimming with spiritual vivacity and appear immune to the intruding tide of secularism and secularization. These schools stand as sanctuaries where the presence of the divine thrives, resisting the prevalent narratives of a world increasingly detached from the sacred. This dynamic can be understood through the prism of the notion of *mysterium tremendum et fascinans,* introduced by the German theologian Rudolf Otto in his seminal work "The Idea of the Holy" (1917). To Otto's mind, the binary dualism inherent in the idea of the holy is evident in the impenetrable and transcendent aspects of the divine that arouse awe and reverence, while the *tremendum* evokes feelings of fear and trepidation, and *fascinans* distils the allure and attraction of the sacred that draws individuals closer.

In "The Idea of the Holy", Rudolf Otto introduces the concept of the "numinous", distinct from Immanuel Kant's conception of the noumenon. While both terms seek to explore elements beyond mundane experience, they emerge from fundamentally different philosophical contexts and implications. The term "numinous", based on the Latin *numen* (meaning "divine power"), gives expression to a spiritual experience that evokes awe and represents the wholly other (*ganz Andere*). For Otto, the numinous experience is ineffable, exceeding rationality and sensory

perception; it cannot be fully expressed or understood through rational analysis. Instead, it must be personally experienced and awakened within individuals, making it a deeply subjective and internal phenomenon.

Mircea Eliade seized on Otto's ideas, emphasizing how the sacred manifesting in various places and rituals can invoke profound experiences that transform the ordinary into the extraordinary. In Eliade's framework, spaces like Jacob's Bethel—held as *locus fascinans et tremendum*—are places charged with spiritual significance where the divine encroaches upon the ordinary world, crystallizing a sense of wonder and awe among those who encounter it. Mircea Eliade introduced the concept of *axis mundi*, which translates to "world axis" or "axis of the world". This term refers to a symbolic center that connects the heavens, Earth, and the underworld, serving as a critical point of orientation and stability in a religious or cosmological framework. In Eliade's view, the axis mundi is a representation of the sacred and serves as a link between different realms of existence.

For instance, in various religious traditions, this concept can manifest through sacred mountains, temples, pillars, or other structures that serve as connections to the divine. Eliade illustrated how many cultures believe that the axis mundi is the place where the cosmic order is established and maintained; it provides a pathway to the divine and is often associated with creation myths and rituals. Through the axis mundi, Eliade emphasized the importance of sacred spaces and their role in religious practice. These spaces act as a bridge between the chaos of daily life and the ordered, sacred cosmos. For believers, these locations often symbolize a connection to a higher reality, providing meaning and direction in their spiritual lives. By establishing a world axis, religious traditions create a context for understanding existence, aligning human activities with the overarching structure of the universe.

What lessons, then, can we draw from the belligerence of the "prayer in the parking lot of a Norwegian school" and the idea of the holy or axis mundi? So far, we have been talking about *racially* segregated schools with the emphasis on pigmentation as the ground zero of animosity. We are now confronted with another identity marker—religion. In the Aeneid, at least the gods of the Trojans did not differ from those of the Romans. The Trojans shared many of their gods with the Greeks because they came from the same mythological background. Therefore, the major gods worshiped by the Trojans were those of the Greek pantheon, like Zeus, Hera, Athena, Apollo, and others. The Romans integrated and reworked these Greek deities, giving them new names and slightly different characteristics or associations. For example, the Greek god Zeus was known as Jupiter in Roman mythology, Hera became Juno, and Athena was known as Minerva. What happens when the God of the children of immigrants in Norway does not coincide with the God or gods of Norway? Even more menacing: what happens when the historical nemesis of Western civilization, Islam, demands a notable presence in a Norway which smugly believed it had "tamed" the power of religion (Christianity) and was on the road to becoming thoroughly secular? The idea of the holy is making a comeback through Norwegian Muslim students who appear to pursue their parents' faith more fervently and threaten to turn their schools into Eliade's axis mundi.

Norway has experienced several significant events and figures giving impetus to the discourse on secularization and anti-religion sentiment. One such influential figure was Arnulf Øverland, a revered poet known not just for his literary contributions but for his blunt critique of religion. In 1933, Øverland mounted a confrontational lecture titled "Christianity, the Tenth Plague", wherein he daringly dissected and criticized the pervasive influence of Christianity in Norwegian society. This act of rebelliousness against sacred norms led to a trial for blasphemy, a dramatic public moment, and yet, he was exonerated, symbolizing a societal shift towards greater acceptance of secular and critical perspectives on faith. Another poignant moment in Norway's engagement with religion and free expression came through the actions of William Nygaard, the publisher behind the Norwegian translation of Salman Rushdie's contentious novel "The Satanic Verses". The book's critical depiction of Islam generated global controversy and led to Nygaard's attempted assassination in 1993—a traumatic token of the high stakes involved when literature intersects offensively with religious beliefs. This event accentuated the tension between protecting free speech and delicate handling of the implications of upsetting religious sensibilities.

In a more recent example, the *Magazinet* (now *Dagen*) magazine entered the fray of global discourse on religion and secularism by republishing the infamous cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad, originally printed by Denmark's *Jyllands-Posten*. This decision resounded far beyond Norway's borders, breeding international fury and protests. The controversy reaffirmed the fragile balance between exercising free speech and respecting religious traditions in an increasingly interconnected world.

The issue at the heart of the dilemma of inclusion and respect for diversity in the new and emerging Norway is the following: Is there room for shades of non-whiteness and religions such as Islam in the new Norway? In the context of religious belonging and the challenges faced by "ghetto" schools, where the sense of religious belonging is often denied, we can draw parallels with the broader narrative of Islamophobia in the West. Historically, Islamophobia has been constructed through events like the Crusades, the fall of Constantinople, and colonialism, which portrayed Muslims as the "folk devil" (Poynting & Morgan, 2012) of their time. This racialized distortion has persisted into modern times, boosting the idea of the "Muslim Other" as irrational and aggressive. In colonial times, European powers managed Muslim populations through military force and Orientalist stereotypes, portraying them as incapable of self-representation. This historical backdrop created a narrative that demonized Islam, with figures like W.E. Gladstone condemning its followers despite their small numbers in places like Britain.

The celebrated sociologist Max Weber reinforced this narrative by describing Islam not as a "religion of salvation" but as a "warrior religion" (Aslan, 2005, pp. 78–79). Not least, Samuel Huntington is associated with the populist notion of a "Clash of Civilizations" in which the boundaries of Islam are bloody and adversarial to the West, hence catering to the West's perennial need for a worthy foe and fill the vacuum left post-Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union. Such narratives echo the marginalization experienced in "ghetto" schools where Muslim students, amidst a lack of spaces for religious practice, face systemic exclusion and

stereotyping. Huntington (2004) took stock of American history considering the credentials of its many nemeses such as German "Kaisirism", Japanese regimentation, Nazism and communism. Finally, however, "The cultural gap between Islam and America's Christianity and Anglo-Protestantism reinforces Islam's enemy qualifications. And on September 11, 2001, Osama bin Laden ended America's search" (Huntington, 2004, p. 263).

The seismic demographic rise of Muslims in Western further obfuscates and adds a layer of complexity to this dynamic. As John L. Esposito notes, contemporary Muslim life is no longer the reserve of "exotic-sounding places" but is part of the urban fabric of Western cities like London, Paris, and New York. This "browning" of the population challenges the constructed "Otherness" of Islam, in the same way that students in "ghetto" schools in Norway are part of a broader multicultural tapestry. Despite these realities, the insistent need to categorize Muslims as outsiders or sinister undercuts their sense of belonging, mirroring the experiences of students in these racially and religiously "otherized" educational environments. Here, the struggle for a quiet room for prayer and meditation contrasts sharply with the broader struggle against the reductionist views of an entire faith, advocating for recognition and integration into the social fabric. We will share another case study from the archive of our experiences as teachers to highlight the dangers involved in perceiving the above as mere academic exercises not rooted in reality.

Case study: An 18-year-old female student at our "ghetto" school began to undergo a marked change over the course of a year. Her "Western" attire was exchanged for black flowing robes (abaya) and she began to be distant and inattentive to her studies. One day, the lead author challenged the student to remove her headphones during an English lesson about Queen Elizabeth II, the then-reigning monarch of the United Kingdom. The student responded that she was more interested in the listening to the Quran. With time, the girl was no longer to be seen at the school. Having inquired about her whereabouts, the teacher was horrified to hear that she had travelled to Syria and joined ISIS in her religious zeal to support the Caliphate.

In his chapter entitled "Religion and Prejudice", Gordon Allport (1979), writes, "The role of religion is paradoxical. It makes prejudice and it unmakes prejudice. While the creeds of the great religions are universalistic, all stressing brotherhood, the practice of these creeds is frequently divisive and brutal" (Allport, 1979, p. 444). This captures the added level of challenge posed by religion among the burgeoning new population in Norway. Having sensed that mainstream society has closed the door of belonging, some decide to no longer keep knocking on this door and turn towards the great, transnational or supranational Muslim community called the *ummah* to meet the innate need for belonging. The term *ummah* comes from Arabic, meaning "community" or "nation", and it represents the idea of a collective identity that transcends national, cultural, and ethnic boundaries. This sense of belonging is rooted in the shared beliefs, rituals, and moral values prescribed by Islam, creating a powerful sense of solidarity among Muslims worldwide. Perhaps Allport's

prescient observation, years before contemporary Islamophobia may provide some insight into the current malaise:

> However sublime the origins of a religion may be, it rapidly becomes secularized by taking over cultural functions. Islam is more than a religion; it is a well-knit cluster of related cultures carried by ethnic cousins who are sharply demarcated from the non-Moslem world. Christianity is so locked with western civilization that is hard to keep in mind its original core; and sects of Christianity have become tied into subcultural and national groups so that religious divisions march hand in hand with ethnic and national divisions (Allport, 1979, p. 446).

Marco Antonsich is one of the most recognized names in theories of belonging. His article, "What's in a Name? Children of Migrants, National Belonging, and the Politics of Naming" (2022) explores how Western societies, like Italy, navigate the "transition to diversity" the denouement of international migration. This massive and perhaps unprecedented movement of peoples destabilizes the symbolic boundaries of nationhood, interrogating the "politics of naming"—the conflicts between the majority and the children of migrants regarding identity labels. Antonsich (2022) detects three main responses by migrant children: espousing labels such as "second generation" or "new Italians" to proclaim social visibility and demand citizenship rights; adapting these terms to enlarge national belonging inclusively; and rejecting them in favor of more plural identities. These methods uncover pervasive ethnoracial prejudices within national contexts and highlight attempts by migrant children to reconceptualize the nation along cultural rather than ethnic or racial lines. The refusal to be culturally incarcerated and the agency of Italian Muslim youth is captured in this citation:

> An exclusive religious focus characterizes instead GMI, which was founded in 2001 in order to support young Muslims in the formation of their identity as both Italians and Muslims (https://giovanimusulmani.it/). Until recently another platform particularly active on the web and composed by children of migrants of different ethnic, racial and religious background was YallaItalia. Although it defined itself as "the blog of second generations", its mission statement specified that "YallaItalia is a forum for young people whom nobody has managed to define: second generation, new Italians, generation 1.5, children of immigrants, bla bla bla . . . Slow, very slow definitions which fail to capture the dynamism and rapidity through which Italian society is changing, the thousands faces which represent its silent propellant, the real country" (http://www.yallaitalia.it/chi-siamo/) (Antonsich, 2022, p. 1084).

Furthermore, Antonsich (2022) also explores the ways in which children of migrants grapple with the complex cornucopia of national identities and cultural belonging. In Italy, the politics of naming throws up some tension as children navigate identities imposed by the majority society. By way of response, and in order to assert their autonomy, children of migrants valorize and accent their cultural plurality rather than acquiescing to the predefined identities crafted by the majority. This discourse echoes broader struggles within Western societies grappling with demographic shifts. Antonsich (2022) argues that as Western populations become more ethnically diverse, it is essential to understand how nationhood is renegotiated by those who embody both cultural sameness and difference. This engagement not only challenges extant national narratives that associate nationhood with race and

ethnicity but emphasizes a cultural conception of the nation that aligns with shared practices, ensuring a more inclusive societal understanding of belonging.

What does this all mean for Norwegians' self-understanding of the new emerging Norway? A good place perhaps to begin is the national curriculum. White teachers in non-white such the "ghetto" schools operate with a curriculum was designed with majority white students in mind and not black and brown Muslim students.

> The objects clause expresses values that unite Norway as a society. These values are the foundation of our democracy and will help us to live, learn and work together in a complex present and in the face of an unknown future. The common values are based on Christian and humanistic heritage and tradition. They are also expressed in different religions and worldviews, and they are rooted in human rights (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2024).

As the media and general public discourse hardens towards these children, they look for their romanticized "Rome" reminiscent of Virgil's Aeneas who rallies his people: "Whatever chance may bring, however many hardships we suffer, we are making for Latium, where the Fates show us our place of rest. There it is the will of God that the kingdom of Troy shall rise again. Your task is to endure and save yourselves for better days" (Aeneid, 1990, p. 9). Propelled by an innate hunger for connection and identity, these children—who have grown up in the heart of Norway—find themselves resolved to learning Arabic, a language that may seem impractical in their northern homeland, while adopting religious attire more suited to sunbaked deserts than to the frosty winds of their environment. In their quest for belonging, they navigate a delicate dance between the warmth of their cultural heritage and the stark chill of their surroundings, crafting a unique tapestry of identity that bridges two worlds.

Like the resilient Aeneas in Virgil's Aeneid, who bears the epic burden of founding a new Troy amidst the ruins of his past, children of migrants forge paths through landscapes dominated by identities crafted by the majority. Aeneas, carrying the Trojan legacy, navigates a world where he must reconcile his past with the promise of a new future. This quest mirrors modern children of migrants, who, instead of allowing their identities to be molded by the majority, choose to celebrate and accentuate the rich tapestry of their cultural backgrounds. They weave their own narratives into the fabric of the societies they inhabit, much like Aeneas envisioned a new civilization that honored his heritage while embracing the potential of a new world. These young navigators, akin to Aeneas, do not seek mere acceptance but strive to redefine belonging itself, creating hybrid spaces where diverse roots can thrive and grow into new epic stories.

In his autobiography, *Familiar Stranger* (2017, p. 94), Stuart Hall writes: "In *The Middle Passage* V.S. Naipaul polemically—as is his habit—condemned the Caribbean as a place without history. This is not my view. In fact, it seems to me that the burden of history is just too much for its people to bear". For some, the "ghetto" schools exist as places devoid of historical narrative. For the young individuals navigating these halls, the struggle of identity construction resembles a perilous journey—caught between the Scylla of rejection from the broader society and the Charybdis of cultural erasure within their own. Hall (2017a, 2017b) mentions James

Baldwin who encountered a West Indian at the British Museum in the 1960s and was asked, "Where are you from?" Baldwin answered, "I was born in Harlem General Hospital" to which his interlocutor retorted, "But where were you born *before that*?" (Hall, 2017a, 2017b, p. 95). This is why the quest for identity cannot be thrust upon the young like a heavy mantle. "Where are you from?" is the epitome of a question that snuffs out belonging. It is, instead, an odyssey—a journey akin to Aeneas's bold pursuit of a radiant future born from ashes. A process of daring to dream, where each step taken is a testament to resilience and hope.

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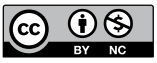

Chapter 10
Soul and School: The Pulse of Islam in the City

> Before occupying myself with my Samara estate, with the education of my son, or with the writing of my books, I had to know why I was doing these things. While I did not know why, I could not do anything. Amidst my thoughts concerning the farm, which at the time kept me very busy, a question would suddenly come into my head: "Well fine, so you will have 6,000 desyatins in the Samara province and 300 horses, and then what?" And feeling completely taken aback, I would not know what to think next. Or, beginning to reflect on the education of my children, I would ask myself, "Why?" Or deliberating on how the peasants might achieve prosperity I would suddenly ask myself, "What concern is it of mine?" or thinking about the fame my own writing brought me, I would say to myself, "Well fine, so you will be more famous than Gogol, Pushkin, Shakespeare, Molière, more famous than all the writers in the world, and so what?" And I had absolutely no answer (Tolstoy, 1987, p. 29).

Leo Tolstoy shone a penetrating light into the malaise that gnawed at and silently devoured at his soul. While ineffable and elusive, this condition of utter meaninglessness was unmistakable in its physical manifestation and haunting ability to paralyze his very existence. One is reminded of the French novelist Honoré de Balzac's protagonist Raphaël de Valentin in *The Wild Ass's Skin* (La Peau de chagrin, 1831) who is enveloped and held hostage by a stubborn mist of psychic darkness described in the famous scene as he enters the notorious gambling den. "The young man looked like an angel without his halo, like one who had lost his way. So, all these emeritus professors of vice and infamy, like toothless old hags, overcome with pity at the sight of a lovely girl offering herself up to corruption, were ready to cry out to the novice: 'Go away!'" (Balzac, 2012, p. 7).

We are of the persuasion that the intriguing phenomenon of increased piety and religious fervor among Muslim youth in Norway cannot be decoupled from the sense of heightened alienation piggybacking on a discourse of Western delegitimization of aspects of their identity, most notably Islam. The citation below from a study conducted by the lead author's study at one such school is a testament to the primacy of religion in the self-understanding of many of these students.

> I would never answer that I am Norwegian if someone asked me where I was from. One thing which does not confuse me is my religion. Although I am born in a Christian country, I am confident that I am a Muslim. I am born and bred in a Muslim family and have been

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> conscious of this since childhood. This is not just something I have been groomed into saying. Now as an adult who can make up her own mind, and can make decisions, I have examined the religion I have called "mine" and concluded that it is true (Female of Moroccan origin, 18 years).

Of their own accord these youth would affirm on many occasions that Islam is the paramount identity marker in their lives. "The young man looked like an angel without his halo, like one who had lost", wrote Balzac, but it appears the halo has been reclaimed through faith for these youth. The rise in the numbers of children born to migrants in Norway who distinctly espouse a more religious and conservative approach to Islam than their parents has baffled many stakeholders in education, hence the salience of an academic engagement with the phenomenon—one devoid of polemic and skullduggery. We will be arguing, contra mainstream discourse, that the relentless attacks upon these youth's cultural heritage may initially succeed in engendering what we call a "pseudo-secular" outlook only to be supplanted by a deeper conviction and commitment to Islam. Of particular concern to some in the West is these youth's embrace of among others what some consider one of the most "militant" and "anti-democratic" variant of Islam, "Wahabi-Salafi-Jihadism". The concern is mirrored in this report with the headline, "Muslim Revival Wave in Oslo" from the national news broadcaster, NrK:

> At Holmlia in Oslo, young petty criminal Muslim boys are recruited into what many refer to as extreme Islamic groups… Young men with long beards and robes stop Muslim boys in the neighborhood or visit their homes and recruit them to the mosque… According to Butt, the missionaries are affiliated with the local mosque at Holmlia, a mosque that belongs to the Tabliqi movement. The movement belongs to the Wahhabi school of Islam… The Wahhabi sect is the state religion in Saudi Arabia and is considered a radical Islamic sect. Osama Bin-Laden and Al-Qaeda belong to this orientation. Mohyeldeen Mohammed, the man who last weekend warned about a Norwegian September 11, also follows this orientation (Ghalegolabi, 2010).

The question which cannot be dodged is the following: What factors explain the growing phenomenon of Muslim youth who although born and bred in secular Norway gravitate towards versions of Islam that are more religious and austere than the one practiced by their parents? We have previously mentioned the national headline-grabbing episode where students at Ulsrud high school in Oslo prayed in the school parking lot when denied permission to conduct their obligatory prayers in the school premises. As of writing this segment, Abid Raja, a Norwegian politician of Pakistani origin, who is a member of the Liberal Party (Venstre) and served as Norway's Minister of Culture and Equality from January 2020 to October 2021, surprised many with his assertion that Islam is a threat to Western values in his new book. While there is the important caveat that his rhetoric is an attempt to kowtow to xenophobes with a view to the elections in 2025, the unvarnished rawness in Raja's castigation of Norwegian-Muslim is unprecedented even by his standards. Raja was himself a spokesman for a conservative Mosque in his youth and held misogynistic views by his own admission. In several of his books which are national bestsellers, Raja candidly recounts and reflects upon his journey towards a progressive and liberal outlook, embracing and propagating values such as abortion and

LHBT+ rights, among others. Raja has painted doomsday scenarios about the emergence of a parallel societies where minorities have not seen the inside of a Norwegian home and are hence free to create and police fiefdoms or pockets of "caliphates" in schools.

> I am an optimist by nature. Like many others, I have thought: "Give it time, it will work out." But after traveling to a number of countries in Europe, visiting a number of high schools in Norway, after talking to experts, teachers, students and politicians, I am no longer optimistic… Imagine being a teacher in a school where the pressure of religious conformity dominates everyday life, where students pray at school, where girls feel socially pressured to cover up, and where the jargon is homophobic. In schools where over 70 per cent of the pupils have a minority background, the teachers are the first line of democracy, perhaps also its last stronghold (Raja, 2024).

Significantly, Raja poignantly asks the question, which is the headline in the national daily *Aftenposten:* "Islam in Norway: Is tolerance really the correct medicine?" A careful persual of the plethora pronouncements about this phenomenon unpacks the nature of the dilemma. In the spirit of Karl Marx, these so-called "philosophers" have done little more than state the obvious, failing to provide any genuine or constructive solutions to the pressing issues at hand. We will do our utmost not to fall into the same pit of pontificating (we no doubt cannot avoid some of it) about the purported "danger" this vulnerable demographic poses. In what follows, our aim is to suggest that the juggernaut of secularism, the Scandinavian rendering in particular, has had an impact in delegitimizing faith, however, the dissonance distilled had the opposite effect: like the female student with roots in Morocco, "Norwegian" was jettisoned in favor of a more personalized and transnational Islam. This new-found Islamic identity, not unlike the decision to don a beard or hijab, becomes the formidable cocoon, the fortress and moat that wards off the inimical forces of secularism which mocks their heritage.

Perhaps some personal reflexivity in this regard is apposite. The second author of this book is Muslim while the first two are Christian. With no intention of offending or undermining academics who lack religious affiliation, we modestly assert that having some common ground with students in our "ghetto" schools when it comes to metaphysical beliefs provides a valuable perspective for understanding the complexities of faith. Leo Tolstoy defined religion as "the establishing by man of a relationship with the infinite Being, or beings, whose power he feels over him" (Tolstoy, 1987, p. 88). He goes on to describe what religion is not: "Neither is a belief in propositions which give man no definite guidance in his conduct. It is similarly impossible to give the name religion to Comte's positivism, since it only establishes a relationship between man and mankind, not with the infinite" (Tolstoy, 1987, p. 88). Herein lies the crux of the problem. For many of the students we spoke to, the myriad streams of Western ideologies jostling for preeminence, whether the Cartesian rupture, positivism, Enlightenment values, capitalism and communism, to name a few, that have flowed into the mighty sea of secularism, not only were developed in opposition to Islam and faith in general, but leave the soul parched and adrift in an ever-expanding sea of meaninglessness.

Consider the example of child-rearing and education to illustrate how certain innovative ideas can clash with traditional cultural practices. In one class lesson, for

instance, a student from one of the "ghetto" schools appeared genuinely perplexed after having googled Jean Jacques Rousseau and discovering that this Enlightenment luminary abandoned all five of his children with his domestic partner Thérèse Levasseur giving them up for adoption to a Paris orphanage. At the time, the students had briefly shared Rousseau's view on children's education through the lens of the fictional Emile in his book *Emile or On Education* (1762). Rousseau sets forth his ideal of education which should be commensurate with the natural stages of human development. He gives pride of place to experiential learning crystallized through the freedom to explore the world. He advocates for a child-centered approach, where the educator acts as a guide rather than a strict authority. Additionally, Rousseau discusses gender differences in education, proposing different approaches for boys and girls. Overall, "Emile" reflects Rousseau's belief in the innate goodness of humans and the critical role of education in cultivating virtue and individuality while challenging existing societal norms and educational practices of his time. However:

> Rousseau fathered five children with Thérèse Levasseur, his domestic partner, but left them all to a Paris orphanage. Although this was not an uncommon practice among the newly monied middle classes, Rousseau unconvincingly attempts to justify himself by invoking Plato's proposal that children would benefit from state education: "I truly saw no harm in it. Taken all in all, I chose for my children what was best for them, or what I believed to be so" (Schouten de Jel, 2019, p. 3).

Now, consider trying to convince students from Muslim backgrounds that the likes of Rousseau, an icon of the age of Enlightenment and the self-evident virtues of reason (with a poorly concealed jab at European Muslims), was worthy of emulation. There should be no doubt about the standing of Rousseau's *Emile* in the canon of western literature. Consider translator Allan Bloom's tribute: "Thus *Emile* is one of those rare total or synoptic books, a book with which one can live and becomes deeper as one becomes deeper, a book comparable to Plato's *Republic*, which it is meant to rival or supersede. But it is not recognized as such in spite of Rousseau's own judgment that it was his best book and Kant's view that its publication was an event comparable to the French Revolution" (Bloom, 1979, p. 4). Rousseau asserts:

> Do not give your pupil any kind of verbal lessons; he ought to receive them only from experience. Inflict no kind of punishment on him, for he does not know what it is to be at fault. Never make him beg for pardon, for he could not know how to offend you. Devoid of all morality in his actions, he can do nothing which is morally bad and which merits either punishment or reprimand (Rousseau, 1979, p. 92).

We return to Leo Tolstoy's "neither is a belief in propositions which give man no definite guidance in his conduct" (Tolstoy, 1987, p. 89). It is certain that Tolstoy would have subsumed Rousseau's *Emile* under the category of Auguste Comte's positivism both of which are devoid of a connection to the infinite and give guidance on conduct which is diametrically opposed to the rudiments of most religions. Obviously, we would be amiss to highlight one or two classic works as the catalysts propelling the increased religiosity among Muslim youth whose piety and devotion to Islam comes as a surprise to some of their parents. Allan Bloom reminds us,

"*Emile* might seem to some ridiculous because it proposes a system of education which is manifestly impossible for most men and virtually impossible for any man. But this is to misunderstand the book" (Bloom, 1979, p. 28). Bloom informs the reader that Emile is akin to a philosopher's heuristic tool and the book is meant to influence "practice only in the sense that those who read them well cannot help but change their general perspectives" (Ibid). One again, try explaining this to youth in our "ghetto" school.

We argue that the continuous exposure to a Western canon filled with Orientalist, racist, Islamophobic, and anti-religious sentiments can lead to the formation of oppositional narratives. These narratives may prompt individuals to embark on a journey for an authentic self, where figures like *Emile* are replaced by names such as Ali or Fatima. In this search for identity, contrary to the advice to avoid verbal lessons, individuals might receive instruction in a madrassa from a local imam at the neighborhood mosque. "The young man looked like an angel without his halo, like one who had lost his way," wrote Balzac. This moving metaphor chimes fittingly with the experience of many Muslim students in Norway who at the outset approached their identities with a palpable equivocation in regard to their religious roots. In a society increasingly dominated by a secularism that targets Islam, these students often wrestle with feelings of dislocation and estrangement, as they navigate a cultural landscape that frequently is inimical to the significance of faith and spirituality.

It was Michel Foucault who reminded us that power is also productive in the sense that it is multipolar and matrix-like. Contrary to the Marxist top-down repression hypothesis, Foucault theorized that even the repressed can exercise power. "Furthermore, this power is not exercised simply as an obligation or a prohibition on those who "do not have it"; it invests them, is transmitted by them and through them; it exerts pressure upon them, just as they themselves, in their struggle against it, resist the grip it has on them" (Foucault, 1977, p. 27). This quest often leads them to re-engage with their faith in a more profound and conscious manner, resulting in what can be interpreted as a reclamation of their "halos." The very forces that seemed to strip them of their identities ultimately propel them towards a deeper exploration of their beliefs, values, and cultural heritage. In this transformative journey, figures such as Ali or Fatima emerge as representations of their renewed commitment to faith, standing as affirmations of their authenticity amid a sea of secular skepticism.

Michel Foucault deemed power not as a phenomenon held by a few and imposed on others, but as something that is omnipresent, woven into the fabric of relationships and society. He argued that it would be reductionist to perceive power as only about domination—it's also productive. It creates discursive systems of knowledge, influences behavior, and shapes how people see themselves and the world around them. In this view, power isn't a one-way street. Even those who seem to be victims aren't just passive recipients of control; they interact with power, push against it, and sometimes re-channel it. Resistance isn't separate from power—it is integral to it, continuously remaking the dynamics of influence and authority. This insight shifts the focus away from merely asking who has power to exploring how power

operates and what it produces. It helps us see that struggles against oppression can lead to new ideas, new identities, and even new ways of living. Instead of being only destructive, these struggles can be transformative, revealing the potential for creativity and renewal in the face of constraint.

In the Civil Rights Movement in the USA, power wasn't just something held by oppressive systems of segregation. It also existed within the communities fighting against these systems. Activists like Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King Jr. didn't hold traditional power in a legal or political sense, but through acts of resistance—like the Montgomery Bus Boycott—they reshaped the power dynamics of society. Their resistance revealed how power flows not just from laws or institutions but also through collective action, reforming culture and generating change. Foucault's idea helps explain how even marginalized groups can generate transformative power through struggle. When governments or institutions try to censor certain ideas online, they endeavor to control the flow of information. However, this often leads to innovative forms of resistance. People find new ways to spread messages, such as using memes, coded language, or alternative platforms. The act of censorship itself can fuel creativity and solidarity among those resisting it. Here, power isn't just suppressive; it's productive—both in the way it attempts to control and in the way it sparks resistance and new forms of expression.

Consequently, the ostensible loss of their halos—symbolizing their disconnection from faith—becomes a mechanism for renaissance and "emancipation". By navigating the intricacies of their religious identities in a secular context, these students not only retrieve what was once lost but also redefine their halos in a contemporary light, signifying resilience and agency in the face of social tensions. Their journeys illustrate the sophisticated interaction between secularism and faith, revealing how the challenges of modernity can unexpectedly play the role of a midwife—a springboard into a rebirth of religious identity. As was mentioned previously, researchers are reduced to a role akin to topographers recording and measuring changes in the landscape, such as the one below with the title "More religious than their parents: Religious transmission and individualization among Norwegian Muslims" (2023) without succeeding in fully plumbing the depths of this curious phenomenon: (Brottveit, 2023, p. 328).

> Several Norwegian studies have, in addition to a more pragmatic and eclectic attitude to religion, found tendencies towards religious revival and orientation towards a more pietistic and orthodox Islam among young people. Kari Vogt writes in her book "Islam in Norwegian" from 2008 that "[p]ossibilities are many, and several new trends are obviously going in a conservative direction, and Salafi-oriented Islam—sometimes in new and unexpected combinations with Sufism—seems to have wind in your sails" (Brottveit, 2023, p. 328).

One must also keep in mind that many of these students' parents came to Norway as migrant laborers or refugees. In other words, religious piety or revival were not on the horizon of expectations. On the contrary, they certainly prepared themselves to accept a subdued and even non-existent role at least in public for their cherished Islam in the new country in the polar north and explore ways of keeping the frail flame of faith burning. The parents were obviously successful in this mission. It is

fair to say that beside the raucous following Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* (1988), the first generation managed to live relatively quiet lives untouched by the later vitriol their religion would soon face. This vitriol would take center stage on September 11, 2001, when Islam was inextricably entwined with terrorism in Western discourse. The emerging generation of Muslims, some of whom were just coming of age during this turbulent period, and others who witnessed the escalation of what they perceived as an age-old hostility toward Islam—rooted in historical events such as the Crusades—became progressively disenchanted with the narrative of peaceful coexistence with the West that their parents had clung to. This cynicism was informed by a litany of contemporary phrases like "war on terror", "extraordinary renditions", "Guantanamo", and "waterboarding", which jointly correspond to a wider systemic assault on their identity and faith.

In light of Paul Ricoeur's insights in *Oneself as Another* (1992), we can critically appraise the present-day narratives shaping Muslim identity in Norway, which are increasingly interlaced with reflections on the recent past and actively crafted in opposition to Western anti-Islamic framing. Ricoeur conveys the idea that personal identity is not merely a self-contained essence but rather a dynamic construct shaped by external narratives and relationships with others. This is particularly relevant for the new generation of Muslims whose identities are significantly influenced by their experiences of societal narratives marked by suspicion, fear, and hostility.

> Bermond thus takes into account our preunderstanding that stories are about agents and sufferers. For my part, I never forget to speak of humans as acting and suffering. The moral problem, as we saw in an earlier study, is grafted onto the recognition of this essential dissymmetry between the one who acts and the one who undergoes, culminating in the violence of the powerful agent (Ricoeur, 1992, pp. 144, 145).

In Norway and elsewhere, the poignant historical context of events framed around the "war on terror", among others, have led to a profound awareness among young Muslims. They have not only witnessed the gelling of age-old prejudices against Islam—rooted in centuries-old conflicts like the Crusades—but have also been subject to the ongoing ramifications of these narratives today. As such, their identity formation is gradually more pivoted around a collective consciousness that recognizes the hidden biases and systemic injustices inserted within mainstream discourse. Ricoeur's notion of identity as a narrative proposes that individuals construct their sense of self through the stories they tell about themselves and those told about them. "Being affected by a course of narrated events is the organizing principle governing an entire series of roles of sufferers, depending on whether the action exerts an influence or whether its effect is to make matters better or worse, to protect or frustrate" (Ricoeur, 1992, p. 145).

For Muslim youth in Norway, their narratives are now crafted in critical response to the dominant frameworks that depict Islam as incompatible with Western values. Add the latter to our earlier assertion that the Scandinavian disenchantment of the universe, to borrow from Max Weber, is totally opposed to the Muslim's divinely enchanted world where the concept of *Tawhid* dominates. Tawhid is the central concept in Islam that emphasizes the oneness and uniqueness of God (Allah),

asserting that there is no deity worthy of worship except him. It encompasses three main aspects: the oneness of God's lordship, the exclusivity of his worship, and the uniqueness of his names and attributes, infusing existence with purpose and meaning by guiding Muslims in their faith and practice. The experience of feeling ostracized and misrepresented has prompted a recalibration of their identities, in which they dismiss the notion of harmonious integration espoused by previous generations. Instead, they embrace a narrative that acknowledges the realities of discrimination and seeks to assert their identity against the backdrop of a society that often frames them as "the other".

Consequently, the current chronicles shaping Muslim identity today are marked by a two-fold process: they wrestle with the weight of historical prejudice while concurrently forging a buoyant identity that is marked by self-sufficiency, agency, and a profound understanding of their place within an often-hostile sociopolitical landscape. This dialectical process echoes Ricoeur's insights on the interaction between self and other, exemplifying how the young Muslim generation in Norway recovers their identity through a narrative deeply informed by both personal reflection and a critical engagement with the societal structures that seek to define them.

Otto Rudolf stresses that the experience of God is understood as wholly other—an encounter that remains unavailable to those who deny the metaphysical. In fact, he asserts that those incapable of visualizing such an experience should refrain from reading his book. This understanding of the "wholly other" surpasses mere belief; it serves as a bulwark that guides Muslims in today's complex sociocultural landscape. The perception of the infinite and the purpose it expresses imparts their identities with a profound sense of meaning and direction, empowering them to navigate the challenges posed by a world that often denigrates their faith. In this context, religion acts as a source of strength and resilience, advancing a collective mindfulness through the transnational ummah—a global community of Muslims united by shared beliefs and values. This mutual bond enhances their sense of identity, fortifying their agency in the face of a public discourse that frequently debases Islam and religion more broadly. The richness of their faith and the connection to a larger Islamic identity imbue these young Muslims with a resilience that is impervious to the negative framing often found in societal narratives. They draw from their religious principles not only to assert their place in the world but also to challenge the stereotypes and prejudices that seek to undermine their existence. The divine, thus, offers them a measure of power and purpose, enabling them to craft a narrative of identity that resists external attempts to define or limit them.

Through this lens, their commitment to faith becomes a transformative process—one that allows them to salvage and redefine not just their personal identities, but also the broader discourse about what it means to be a Muslim in contemporary society. In doing so, they show that their identities, nourished by faith and community, are not merely responses to the suffering that Ricoeur describes, but affirmations of their inherent dignity and significance in an increasingly complex world.

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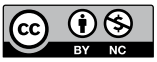

Part III

Chapter 11
Between Labels and Legacies: The Dilemma of Whiteness

> But first, the label itself—"mugging". In law, there is actually no such crime, and there is no figure for it in the statistics until 1973. No actual British crime is called a "mugging" until August 1972. The media tend to work with labels; labels simplify. They identify. They mark things out, and they focus our attention on things. "Teddy boy". "Hell's Angel"."Skinhead". One man's "urban terrorist" is another man's "freedom fighter". Labels mobilize strong feelings and attitudes. They carry a lot of moral weight. They help us to make sense of things, and they give people personal qualities. But they also help to cluster stories in the press which don't necessarily belong together … Where, in fact, did this label, "mugging", come from? (Hall, 2021, pp. 162, 163).

It is abundantly clear that any genuine attempts at understanding and mitigating the current slide into racially segregated schools and societies in Norway will necessitate an interrogation of the role of mainstream media. In *Orientalism,* Edward Said critically assessed how Western scholars often depicted the East through a pseudo-academic lens, ensuing in grotesque and simplistic understandings of Eastern cultures. This critique underscores the absurdity of claiming comprehensive insights while being entrenched in biases. Today, a parallel can be seen with journalists who "research" the progeny of these Eastern cultures. Despite advances in technology and global interconnectedness, these journalists often produce narratives that are similarly prejudiced and distorted, reflecting the same racial biases their academic predecessors propagated. This cyclical pattern underlines the tenacious farce in claiming objective understanding while perpetuating misrepresentations.

The role played by mainstream media in shaping the discourse on immigration and integration has been extensively researched. The British cultural theorist, Stuart Hall (2021), contributed significantly to the understanding of media's role in shaping cultural identities and societal attitudes. His study focusing on the encoding and decoding in media studies has furnished critical insights into how audiences interpret media messages about immigration. The Dutch scholar, Teun A. van Dijk, has been influential in the field of critical discourse analysis, showing how media discourse overtly and covertly secretes prejudice and racism putting non-white

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minorities beyond the pale. One is hard-pressed to find any substantial changes since van Dijk penned these words in 1984:

> In general, then, minorities also are minorities in the media. They are less employed as journalists (in the Netherlands: almost none) (Greenberg & Mazingo, 1976; Husband, 1983). Newsreports, feature articles, and TV-programs about them are relatively scarce. In movies they still play secondary and stereotypical roles. News about them is predominantly negative: crime, conflict, social problems, drugs, and the negative consequences of immigration as perceived by the majority. Or else they have a passive role; it is news about the actions of the authorities for (or against) them, or of members or groups from the white majority. Their opinion, even in matters that regard them directly, is seldom asked. Instead, white minority specialists are invited to comment on policy issues or conflicts. General social problems, such as drugs or muggings (Hall et al., 1978), are redefined as associated with minorities. Even when news is not outright racist, it subtly conveys negative representations about (the presence of) minorities (van Dijk, 1984, p. 9).

We argue that unless the role of whiteness in perpetuating the continued segregation of schools in the capital and elsewhere is critically studied, the Norwegian media discourse on the topic will continue to tilt at windmills, as did Miguel de Cervantes's Don Quixote who misidentified imaginary or exaggerated adversaries—the adversaries in our case being either (1) scapegoating the minorities themselves for creating "ghetto" conditions, which populists favor, and (2) blaming the grade-based admission system, which the left favor. Such an analysis is crucial for grappling with the pressing question of why the majority of white individuals—irrespective of their ideological leanings, barring those who lack the financial means to relocate—are participants in the phenomenon generally referred to as "white flight".

This exodus effectively results in the departure of white populations from increasingly diverse neighborhoods, leaving behind primarily black and brown communities. Engaging directly with the motivations and consequences of this exodus is essential for unpacking the complexities of segregation and for advancing a more equitable societal framework. Failure to do so not only obfuscate the underlying structural dynamics at play but also perpetuates a superficial narrative that inadequately captures the lived experiences of marginalized populations left in the wake of this demographic shift. In a recent study based on a fresh doctoral study and reported in the newspaper *Utrop* with the headline, *Clear signs of white flight in Oslo School* (13.02.2024), the article states, "Ethnic Norwegian families are moving away from primary schools in Oslo with many minority pupils, new research shows. Integration does not work well if our school districts look like a chessboard, says the sociologist" (Kinsella, 2024).

Ultimately, once the dust of denial settles, all parties are forced to confront the ugly but crucial point that "white flight" is, unlike the invention of the fictitious "muggings" (Hall, 2021) in the UK context, the correct term to describe the phenomenon, and, more importantly, is parasitic upon white supremacism. Before we proceed to show how white supremacism underpins "white flight", a brief sketch of the historical contours of white supremacism in Norway from a study co-authored by the lead author (Thomas et al., 2023), among others, follows. White supremacy is rooted in the belief in a biological hierarchy of races, suggesting the superiority of the White race over others and thus giving succor to systems of domination.

While some Norwegian critics may assert that the term is an import from the USA, we argue that White supremacy has deep and localized roots in Norway, preceding the establishment of the United States, hence signifying a homegrown form of Norwegian White supremacy. Historically, the term "race" was considered taboo within Norwegian educational research, leading to the adoption of euphemistic terms like "ethnic" and "cultural" differences until recently (Andersson, 2022; Beach & Lunneblad, 2011, p. 32).

Race was often associated with hubris, which advocated the belief in innate and incompatible differences between races, presenting a justification for White supremacy. This refusal to acknowledge forms of racism endured despite state-sponsored discrimination faced by national minorities such as the Sami, Jews, and Tartars, which were anchored in classical notions of racism. For instance, racism against the Sami in the 1800s included practices like body-snatching and skull measurement to reinforce notions of their inferiority (Berg-Nordlie, 2022, p. 427). Accordingly, although the Sami are classified as White, they were omitted from the hegemonic conception of Whiteness in Norwegian society due to their perceived biological and cultural "otherness". This resonates with the earlier stigmatization and later accession of Irish Whiteness in the USA, as noted by Noel Ignatiev in "How the Irish Became White" (Ignatiev, 2022). Norwegian historians Brochmann and Kjeldstadli (2008) have articulated that the predominant views of racial hierarchy during Norway's nation-building period (1814–1940) were significantly shaped by Enlightenment thought: "Towards other peoples, Norwegians shared the same notions of supremacy as most nineteenth-century Westerners" (Brochmann & Kjeldstadli, 2008, p. 94). National minorities faced systemic disadvantage on account of a White racial framework that upheld the superiority of the "Germanic", "Nordic" or "Norwegian race", leading to the cataloguing of the Sami as "biologically degenerate" and the Kvens as evincing "Mongol" traits characterized by "brutality" and "sentimentality". Likewise, the Romani people were the subjects of attempts at forced assimilation, involving abduction and sterilization, echoing colonial practices seen elsewhere (Brochmann & Kjeldstadli, 2008, p. 149). As a result, "Norwegians came to share a colonialist mind without having colonies—apart from the Sami areas" (Brochmann & Kjeldstadli, 2008, 98). This valorization of a constructed, "primeval" notion of Norwegian Whiteness resonated with the Nazis, who regarded Norway as "a genetically desirable country" and "highly Aryan", exemplifying the extremities of Nazi ideals regarding race, as illustrated by the creation of the *Lebensborn* program in Norway, which facilitated relationships between Norwegian women and German soldiers (Nilsen, 2019, p. 181; Brochmann & Kjeldstadli, 2008, 161).

Within a broader context of northwestern Europe, Norwegians perceived themselves in a psychological hierarchy that positioned England and Germany as superior, with aspirations to align alongside these civilizations (Brochmann & Kjeldstadli, 2008, 8). At the time of the drafting of Norway's Constitution in 1814, two competing notions of nationality emerged: one with roots in the French vision of political union and citizenship, and another, germane to theorizing Whiteness in Norway, expressed by early historians such as Rudolf Keyser and Peter Andreas Munch, who

posited the immigration theory, suggesting that Norway was principally populated from the north by Germanic tribes while largely disregarding the presence of the Sami, consequently framing Norwegians as a pristine, homogeneous people (Brochmann & Kjeldstadli, 2008, p. 95).

Having briefly traced the contours of what Bonilla-Silva called a "white habitus" in Norway (Bonilla-silva, 2022), we argue that such a white habitus entrenched in a historically conditioned white supremacy, no doubt informs the bedeviling notion of white flight that leaves behind racially segregated schools and societies in Norway. Consider Fig. 11.1 below which is from the news source *Human Rights Service* (Karlsen, 2017) considered extreme right in its ideology. The heading in Norwegian states, "Total net migration 2008–2017 distributed into districts [i.e. in Oslo]". It is significant that the reporters pull no punches when they bluntly state:

> For the sake of simplicity, we have divided the groups into R1 = Norwegians (without immigrant background), R2 = EU/EEA, which also includes the USA, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, and R3 = Asia, Africa, South and Central America, Oceania excluding Australia and New Zealand, and Europe outside the EU/EEA. (Comment on R1: Here, anyone who is not an immigrant or born in Norway to immigrant parents will be registered, such as those with one Norwegian-born and one foreign-born parent) (Karlsen, 2017).

Conveniently, figure omits R2 which includes mostly whites from the USA, Canada, Australia etc., the focus is only between whites in Norway (R1) and black and brown individuals from the Global South (R3). The report and the choice of racial/ethnic categories, which surprisingly is commensurate with the practice of the official Statistics Norway, a phenomenon which Gullestad (2002, p. 51) has castigated as "statistical reification", clearly obsesses about the influx of black and brown bodies into the capital and the corollary "disappearance" of white bodies. Such reports, which are not limited to the extreme fringe, are sadly too common.

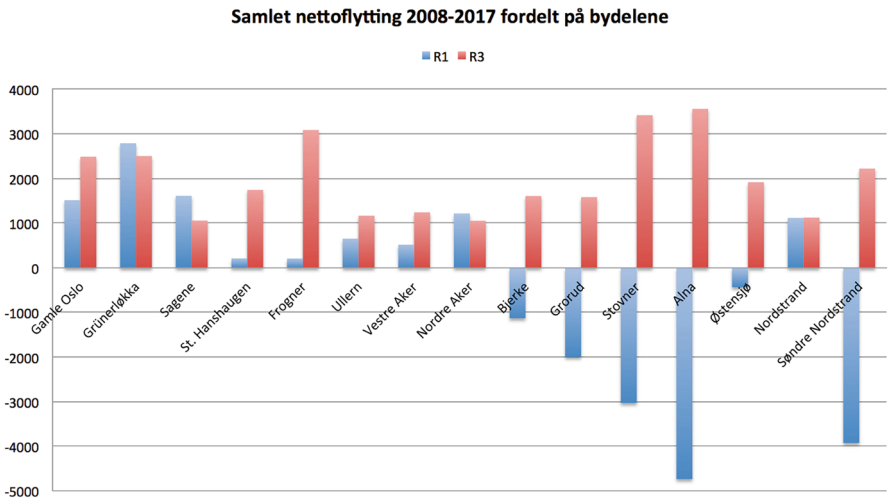

Fig. 11.1 Total net migration 2008–2017 distributed into districts [i.e. in Oslo]

This is about maintaining what we call "the balance of white visibility". Once this dominant field of White visibility falls below a certain threshold—an accepted ratio that remains known only to those who serve as the "keepers of the 'Holy Grail' of White presence"—it triggers what Hall (2021) describes as a "moral panic". Such a decrease in visibility can activate fears of cultural displacement, social upheaval, or loss of status, leading individuals and groups to react irrationally in a bid to retrieve or maintain their perceived superiority. The bars in the red represent black and brown bodies while white Norwegians represent the blue ones. A critical reader is left to wonder if the choice of color, red, for the immigrants from the Global South is accidental. This becomes not a case of "Waiting for the Barbarians" (1980) but "The Barbarians are Here" to paraphrase J.M. Coetzee's classic novel.

This classification, reminiscent of the cruder original crafted by the Swedish botanist Carl von Linnaeus, implicitly pivots whiteness as the normative standard, suggesting that those who classify within R1 hold a superior status. The presence of Western countries in R2 implies that they share a more racially and culturally affable identity with Norwegians, reinforcing a Eurocentric view that underpins the superiority of Western cultures while dislocating Norway from the racial and cultural diversity found in R3. Furthermore, by grouping vast and diverse regions like Asia and Africa into a single classification, the sorting distils a sense of otherness that dehumanizes individuals from those regions, overlooking their unique identities and contributions. This broad-stroke approach to categorization peddles in stereotypes and fails to value the complexity of the lived experiences of people from these regions, ultimately marginalizing them within the Norwegian socio-political landscape.

This rhetoric serves to stir up a defensive stance among the dominant population, stimulating calls for insular policies and protective measures aimed at safeguarding what is often described as an endangered way of life. It creates a climate of urgency and alarm, where the underlying message suggests that diversity must be challenged at all costs to prevent chaos or decline. Subsequently, this distillation of fear not only simplifies complex societal changes into a binary of "us versus them" but also impedes more nuanced understandings of multiculturalism and its potential benefits. The legal scholar Cheryl I. Harris (Harris, 1995), employs the term "Whiteness as property" in the US context to give expression to the particular set of advantages and privileges that are conferred upon white individuals to the detriment of non-whites in a social and legal setting. Harris (1995) narrates the story of her light-skinned grandmother who, faced with dire economic circumstances, decided to "pass as white" and work in a major retail store in Chicago's central business district in the 1930s. She goes on to write and describe the phenomenon of whiteness as property:

> My grandmother's story illustrates the valorization of whiteness as treasured property in a society structured on racial caste. In ways so embedded that it is rarely apparent, the set of assumptions, privileges, and benefits that accompany the status of being white have become a valuable asset – one that whites sought to protect and those who passed sought to attain, by fraud if necessary. Whites have come to expect and rely on these benefits, and over time

> these expectations have been affirmed, legitimated, and protected by the law (Harris, 1995, p. 277).

We contend that it is incumbent on those who genuinely desire to understand the phenomenon of increased racial segregation in schools in Norway to flip the lens and concentrate on the intransigent phenomenon of whiteness as property rather than approach the issue from the perspective of the victims. Indeed, this was the very rationale driving the efforts of white scholars in the field of whiteness studies. Examining the effects of racism on its victims shines a light on only one facet of a multi-layered issue, analogous to examining the wrecked lives of those caught in the crossfire of a shattering war. While the narratives of individuals suffering from racial discrimination are critical and deeply impactful, they uncover just a fragment of the broader tapestry of societal consequences. Studying the effects of racism on its victims offers a partial view into a broader and more complex narrative; however, it is crucial to guide our inquiry toward the source of racial oppression—specifically, the constructs of whiteness and the elaborate machinations that uphold it.

We argue that whites would still "flee" from neighborhoods where non-white people begin to make their presence felt even if none of these non-white people were Muslim. One could be forgiven for thinking that white flight is a natural consequence of an Islam which is incompatible with Western democratic values. Norwegian media offers a smorgasbord of reasons for "white flight": poor Norwegian linguistic skills among non-white children, white children bullied for bringing salami in their lunch boxes, the observance of the separation of the sexes during swimming, students fasting during Ramadan and a host of similar complaints. Yet, as is often the case in the skewed reporting, the school and the non-white demographic left behind is blamed for the status quo. For instance, the online newspaper *Nettavisen* ran the headline, "No ethnically Norwegian first graders" with the subheading, "Mortensrud School is unlikely to have a single student with an ethnic Norwegian background in first grade this autumn. But are not worried" (Brynildsen, 2011).

A short summary of the article follows. The article reports that Mortensrud School in southeast Oslo does not expect to have any students with ethnic Norwegian backgrounds in the first grade that fall, yet both the school and city officials respond that they are not anxious about this development. Assistant Principal Astrid Madsen stresses that the school is prepared to address the challenges presented by having a high proportion of minority-language students, focusing on providing all students with a quality education regardless of their background. However, the debate has revealed concerns among city residents about how Oslo will evolve, with some expressing fears that Muslims will take over. City Council Leader Stian Berger Røsland highlights the importance of redefining what it means to be Norwegian and hopes that society will begin to view individuals of different skin colors as part of the Norwegian identity.

Overall, the article illustrates how non-white students are often unfairly blamed for "white flight", with an underlying fear of cultural change wrongly placed on them. We have subjected the article to a Hallidayan analysis (Halliday, 1985).

Fairclough (1985, p. 739) posits that "ideological discursive formations" (IDFs) can be compared to "speech communities." These formations are shaped by ideological and discursive norms that create institutional subjects, often without their conscious realization. This process involves "naturalizing" these constructions, aligning with Gramsci's notion of "common sense", which is understood as a product of a manufactured consensus that has been established over time. (Fairclough, 1995). "Ideology' […] involves the representation of 'the world' from the perspective of a particular interest, so that the relationship between proposition and fact is not transparent, but mediated by representational activity" (Fairclough, 1985, p. 754).

A significant prominence of relational processes (Halliday, 1985) is evident in the article discourse, specifically in the negotiation and construction of identities. The descriptions of various interlocutors—such as students, the educational institution, and city officials—underline a constant effort to articulate the essence of what it means to be "Norwegian" within a social context. This significant emphasis on relational processes signals an intriguing inquiry into identity within a multicultural society, suggesting a transformative understanding of national identity that transcends purely ethnic connotations. This shift alludes to changing perceptions of community and belonging within the urban landscape of Oslo. Furthermore, mental processes (Halliday, 1985) also predominate often articulated in the form of concern and anxiety. The pervasive public trepidation is palpable in regard to the evolving demographics crystallized in the disappearance of the last white pupil.

The prevailing public sentiment is revealed in the apprehensions expressed regarding the evolving demographics of the school and the broader implications for the community. The focus on mental processes indicates a collective sense of fear or unease among residents about the future trajectory of their community amidst significant cultural shifts. This reflects a societal struggle to acclimate to increasing diversity, coupled with an underlying anxiety regarding the potential erosion of a historically defined national identity. In both processes, a palpable sense of unease permeates the discourse revolving around demographic change. In "The Last of the Mohicans", James Fenimore Coope explores the hostility that shot through cultural and racial upheaval during a time of colonial turmoil. Likewise, the current educational landscape in Oslo reflects pervasive public trepidation regarding the shifting demographics, epitomized by the emblematic loss of the last white pupil at Mortensrud School. This absence signifies not merely a change in student composition but also ignites fears regarding the erosion of an established social order and the perceived threat to cultural identity.

> And transitivity is of central importance in, for example, its ability to place members of a particular group consistently in subject or in object position, depending on the communicative needs of the ongoing discourse, and reproducing asymmetrical power-relations among members of a community (Fowler, 1991, p. 95).

In Charles Dickens's "A Tale of Two Cities", the famous opening line employs anaphora: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness…" the concept of repeated themes or ideas can sometimes lead to anaphoric effects when similar sentiments are articulated in close

succession. In the *Nettavisen* article, recurrent phrases and themes playing on public concern or anxiety regarding demographic changes, creates a sense of anaphoric effect along with the multiple references to interpretations or negotiations of identity in the socio-cultural context.

> Cornel West's reference to a normative gaze describes how a racialized (white and Eurocentric) perspective provides a conceptual lens ("the norm" or frames) for framing racialized minorities… With a racialized gaze, minorities are looked at from a white-o-centric point of view, thus reinforcing pre-existing beliefs, while minority women and men internalize a white way of being looked at (Fleras, 2011, p. 44).

It is clear to us, premised on many such reports about the fear of the increasing phenomenon of schools without white Norwegian pupils, that a version of white supremacy is at play here. We, of course, understand that this sui generis demographic change warrants academic studies with respect to social identity, educational equity, and the evolving dynamics of cultural integration within the Norwegian context. However, we argue that there is perhaps a greater need for the white majority to become familiar with the machinations of a white habitus that sees the emergence of black and brown Norwegians as incompatible with Norwegianness. The United States accomplished the milestone of electing its first black President—albeit one of mixed heritage—into the White House, yet it faced significant challenges in refuting allegations of illegitimacy that were rooted, not in his birthplace as was purported, but in the color of his skin. In her notion of "whiteness as property", Harris (1995) writes:

> White identity conferred tangible and economically valuable benefits, and it was jealously guarded as a valued possession, allowed only to those who met a strict standard of proof. Whiteness—the right to white identity as embraced by the law—is property if by "property" one means all of a person's legal rights (Harris, 1995, p. 280).

In one class session, where we discussed the "browning" of schools in Oslo, a student in the "ghetto" responded that history repeats itself. Her parents were from South America, and she referred to her parents who told her about Bartolomé de las Casas the Spanish Dominican friar and missionary who became a prominent advocate for the rights of Indigenous peoples in the Americas during the sixteenth century. She went on to state, "At least we immigrants did not commit the atrocities of the Conquistadores such a Hernán Cortés and Francisco Pizarro who destroyed the Aztec and Inca empires respectively". Bartolomé de las Casas wrote that the natives of Peru, for instance, "were ignorant of the true nature of these Spaniards (who would attack and rob the Devil himself if he had gold about his person) and had never witnessed the speed of their horses" (de las Casas, 1992). He goes on to write in his *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies* (1542):

> I testify that I saw with my own eyes Spaniards cutting off the hands, noses and ears of local people, both men and women, simply for the fun of it, and that this happened time and again in various places throughout the region. On several occasions, I also saw them set dogs on the people, many being torn to pieces in this fashion, and they also burned down houses and even whole settlements, too numerous to count. It is also the case that they tore the babies and sucklings from the mother's breast and played games with them, seeing who could throw them the farthest (de las Casas, 1992, p. 113).

Having assured the lead author who witnessed this exchange that the student was not relishing the prospect of a bloody demographic revolution, "a white armageddon", against white, Western populations, the entire class agreed that the transition to a pluralistic and multi-racial Norway must piggyback on a multi-racial coalition committed to the values of a democratic governance and empathetic citizenship. The student's mention of the painful past highlights the cognizance of a historical account that often positions Indigenous populations as victims of colonial oppression, while also casting current immigrants in a more compassionate light, buttressing their status as bearers of a historical wound rather than fomenters of violence. In her reference to de las Casas' traumatic descriptions of colonial brutality, the student evokes not just empathy but also a call for acknowledgment of a common human experience that surpasses race and background, serving as a reminder of the ongoing implications of colonial legacies.

This classroom dialogue paved the way for a more serious discussions of what a pluralistic and multi-ethnic Norway might look like, framed by democratic values and empathetic citizenship. Nations mourn the loss of land, language, culture and similar values, and not skin color. Whoever heard of a brown people developing an ideology of the purity of brownness, such as the Nazis with whiteness. The Nation of Islam, under the leadership of Elijah Muhammad, teaches that white people were conjured up by a black scientist named Yakub through genetic manipulation. This doctrine serves to explain racial differences and critique systemic racism while empowering African Americans by emphasizing their status as the original people. Despite its impact within the community, this narrative has faced substantial criticism for its pseudoscientific foundation.

The students' in our "ghetto" school's collective agreement regarding the necessity of a multi-racial coalition hints at a hopeful vision for the future, one that prioritizes inclusivity and shared governance amid changing demographics. This outlook demonstrates a conscious effort to learn from the past, emphasizing the need for a societal structure that supports mutual coexistence rather than one defined by historical aggression. Implicitly, the reference to a "bloody demographic revolution" serves as a warning against the hostilities that can arise from demographic changes when coupled with fear and misunderstanding. Instead, the class advocated the need for a proactive approach—one that embraces diversity and fosters mutual respect. By negotiating this complex historical narrative and advocating for a cooperative future, these students embody a commitment to changing the discourse around race, identity, and citizenship in contemporary Norway, seeking to transform historical grievances into a foundation for solidarity and social progress.

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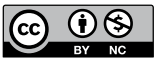

Chapter 12
The Network Society: A Double-Edged Sword

> The constitution of a new culture based on multimodal communication and digital information processing creates a generational divide between those born before the Internet Age (1969) and those who grew up being digital.
>
> Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society* (2010, p. viii).

The phenomenon of "ghettoization" that we have considered in this book would be incomplete if we did not add another and crucial contemporary dimension, the network society, a term we have borrowed from the sociologist Manuel Castells. Castells defines this as "a new social structure in the making, which I conceptualized as the network society because it is made of networks in ways that allowed their endless expansion and reconfiguration, overcoming the traditional limitations of networking forms of organization" (Castells, 2010, p. viii).

Consider the "generational divide before the Internet Age and those who grew up being digital" that Castells mentions. It is worth the while to look back retrospectively and remind ourselves of the paradigm shift or even "quantum leap" our generation has witnessed in terms of interpersonal communication and activism. Mahatma Gandhi, for example, is acknowledged as one of history's most prolific organizer and social activist. Gandhi cut his teeth as a advocate for the rights of the downtrodden and disenfranchised as a young lawyer in, among others, South Africa. Gandhi's efforts, always wholehearted, passionate and optimistic, involved analog methods of raising the consciousness of people and marshaling them towards self-emancipation. Letters of introduction, face-to-face engagement, meticulous planning, large gatherings in public places and a profound sense of purpose were among the ingredients that led him on the path to fighting injustice and ultimately toppling the British Raj in India.

> My first step was to call a meeting of Indians in Pretoria. I expressed a desire to study the conditions of Indians there… The meeting was held in the house of Sheth Haji Muhammad Haji Joosab, to whom I had a letter of introduction…My speech at this meeting may be said to have been the first public speech in my life… I suggested, in conclusion the formation of an asssociation to make representations to the authorities concerned in respect to the hardships of the Indian settlers…My speech was followed by discussion… I saw that very few

P. Thomas et al., *Education and Cultural Evolution in Norway's Multiethnic Society*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-89018-5_12

> amongst my audience knew English… I undertook, besides, to teach a class, if one was started, or personally to instruct individuals desiring to learn the language (Gandhi, 1929, pp. 125–127).

In contrast, contemporary youth of the "internet age" appear to constantly inhabit cyberspace driven by no particular or pressing reason other than the welcome prospect of banishing boredom. This may come across as harsh critique that lumps all youth in this category of "digital drifters", and it is important to nuance this with youth-powered, internet-based movements such as the Arab Spring of 2011 when Mohamed Bouazizi became the apotheosis of the hopelessness felt by unemployed youth in north Africa in an act of self-immolation that reverberated worldwide. One can also add the Black Lives Movement and murder of George Floyd which spontaneously galvanized 20,000 Norwegian youth of all shades who marched to the Parliament echoing the slogan of their American counterparts, "No justice, no peace".

Despite these laudable transnational, internet-based movements, it is fair to say that the lion's share of youth populates a fast-paced digital landscape dominated by social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram, where the lines between engagement and entertainment is often fuzzy. Disturbingly, experts, such Professor of Media Studies and Law at the University of Virginia, Siva Vaidhyanathan, warn that Google, for instance, may make us its own "product" by molding us into its own image complete with its biases.

> One way to begin is by realizing that we are not Google's customers: we are its product. We—our fancies, fetishes, predilections, and preferences—are what Google sells to advertisers. When we use Google to find out things on the Web, Google uses our web searches to find out things about us… it has remarkable power to set agendas and alter perceptions. Its biases (valuing popularity over accuracy, established sites over new, and rough rankings over more fluid or multidimensional models of presentation) are built into its algorithms… in other words, we are folding the interface of google into our very own prceptions (Vaidhyanathan, 2011, pp. 3–7).

The question becomes: What are the "fancies, fetishes, predilections, and preferences" that may be contributing to both "white flight" and the preferences of some non-white students to deliberately settle for high schools with a majority non-white demographic? A white-o-centric point of view obssesses over the potential of the World Wide Web to radicalize so-called "maladjusted" Muslim youth in the West. Although the numbers and consternation are exagerated, one cannot deny the phenomenon of internet radicalization. Conversely, how much do we hear about the same internet being hardwired to further promote and reinforce a white way of perceiving the world? There has been a growing suspicion, and studies, that are looking into why face recognition technology, for instance, appears to clearly be biased against non-white faces.

One study that considered the implications of face recognition technology used by law enforcement agencies, concluded that this technology does indeed excarcebate existing racial discrepancies by disproportionately identifying black individuals from biased databases (Bacchini & Lorusso, 2019), the denouement being increased stop and search incidents, detentions and imprisonment for blacks. In

addition, this technology has been attacked as one that reifies blackness; blacks are defined and limited primarily to their pigmentation to the detriment of all other identity markers. Finally, the authors contend that no application of face recognition technology can be deemed "racism-free" due to the pervasive influence of societal racism, highlighting the need for accountability, unceasing monitoring, and broader societal change to allay its harmful effects.

> Black people are more likely to be enrolled in face recognition systems, be subject to their processing and misidentified by them—with all the consequent troubles that white people more frequently escape. As US House oversight committee ranking member Elijah Cummings effectively summed up in a congressional hearing on law enforcement's use of facial recognition software in March 2017, "If you're black, you're more likely to be subjected to this technology and the technology is more likely to be wrong" (Bacchini & Lorusso, 2019, p. 326).

What the above means is that both white students and non-white ones are affected—both subtly and overtly—by the internet. If as the adage goes, "birds of a feather flock together", then it behooves educators and other stakeholders to query how this transpires on the internet. As we have alluded to earlier, first generation immigrants in Norway and the West in general experienced limited options for engaging in activities that reinforced their sense of identity. The majority were thankful to have made it to Norway, gained meaningful employment and material prosperity. Stories abound about first-generation immigrants, from Pakistan in particular, who worked very long shifts even in the weekends in blue collar jobs and lived in overcrowded residences. In other words, issues of identity, integration, and how to chart a future as "Pakistani-Norwegians" in their newly adopted homeland were placed on the backburner.

The framework of Charles Mills' "Racial Contract" (Mills, 1997) is salutary in comprehending how race influences social exchanges and institutional dynamics within contemporary contexts, particularly in the digital age. According to Mills, the racial contract not only furnishes a blueprint for societal pecking orders but also offers an explanation for the privileges afforded to white individuals, fundamentally framing them as the norm within diverse social structures. As we examine the behaviors and inclinations of youth today, we can draw comparisons between the racial contract and their engagement—or lack thereof—with pressing social issues.

Mills' (1997) racial contract additionally illustrates the dissonance in online engagement and perception between racial groups. As white individuals continue to enjoy the privileges bequeathed by the racial contract, they may inadvertently perpetuate a colorblind discourse, belittling the realities of racism faced by marginalized communities. This view often manifests in online forums and discussions, where predominant narratives—often shaped by white participants—can eclipse the lived experiences and critical insights of black individuals. Moreover, the risk of "white flight" becomes evident; as neighborhoods and schools in Western societies become more and more diverse, white individuals may elect to distance themselves from those spaces, seeking environments that reinforce their racial and cultural norms.

In the digital orbit, this "flight" can take the form of curated online pockets that spread echo chambers of whiteness, harping on extant biases and sidelining voices from non-white groups. These biases piggybacking on individual biases and coalescing into a sea of white echo chambers conversing with each other in internet "ghettos" are typified in the growing corpus of research revealing that technologies like face recognition systems are fundamentally biased, with algorithms disproportionately misidentifying and policing black individuals in a digital panopticon. The interchange between the racial contract and digital collaborations underlines how both white and non-white students are impacted by online intrigues and narratives.

For non-white youth also, the internet can act as both a springboard for empowerment and a window that reinforces racial stereotypes, often narrowing identities to pigmentation and religion above other significant attributes. This composite web showcases the need for a critical examination of how digital technologies and societal structures overlap, accenting the very discriminations that Mills describes in his racial contract. The inferences are clear: in order for youth to navigate the internet meaningfully—transmuting it into a tool to further democratic and just values rather than a purveyor of apathy—they must lock horns with the omnipresent racial dynamics that secrete particular discourses into their online lives and social realities. This fosters a comprehension of how power operates both in the physical realm and the digital spaces they inhabit, urging a collective responsibility to challenge and reshape these narratives. Vaidhyanathan (2011) critiques this cultural imperialism on the internet.

> While those who complain about cultural imperialism cite the ubiquity of KFC in Cairo and McDonald's in Manila, anxious cultural protectionists in the United States quiver at the sound of Spanish spoken in public or mosques opening in Ohio. Some American nationalists argue that cultural imperialism would be good for the world, because Americans have so much figured out (Vaidhyanathan, 2011, p. 109).

It is incumbent upon western stakeholders in education in the West to develop a "double consciousness" (Du Bois, 1935) with respect to the manner in which whiteness is extended to and played out in cyberspace. Since the onset of the internet age and the network society of Manuel Castells (2010), white pupils and students are introduced to a digital world where they are expected to adapt to the discourse of whiteness which is enacted and performed perhaps more forthrightly given the anonymity cyberspace affords. Eli Pariser writes in *The Filter Bubble: What the Internet is Hiding from You* (2011), "You may think you are the captain of your own destiny, but personalization can lead you down a road to a kind of informational determinism in which what you've clicked on in the past determines what you see next—a Web history you're doomed to repeat. You get stuck in a static, ever-narrowing version of yourself—an endless you-loop" (Pariser, 2011, p. 16). There is a lacuna in the research indicating the extent to which students' search preferences on the internet align with racialized patterns.

Do the online browsing behaviors of students correspond to and perpetuate racialized patterns of web usage? Answering this question will unquestionably illuminate the underlying dynamics contributive to the mounting patterns of

segregation in education within the capital and other cities where students are offered a degree of "choice" in selecting high schools, among other educational institutions. Fundamentally, there is little reason to anticipate that the internet diverges from traditional analog discourses, wherein racialized patterns of behavior are insidiously embedded within the public sphere. This is deleterious to schools' mandate to nurture and develop a citizenry committed to the ideals of democracy. "Democracy requires citizens to see things from another's point of view, but instead we're more and more enclosed in our own bubbles. Democracy requires a reliance on shared facts; instead, we're being offered parallel but separate universes" (Pariser, 2011, p. 59).

In his seminal work "Bowling Alone" (2000), Robert Putnam examines the attrition of social capital in America, differentiating between bonding and bridging social capital. Bonding social capital refers to the relationships and connections within homogeneous groups that afford emotional support and a sense of belonging, while bridging social capital applies to the relations between varied groups, fostering broader networks that promote inclusivity and shared understanding. Within the context of students' internet use, we can observe a disconcerting trend: students are increasingly engaging in bonding social capital online, which tends to reinforce local, often racialized connections, rather than bridging across demographic lines to engage with the broader, multiracial society.

The internet, while presenting in theory limitless prospects for connection and interaction, often becomes a parochial platform where homogeneous groups assemble; the digital "tree" under which the tribe congregates. This occurrence can be seen in online spaces where students predominantly network with peers who share comparable racial, cultural, or socioeconomic backgrounds. As students bond over shared experiences, interests, and identities, they may unconsciously heighten the rifts between racial and ethnic groups. This conduct supports Putnam's contention that excessive bonding can lead to insularity, limiting exposure to contrasting perspectives and experiences that are critical for the emergence of a cohesive society.

Furthermore, Tom Friedman's proposition in *The World is Flat* (2002) enunciates a cheerful view of global connectivity and parity brought about by the internet, portending a brave new world of digitally empowered individuals regardless of their backgrounds to engage with the broader world. However, evidence suggests that instead of "flattening the world", the internet often intensifies existing inequalities, creating "internet ghettos". These digital enclaves are little more than echo chambers, where individuals are primarily exposed to viewpoints that reinforce their own, further ensconcing social divisions rather than bridging gaps between different racial and cultural groups.

> First, by definition, the average person's Facebook friends will be much more like that person than a general-interest news source. This is especially true because our physical communities are becoming more homogenous as well—and we generally know people who live near us. Because your softball buddy lives near you, he's likely to share many of your views. It's ever less likely that we'll come to be close with people very different from us, online or off—and thus it's less likely we'll come into contact with different points of view (Pariser, 2011, p. 66).

The notion of "internet ghettos" gives expression to the rupture between the ideals of the internet as a democratizing force and its actual impact on societal structures. While students may possess the technical know-how to access a wealth of information and the potential for widespread interactions, their propensity toward bonding within their local, racialized communities can lead to a patchy understanding of citizenship. A positive local engagement requires bridging social capital to cultivate relationships across miscellaneous groups, advancing empathy and shared purpose essential for a culturally diverse democracy. The current dynamics of students' social interactions online reflect a critical challenge to the notion of healthy citizenship.

Rather than bridging across racially segregated forums and engaging with the mainstream society, students are principally bonding within their racialized groups, thus exacerbating segregation. The internet, then, rather than serving as a levelling agent, has been instrumental in the formation of insular communities that impede integration and mutual understanding. Consequently, there is a pressing need to create opportunities for bridging social capital in digital spaces to cultivate a more interconnected and fair society—one that is not fraught with the pitfalls of "internet ghettos". The Norwegian social anthropologist Thomas Hylland Eriksen wrote an opinion piece in *The Guardian* entitled "Anders Behring Breivik: Tunnel vision in an online world" (2011) in the aftermath of Anders Breivik's terrorist actions. He references Eli Pariser's book stating how the filter bubble on the internet skews perception: "The filter bubble operates on Amazon by giving personal recommendations; in its more insidious ways, it tailors our web searches to confirm our pre-existing world view without us noticing. Eventually, we may drift apart and end up living in different worlds" (Eriksen, 2011). He goes on to write:

> Breivik must willingly have allowed himself to be brainwashed by Islamophobic and extreme rightwing websites. However, had he instead been forced to receive his information through a broadsheet newspaper, where not all the stories dealt with Europe's loss of confidence and the rise of militant Islam, it is conceivable that his world would have looked slightly different. Perhaps one lesson from this weekend of shock and disbelief may be that cultural pluralism is not necessarily a threat to national cohesion, but that the tunnel vision resulting from selective perusal of the internet is (Eriksen, 2011).

Eriksen's argument offers constructive insights into the intricacies of modern societies manifesting as kaleidoscopes of increasing ethnic diversity and globalization. One significant issue is the phenomenon of segregated schooling, workplaces, and social lives, particularly in Western countries like Norway, where collective cohesion is at stake. Eriksen's standpoint stresses that while addressing physical segregation—such as the separation of different ethnic or cultural groups in schools or neighborhoods—is decisive, it is equally important to examine the role of online bonding and bridging patterns in buttressing or undermining these divisions.

Eriksen contends that without factoring in online socialization into the calculus of social integration, the dilemmas attributed to segregated schooling and workplaces will endure unopposed. In a context like Norway, where there is a commitment to social equity and integration, ignoring the impact of digital interactions may thwart efforts to nurture a cohesive society. For instance, if students from immigrant

backgrounds primarily engage online with peers who share their cultural heritage, they may develop social networks that are insulated from mainstream Norwegian society. This lack of bridging social capital can result in a disconnect from the broader societal narratives and inhibit the formation of an inclusive national identity. Additionally, the effects of segregated online socialization stretch beyond personal interactions. They can influence collective attitudes and societal norms, contributing to an even greater divide. For instance, online discussions about immigration or social policy can become rancorous and polarized, with individuals withdrawing into communities that reinforce their views without the challenging influence of diverse perspectives. The result is a society where dialogue becomes increasingly fraught, and mutual understanding is undermined.

Hassan Abdi Dhuhulow (1990–2013) was a Norwegian citizen of Somali origin originally from Larvik, Norway, who became radicalized through online platforms and eventually joined the terrorist group Al-Shabaab. His transition into radicalization showcases how digital environments can serve as influential vectors for extremist ideologies. "Anders Nordheim, who went to secondary school with Dhuhulow, remembers that he was occasionally bullied because he was dark-skinned. 'In the episode I remember best, someone called him a nigger'" (Hammer, 2014). On September 21, 2013, four masked gunmen unleashed an assault on the Westgate shopping mall, a luxury shopping center in Nairobi, Kenya. Reports regarding the death toll from the attack differ due to the collapse of part of the mall ensuing from a fire that broke out during the siege. In total, the attack claimed the lives of 71 individuals, including 62 civilians and five Kenyan soldiers, along with all four assailants. Approximately 200 people were injured in this tragic event. Hassan Dhuhulow was one of the assailants.

Hassan Dhuhulow is the focus of the 2015 book *En norsk terrorist: Portrett av den nye ekstremismen* (A Norwegian Terrorist: Portrait of the New Extremism) by journalist Lars Akerhaug. Akerhaug has strongly criticized Norwegian authorities for their complacent handling of Dhuhulow's case and for their "cowardice" prior to the attack. He has called for a fact-finding commission similar to that established after the 2011 Norway attacks, claiming that the victims of the Westgate massacre warrant more effective accountability and answers from the Norwegian government. Researcher Stig Jarle Hansen has echoed these concerns, stating that Norway has not taken the issue of its Al-Shabaab fighters seriously enough, especially given that the number of fighters is comparable to that in the United Kingdom, despite the much larger Somali population there. Dhuhulow was featured in a BBC Newsnight report that aired on October 17, 2013, and in the NRK *Brennpunkt* documentary "Terroristen fra Larvik" (The Terrorist from Larvik), which was broadcast on October 21, 2014. Dhuhulow is widely regarded as Norway's most notorious terrorist, second only to Anders Behring Breivik.

In his book, Lars Akerhaug takes stock of Dhuhulow's radicalization. "One of this book's fundamental assertions is that Hassan Dhuhulow was influenced, both by a local radical Islamist context and through individuals he met in a digital universe, to act in the way he did. The common denominator in this environment was the strong emphasis on jihad, holy war" (Akerhaug, 2015, p. 168). The

radicalization of Hassan Dhuhulow was significantly influenced by the insidious elements of racism and social ostracism he encountered during his school years. As previously noted, he faced disparaging slurs such as "nigger", among other bigoted labels, which contributed to a pervasive sense of alienation. These experiences of prejudice not only impacted his sense of belonging but also created fertile ground for radicalization, as the feelings of marginalization and exclusion were gradually nurtured by these toxic social dynamics. Akerhaug (2015, p. 38) verbalizes the undercurrents of bigotry that contributed to a toxic environment, ultimately depicting Dhuhulow as an individual who was perceived as beyond the pale. This convergence of prejudice and discrimination not only marginalized him but also created a "devil's brew" of hostility that played a crucial role in his radicalization, strengthening his sense of alienation and facilitating his departure from mainstream society.

> It did not help that Norwegian schools for decades had campaigns to counter racism and discrimination. Buttons and T-shirts with the message "Yes to a colorful fellowship" and "Don't bully my friend" were produced. The message from the teachers and society was that schoolmates should play together and be friends regardless of skin color and ethnicity. However, groups of children are not easily swayed by efforts designed to change their attitudes. They notice when someone is different. Many classmates shared that Hassan stood out, some package this [are diplomatic], others tell it as it is, but would rather it not be told in this way. They would rather not remember that they thought he [Hassan] smelled terrible and was weird (Akerhaug, 2015, p. 38).

The reader is left in no doubt as to the unbearable racism Hassan had to endure. One is reminded of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* when considering the radicalization of Hassan Dhuhulow, as both sequence of events explores themes of marginalization and alienation within their respective cultures. In Shakespeare's play, the character of Shylock, a Jewish moneylender, embodies the difficulties of existing on the periphery of a mainly Christian society. Despite his financial clout, Shylock encounters unrelenting discrimination and dehumanization, demonstrating how societal attitudes can render individuals both powerful and powerless simultaneously. Similarly, Dhuhulow, as depicted in Lars Akerhaug's analysis, faced profound isolation and racial hostility that ultimately contributed to his radicalization. Ironically, Hassan is also portrayed as big, strong and even violent so much so that many feared his physical prowess. "The classmates discovered that Hassan had a vulnerability, he was easily angered. Because he was the only Muslim and the only dark-skinned student in the class, he was called 'nigger'. He became angry, and the fights began. He hit and hit, and the other students were afraid" (Akerhaug, 2015, p. 39).

Unlike Shylock, who was a man of means that afforded him a measure of agency within society, Dhuhulow was devoid of any kind of capital that would endear him to Norwegian society, which deprived him of opportunities for acceptance or identification. His experiences of alienation were intensified by the manifest racism he encountered throughout his school years, including being subjected to slurs. These daily prompts about his otherness not only heightened his sense of isolation but also broke up fallow ground to receive the seed of discontent and consequent radicalization, as he struggled to find a place where he could belong. This conflation of racial

prejudice and societal ostracism parallels Shylock's experiences, where the ruthless discrimination casts him as a crook to the Christian heroes, regardless of the actual moral nuances in his character. Both figures reveal the devastating effects of a society that fails to embrace diversity and instead nurtures division through prejudice.

Many classmates viewed Dhuhulow's individualism with contempt, depicting him as "weird" and adding to a harsh cycle of bullying and social banishment. Such dynamics underscore a critical flaw in anti-racist efforts: institutional messages of inclusion often fall short in effectively penetrating the social consciousness of young individuals. Hassan and Shylock are certainly distinct figures, with one being a real individual and the other a fictional character. Hassan is a Somali-Norwegian who experienced radicalization in a contemporary context, while Shylock, a Jewish-Italian moneylender, figures within the storyline framework of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*. Besides, their ages further distinguish them, as Hassan was a young man in 2013, whereas Shylock is characterized as an older, mature individual. Nevertheless, as has been exemplified in great works of literature across centuries and cultures, the universal themes of prejudice and racism continue to resonate profoundly in our modern society. These shared experiences of marginalization underscore the lasting significance of these issues, inducing critical reflection on how they manifest in contemporary contexts.

Shylock's character is deeply upset by the anti-Semitic sentiments permeating Venetian society. As a Jewish moneylender, he faces relentless discrimination and scorn, leading to his isolation and resentment. This marginalization breeds a desire for retribution against those who have wronged him, particularly Antonio, whose past insults and mistreatment highlight Shylock's outsider status. His resolve in exacting a pound of flesh as payment for the debt symbolizes a refusal to be further humiliated and a desperate attempt to reclaim power in a society that has consistently disparaged him.

SHYLOCK

You call me misbeliever, cut-throat dog,
And spit upon my Jewish gaberdine,
And all for use of that which is mine own.
Well then, it now appears you need my help:
Go to, then; you come to me, and you say
"Shylock, we would have moneys:" you say so;
You, that did void your rheum upon my beard
And foot me as you spurn a stranger cur
Over your threshold: moneys is your suit
What should I say to you? Should I not say
"Hath a dog money? is it possible
A cur can lend three thousand ducats?" Or
Shall I bend low and in a bondman's key,
With bated breath and whispering humbleness, Say this;
"Fair sir, you spit on me on Wednesday last;
You spurn'd me such a day; another time
You call'd me dog; and for these courtesies
I'll lend you thus much moneys"?

ANTONIO
I am as like to call thee so again,
To spit on thee again, to spurn thee too.
If thou wilt lend this money, lend it not
As to thy friends; for when did friendship take
A breed for barren metal of his friend?
But lend it rather to thine enemy,
Who, if he break, thou mayst with better face
Exact the penalty.
The Merchant of Venice, Act 1, Scene 3 (William Shakespeare, 1596–1598)

It is difficult not to be pessimistic about the fact that, while there has been progress overall, the spirit of Antonio lives on in the dismissive and defiant "I am as like to call thee so again, to spit on thee again, to spurn thee too". Nothing can justify revenge that takes the form of terrorism against innocent civilians enjoying a day visiting a shopping mall or a merchant capitalizing on the misfortune of Antonio whose ships were destroyed at sea to exact a pound of flesh. Both Dhuhulow and Shylock exhibit responses to their marginalization that veer toward violence, driven by a profound sense of injustice. For Hassan, radicalization becomes a means of demonstrating agency within a community that he feels understands him, although through a violent and radical lens. His actions mirror a dangerous grasp for identity and significance, fed by the toxic dynamics of a society that failed to accept him.

In contrast, Shylock's quest for revenge ends in a legal battle that reveals the senselessness and self-destruction of his mission for retribution. His commitment to the "pound of flesh" as a form of justice goes beyond the personal and becomes a representation of wider societal conflicts. However, in his dogged pursuit, Shylock loses not just his legal claim to Antonio's flesh but also his independence, as he is forced to convert to Christianity and surrender his wealth. Ultimately, both characters are testament to the devastating nature of societal prejudice, and the extremes individuals may resort to when faced with rejection and discrimination. Hassan's radicalization into violence and Shylock's descent into vindictive fixation serve as instructive tales about the outcomes of alienation. They reflect the crucial need for societies to confront their biases and foster inclusivity, as the failure to do so can lead to cycles of violence and hatred, affecting individuals and communities at large. Both narratives remind us of the human cost of exclusion and the critical importance of understanding and addressing the root causes of radicalization and retribution.

> In the 1980s and 1990s, racism against immigrants in Norway was a highly real phenomenon. Racism assumed open forms. It was not unusual to hear school children, or adults in buses, talk about Pakistanis who smelled of garlic. It was also common to generally hear assertions about immigrants being more criminal than Norwegians. Assertions about Pakistanis who were living off welfare. The so-called everyday racism was to some extent quite a prevalent phenomenon, and extreme right politicians were often spokespeople for this type of racism in a more direct fashion than what is common today. It was this clear-cut racism Hassan was exposed to. "Nigger". The derogatory remark continued to persecute him (Akerhaug, 2015, p. 41).

Few can doubt, in light of the above, that the internet can be populated by youth who are seeking their "pound of flesh" having lost faith in the educational system's desire or ability to include them or provide redress for their real or imagined

suffering. This also applies to white youth who may have been the victims of a black or brown "gang" due to which they experience hatred towards the entire group. Alone in their rooms and buoyed by the anonymity the internet affords (or so they think), it isn't long before they fall into the digital arms of radicals who are adept at justifying their grievances, massaging their fragile egos and re-empowering them with a twisted mission. In other words, racially segregated schools may run parallel to racially segregated spaces on the internet.

The rise of the network society, as articulated by Manuel Castells in 2010, marks a seismic shift in the way individuals connect with one another and the world around them through digital technologies. This advent is characterized by what Castells describes as a "culture of real virtuality" (Castells, 2010, xxxi) where virtual interactions and experiences have become integral to our everyday lives, shaping not only social dynamics but also cultural, political, and educational frameworks. Castells' assertion that "digitized networks have made virtuality a fundamental dimension of our reality" (Ibid) emphasizes the profound impact that digital technology has had on human relationships and societal structures. In former times, virtual interactions often occupied a secondary role to face-to-face engagement; however, in the network society, virtuality emerges as a primary mode of communication and socialization, especially among the youth. The challenge for educators, hence, lies in identifying the significance of these virtual spaces in students' lives; the experiences and interactions that occur online are not merely add-ons but rather foundational to the way students perceive and interact with the world around them. Traditional educational approaches that neglect or downplay the importance of the digital landscape risk becoming irrelevant in a culture where students' sense of self and community is increasingly constructed through online experiences.

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Chapter 13
Evolving Hybrid Identities: A Call for Patience

> My personal journey as a "third spacer", embodying the fusion of Somali, Nowegian, and Christian identities, resonates with Paul Gilroy's (2013) concept of hybridity and interconnectedness among diverse cultures. Gilroy's notion underscores the transformative process where disparate cultural elements blend, giving rise to hybrid identities that transcend the constraints of conventional racial, religious, and national boundaries. Gilroy provocatively questions the presence of "Black in the Union Jack" [i.e. the absence], signifying the dynamic and evolving contributions of black communities within complex societal frameworks.
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> —*A Somali-Norwegian Saga: My Journey from Refugee to Cab Driver to Professor*, (Thomas, 2024)

The excerpt above is plucked straight from the autobiography of the lead author, who embarks on a risky quest to unravel the complexities of his identity. Picture this: a remarkable journey that takes an eclectic mix of ostensibly incompatible components—Somali, Christian, Anglo-Indian boarding school experience, Norwegian, refugee, cab driver, teacher, and professor—and incredibly merges them into a cohesive identity "smoothie". It's like trying to fit a square peg in a round hole, only to discover that with a bit of creativity, you've actually discovered a new shape altogether! In this meditative investigation, he navigates the complexities of his multifaceted existence, serving up a hearty dish of identity that is as rich and diverse as his experiences. Several of our second-generation students whose parents immigrated to Norway from the Global South struggled to articulate a clear-cut identity or locus of belonging.

> I am a Norwegian-Pakistani girl who is 18 years of age. I was born and brought up in Norway. Despite this Norwegians still say that I am a foreigner (utlending). When I am on holiday in Pakistan, the Pakistanis consider me to be a foreigner from Norway. I am a bit confused (Thomas et al., 2016, p. 219).

In this section, we argue that the pressures imposed by mainly white, Western societies on the children of immigrants—particularly those in the second generation and beyond—must be approached with a nuanced recognition and empathetic understanding of the multi-layered and often contradictory strands of identity that these individuals navigate. These identities, which encompass a complex interplay

P. Thomas et al., *Education and Cultural Evolution in Norway's Multiethnic Society*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-89018-5_13

of cultural, social, and personal influences, require careful negotiation and integration into cohesive self-conceptions that are perpetually marked by inherent tensions and contradictions. Recognizing this dynamic is crucial for cultivating an inclusive environment that honors and affirms the diverse identity formations of immigrant youth. The eminent British historian Eric Hobsbawm reflected on the emerging demographic changes in the West in 1995. He surmised that modern transportation and globalization facilitated a new "simultaneous, bi-national or multinational existence, such as, of course, many members of the upper, middle class, especially academics, are already engaged in" (Hobsbawm, 2021, p. 159).

Hobsbawm (2021) was intrigued by this novel phenomenon of globetrotters who while retaining some form of contact with their home bases, spend several months of the year in one or more countries. He mentions Israelis working in New York and and an Ecuadorian who spends half the year in New York. "Where does this leave exclusive ethnicity, exclusive nationalism, the exclusive division of the world? I raise these questions not to answer them, because there is no answer. I raise them because they are problems that the left and the right must face today" (Hobsbawm, 2021, p. 159). It is precisely the point about the futility of trying to predict, channel or determine new and emerging identities of second and third generation children of immigrants that we wish to underscore. This shift challenges the binary and often fixed groupings through which we have traditionally understood nationality and ethnicity. As Hobsbawm states, the sole division of the world into distinct ethnic or national groups becomes gradually flawed in light of these new patterns of mobility. Individuals who cross borders, often fluidly, can embody manifold identities and experiences that do not correspond to pristine nationalist definitions. Instead, they represent a tapestry of interconnected lives, formed through personal, economic, and cultural exchanges across different societies.

Hobsbawm's formulation of these questions seeks to provoke critical thought and dialogue on an issue that both the political left and right must grapple with. For the left, which has often advocated multiculturalism, globalization, and diversity, there is a need to re-evaluate how inclusive narratives can be raised in ways that genuinely mirror the realities of individuals living in transnational contexts. This includes acknowledging that identity is not static but rather dynamic and complex—a perception that demands empathy and understanding of the complex ways in which individuals navigate their multiple heritages and affiliations. Conversely, the right, which has often agitated for notions of exceptionality, national identity, and autonomy, might find itself at a crossroads when confronted with the phenomenon of hybird identites and globetrotters. The rise of individuals who personify various identities calls into question the worth and relevance of purely nationalistic readings of identity. It invites a reconsideration of how immigration, transnational ties, and global flows affect national cohesion, and whether the emphasis on exclusive nationalism can adequately address the realities faced by contemporary societies.

The globalization of identity also stimulates deeper considerations on issues of belonging and community in an age of increased mobility. It challenges the notion of a fixed land of origin and invites new forms of community to develop—ones that may not necessarily be compatible with conventional geographic or ethnic distinctions. These new communities can be accelerated through technology and social

networks, allowing for individuals to feel connected to myriad places and cultures simultaneously, creating a more inclusive understanding of belonging.

Hobsbawm (2021) appears pessimistic about the future of nationality. He raises significant concerns regarding the impact of the burgeoning ethnic diversity on national identity and cohesion within states, particularly focusing on the United States. He expresses the fear that the allocation of the population into self-contained sub-units may lead to a lack of common national ground. This compartmentalization results in communities becoming insular, potentially undermining shared values and societal unity. Next, he highlights the consequences for political unity, specifically mentioning the Democratic Party's historical capacity to unify various ethnic and class interests into a cohesive political force. This unity was achieved through a clever amalgamation of diverse identities, creating a broad coalition. However, Hobsbawm (2021) argues that this aptitude has dissipated in today's political landscape. The absence of the kind of concern for Americanization that was prevalent from the 1880s to 1992 reflects a significant cultural shift. During that time, there was an intensive effort to integrate immigrants into American culture, fostering a sense of shared identity and values. The current lack of such efforts indicates a retreat from engaging immigrants as integral members of society, leading to a potential erosion of national cohesion.

> Nevertheless, it may be worth concluding these reflections by stating the obvious, namely that nationalism is a historic phenomenon, the product of the fairly recent past, itself subject to change, and unlikely to persist indefinitely (Hobsbawm, 2021, p. 202).

Only time will tell whether nationalism will not likely persist indefinitely. It is important to recognize that there is a significant difference between a juggernaut like the USA and lilliputian nations such as Norway. Norway, with a population of about five and a half million, boasts a state-of-the-art bureaucracy that many nations would envy. In this context, one might draw comparisons to Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, where a highly efficient system governs the lives of its citizens with the veneer of stability and order. However, unlike Huxley's dystopian society, which sacrifices individuality for the sake of uniformity and control, Norway's advanced bureaucracy is designed to enhance the quality of life for its citizens while striving to balance social equity with personal freedoms. We argue that the issue of nationality, integration and belonging are of enormous importance to smaller countries such as Norway. Norway was under Danish rule from 1380 to 1814, becoming part of the Kalmar Union, which united the crowns of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden under a single monarch. Following the Napoleonic Wars, Norway was ceded to Sweden in 1814 as part of the Treaty of Kiel, leading to a union that lasted nearly a century. This union with Sweden, while granting Norway some degree of self-governance, was marked by ongoing tensions, ultimately culminating in Norway's peaceful declaration of independence in 1905.

Add to the above Norway's suppression and mistreatment of several of its minorities such as the Indigenous Sami, Kvens, Romani, forest Finns and Jews, and a particular picture emerges, one where the country has felt vulnerable and responds with various panoptic machinations to manage identity construction among

perceived non-comformists. The Sami are an Indigenous people native to Sápmi, a region spanning northern Norway, Sweden, Finland, and parts of Russia, with a rich cultural heritage centered on reindeer herding, fishing, and unique linguistic traditions. The Kvens are descendants of Finnish-speaking settlers who migrated to northern Norway, primarily in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, while the Forest Finns are a minority group who migrated from Finland to the forested regions of southern Norway in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, known for their slash-and-burn agricultural practices. It is in the interstices of these historical confluences that children of immigrants in Norway struggle with their hybrid and multifaceted identities which do not align with those of their parents nor conform fully to the one envisaged by officialdom, despite platitudes about freedom to forge one's identity under the rainbow flag of diversity. Consider the statement below from an interview with one student of Somali ethnic background:

> My affinity towards Norway has undergone some changes since I moved back after a few years in the UK in 2011. While in England, I felt a connection with Norway since I was born and brought up in western Norway. Since I returned, I feel less Norwegian. The rhetoric of politicians, the language and agenda of the media, all this makes people with immigrant backgrounds feel less Norwegian, although we are actually Norwegians (male, 18 years old).

Identity is also constructed as a response to a negation. Let us perceive "granting" the coveted status of becoming Norwegian as the "Holy Grail" of the immigrant's journey. As Amin Malouf reminds us,

> One's first reflex is not to flaunt one's difference but to try to pass unnoticed. The secret dream of mot migrants is to be taken for "natives". Their first temptation is to imitate their hosts, and sometimes they succeed in doing so. But more often they fail. They haven't got the right accent, the right shade of skin, the right first name, the right family name or the proper papers, so they are soon found out. A lot of them know it's no use even trying, and out of pride or bravado make themselves out to be more different than they really are (Malouf, 1996, pp. 38, 39).

Why would children of immigrants, who wish to be preceived as Norwegians, embark on a journey fraught with myriad pitfalls and scant prospects of making it into the warm inner circle of belonging? Amin Malouf's insights further lend succor to the Somali student whose relation with Norwegianness was ambivalent. The student's experience resonates with Malouf's contention that immigrants often wish to blend in, undertaking to pass as "natives" in a bid for acceptance. The difficulties confronted by students of immigrant backgrounds showcase the reality that, no matter how much they may try to conform—through language, comportment, or cultural practices—certain characteristics, such as intonation, skin color, or names, may doggedly mark them as outsiders. This realization can lead to feelings of frustration and deficiency, especially when the desire for acceptance is met with societal barriers.

This struggle also produces a defensive stance on the part of young immigrants, who may start flaunting their differences rather than downplaying them. In reacting to the exclusion they face, some may embrace their heritage more passionately, forming connections with others who share similar experiences. This is the reason

there has been a growing and surprising trend among the children of migrants with Muslim backgrounds who proudly wear hijabs among others and abandon western attire. These youth are born and bred in Norway, have mastered the language and are doing very well with their education. Yet, they go against the grain in espousing the very religious paraphernalia that some western countries eschew. This emphasis on cultural pride can create a sense of community and belonging amongst themselves, providing resilience against the alienation often encountered in wider society. However, it also raises complex questions about authenticity and identity; if one's cultural background is seen as a barrier to acceptance, what does it mean to truly belong in a society that prizes conformity?

The case of the Dutch Muslim marathon runner, Sifan Hasssan, who challenged France's ban on the hijab for French athletes, exemplifies the compound dynamics of identity, image, and resistance encountered by individuals in the landscape of immigration and belonging. By choosing to wear her hijab during the closing ceremony, she not only asserted her cultural identity but also made a bold statement against the restrictive policies of a nation that often marginalizes Muslim women. For the offspring of immigrants, and those who arrived as refugees as children, such as the Dutch Muslim runner, the desire to be perceived as a full member of their society often overlaps with the challenges posed by cultural and sacred symbols. In this context, the act of wearing a hijab takes on meaningful significance. It expresses both a personal choice and a political act, challenging the stereotypes and conventions that underpin the societal narratives surrounding Muslim identities in Europe. Writing for the *Interfaith America Magazine*, a columnist articulates what is at stake:

> But perhaps, in what felt like a bit of temporary redemption, the most lasting image from these games, one that feels especially apropos given France's bans on hijab and religious clothing in the public sector, will be of Hassan, who received the last Olympic gold medal on the last day of the games. She chose to wear a maroon hijab with her bright orange tracksuit, creating a striking image and statement in France. It was nice to see Hassan receive her medal with grace and respect, beaming with a beautiful smile—that was the optics of poetic justice at its finest (Ali, 2024).

For many children of immigrants who wish to be perceived as part of the fabric of their host nation, such bold actions become symbolic of the larger struggle to distil their identities within a framework that often defines them by their differences rather than their contributions. Wearing a hijab in the West, then, takes on a whole different meaning then wearing a hijab in Iran for instance. In the former, a girl born and bred in Norway will don the hijab in protest and defiance against the dominant culture which she may perceive as duplicitous: it mockingly holds out the tantalizing "promise" of belonging but demands that the hijab is discarded and trampled upon after which belonging is denied. The desire to be included in the "warm inner circle of belonging" is often fraught with risks, as they may face backlash or discrimination when asserting their cultural identity in contexts where it is not readily accepted.

The the hijab serves as a litmus test of how identity is an ever-evolving process, shaped by the interplay between cultural heritage and the societal expectations imposed by the dominant culture. For many individuals, particularly children of

immigrants, this process of becoming is not static; it is an endless negotiation affected by both the "carrots" of acceptance and recognition and the "sticks" of marginalization and exclusion. As we explore our identities, we often respond to the experiences of the environment around us. In the context of individuals wearing the hijab, their choice becomes a powerful statement—a way of laying claim to an identity against a backdrop of institutional and societal pressures that seek to straightjacket them into predefined categories. This act of wearing a hijab can symbolize pride in one's cultural and religious background while simultaneously challenging the mainstream narratives that may view such expressions as deviant or objectionable. Thus, the hijab issue becomes a synedoche of a broader dialogue about identity and belonging in a diverse world.

Identity, can be analogous to geological features chiseled by time and environment. It is intrinsically hybridized—composed of myriad influences and experiences that define who we are. Just as each rock formation is unique, exhibiting the effects of erosion by wind, water, and heat, each individual's identity emerges from their varying interactions with diverse cultures, traditions, and societal pressures. In this sense, the end product is not a monolithic, inert identity but rather a vibrant mosaic of influences that reflect personal journeys and experiences, making each individual a unique representation of their multicultural heritage.

Ultimately, accepting that identity is a process of becoming rather than a final destination underscores the importance of embracing diversity in all its forms. Just as we can appreciate the unique beauty of various geographical features, we must also appreciate and celebrate the individual narratives that contribute to a diverse collage that forms the landscape. Few would cherish the prospect of a landscape that is bland and uniform. By consenting to this diversity of identity—in all its complexity—we can create space for a more inclusive society that values contributions over conformity, thus enabling every individual's story, including those who wear the hijab, to be an integral part of the larger narrative of belonging. In doing so, we challenge the notion that everyone must fit into a singular mold and instead embrace the idea that the richness of human experience lies in its variances and intersections.

We reiterate that the above does not translate into a carte blanche acceptance of cultural practices that are antithetical to democratic practices. The dilemma of wearing hijabs in the West is distilled in the title "The oxymoron that is hijab-wearing feminists" featured in the *Toronto Sun* by columnist Farzana Hassan (2021).

> Undoubtedly, the notion of a hijabi feminist is a contradiction in terms. It is justifiably oxymoronic when women donning the Islamic headscarf tout feminism. And yet, especially in the West, many young women have taken to social media to normalize the hijab as a symbol of emancipation rather than oppression. That the hijab is rooted in patriarchy is indisputable. The custom even goes back to pre-Islamic times when women were considered chattel. They were regarded as temptresses to be shielded from the predatory gaze of lecherous men. The veil was a symbol of control, oppression, and male dominance. Islam retained many of the customs and practices of pre-Islamic societies (Hassan, 2021).

While it is true that some may view traditional practices like hijab-wearing as contradictory to the ideals of democracy and feminism, this perspective underscores the intricacy inherent in identity construction. The same crtique can be extended to the

role of nuns in comparable discussions about religious attire and identity. Just like women wearing hijabs, nuns often face criticism for their traditional garb, which can be perceived as a symbol of oppression or submission; yet, many embrace this attire as a reflection of their faith, commitment, and personal identity. The columnist Farzana Hassan raises valid questions about the juxtaposition of feminism and hijab-wearing, contending that the identity of a hijabi feminist may indeed represent a contradiction, an oxymoron. For many, the hijab is inextricably linked to patriarchal traditions that historically treated women as chattel, with roots that extend even into pre-Islamic societies, where it denoted not autonomy but control, oppression, and male dominance.

As we have previously discussed, symbols of oppression have often been reclaimed and reconfigured as weapons of empowerment. The use of the N-word among blacks in the USA is a case in point. It is this "becoming" whch the black feminist scholar bell hooks—the refusal to capitalize her name being an example—emphasizes. She calls for the mask of inauthenticity to drop and for individuals to own their authentic selves. "When black people spend our lives wearing a mask to survive and suceed in the culture of white supremacy, we do violence to our authentic selves. We cannot know who we really are" (Hooks, 2013, p. 197). Perhaps, in the spirit of humility and self-critique, majority western cultures ought to do some soul-searching with a view towards understanding the ways in which they may have been complicit in the turn towards a religious conservatism among some children of migrants. We are aware this is a controversial declaration and are by no means branding these societies Islamophobic and laying the blame at the collective door of the West, given the amorphous nature of the term concealing diversity, but the alternative is to scapegoat and stigmatize vunerable youth.

Perhaps the hijab on the heads of girls whose mothers do not wear the hijab could be emblematic of what we *have made* of Muslim girls, and not what a Muslim girl *is*. The assertion that the hijab worn by girls whose mothers do not don the headscarf could denote what we have erected around Muslim girls, rather than reflecting their authentic identities, resonates profoundly with Jean-Paul Sartre's examination of identity and prejudice in his book, *Anti-Semite and Jew* (1948). In Sartre's exploration, he avers that it is the perception of the Jew—rather than the actual historical realities of Jewish life—that shapes societal attitudes and actions. He argues, "It is therefore the idea of the Jew that one forms for himself which would seem to determine history, not the 'historical fact' that produces the idea" (Sartre, 1948, p. 16). This assertion draws attention to the constructed nature of identity as influenced by external perceptions and societal narratives.

In exploring the hijab in contemporary Norwegian society, we can draw parallels between Sartre's notion of the contrived and ascribed identity of the Jew and the way Muslim girls are perceived when they wear the hijab. The hijab becomes saddled with meanings imposed by society—often associated with subjugation, atavism, or fundamentalism—discounting the possibility that Orientalist views may be complicit in this version of the "Empire dresses back". When Gandhi donned the *dhoti*, a simple apparel typical of rural Indian wear, he wanted to give visible expression to India's cultural heritage and emphasize self-reliance and humility. However,

this action was met with contempt by figures like Winston Churchill, who censoriously referred to Gandhi as a "fakir". Churchill's label was aimed at belittling Gandhi, pigeonholing his philosophy and aspirations into a stereotype of poverty and superstition, reflecting an Orientalist viewpoint that portrayed Indians as exotic, primitive, and uncivilized. This derogatory characterization served to reinforce colonial ideologies that deemed Western societies as inherently superior and justified their dominance over those they viewed as "other".

Just as Sartre urges us to ask, "What have you made of the Jews?" (p. 69), we might likewise ask, "What have we made of Muslim girls who wear the hijab?" The answer lies in the reductive narratives that often dominate public discourse, framing these young women as symbols of conflict or as subjects of pity rather than as individuals with agency and personal identity. Both the hijab and Gandhi's dhoti demonstrate how cultural symbols can be misapprehended and stuffed with meanings manipulated by societal and colonial narratives. They remind us that identity is not fixed; rather, it is incessantly negotiated against the backdrop of historical and political contexts. This assessment underscores the importance of recognizing the agency of individuals in defining their identities, highlighting the need for an inclusive dialogue that respects and honors the myriad ways people express themselves through cultural symbols. The philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah weighs in on western duplicity in regard to toleration and universal values.

> I mentioned intolerance. Yet there are plenty of things that the heores of radical islam are happy to tolerate. They don't care if you eat kebabs or meatballs or kung pao chicken, as long as the meat is halal, your hijab can be silk or linen or viscose. On the other hand, there are limits to cosmopolitan tolerance. We will sometimes want to intervene in other places, because what is going on there violates our fundamental principles so deeply. We, too, can see moral error. And when it is serious enough—genocide is the uncontroversial case—we will not stop with conversation. Toleration requires a concept of the *in*tolerable (Appiah, 2006, p. 144).

Anthony Appiah argues that both the so-called liberal West and certain interpretations of Islam display forms of intolerance. He asserts that while there are radical elements within Islam that display rigid intolerance for practices outside their ideological framework, this same rigidity can also be observed in the attitudes of liberal Western societies. For many in the West, the hijab is often distorted through the prism of prejudice and misunderstanding, leading to a narrative that equates it with oppression or backwardness. This perspective can foster an environment of intolerance that oversimplifies the complexities of Muslim identity and cultural practices. Appiah notes that while the "heroes of radical Islam" may have their own sets of tolerable practices, the response from the West can also be intolerant. One remembers the highfaluting talk of liberating females in Afghanistan before its invasion only for these females to be abandoned to a worse fate under the Taliban in 2021.

Appiah's point about the "limits of cosmopolitan tolerance" underscores that there are ethical boundaries where intervention might be deemed necessary, especially in situations perceived as harmful. However, the challenge lies in discerning when to engage in such intervention and how to approach cultural practices without falling into the traps of cultural imperialism or paternalism. Thus, both the West and

certain radical interpretations of Islam can demonstrate forms of intolerance. Each perspective risks oversimplification—whether by marginalizing Muslim women's choices or by stigmatizing Western criticisms of practices perceived as oppressive. Recognizing this shared flaw invites a more nuanced conversation about identity and culture, emphasizing the importance of approaching such discussions through empathy and understanding rather than judgment.

Ultimately, minority background youth in Norway must not only be given space to negotiate their own "becomings", to borrow from bell hooks, but, and we would argue even more crucially, is the greater need for the majority to empathize with the myriad challenges this see-saw identity-construction voyage entails. The youth are adrift on a tempestuous sea of self-discovery. The outcome of this introspective journey is not a matter for these young souls alone, it affects the entire society. As such, it is incumbent upon the majority to feel the weight of the scales on which these youths balance their identities. This cannot be approached as a philantropic act alone, but an essential bridge to unity, forging a society that embraces the harmony of its diverse identities. The growing presence of non-white minorities in traditionally white societies heralds, for better or worse, the need to reconfigure the essence of a taken-for-granted understanding of nationhood, if not its eventual death knell, reminscent of Nigerian author Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) when the protagonist Okonkwo shudders at the meaning of his own son Nwoye's conversation to Christianity which was a harbinger of the atrophy of the old ways.

> To abandon the gods of one's father and go about with a lot of effimnate men clucking like old hens was the very depth of abomination. Suppose when he died all his male children decided to follow Nyoye's steps and abandon their ancesttors? Okonkwo felt a cold shudder run through him at the terrible prospect, like the prospect of annihilation. He saw himself and his fathers crowding round their ancestral shrine waiting in vain for worship and sacrficie and finding nothing but ashes of bygone days, and his children the while praying to the white man's god. If such a thing were ever to happen, he, Okonkwo, would wipe them off the face of the earth (Achebe, 1958, p. 108).

The shifting worlds in Okonkwo's time marked by the onset of colonialism and the introduction of the white man's religion was too painful for him to acquiesce to. Standing at this crossroad, Okonkwo took it upon himself to withstand this disruption of the old established ways. To reimagine a new society touched by what he perceived was "abomination" was a step too far. After all, Okonkwo had labored indefatigably to distance himself from his father's weak legacy. As a respected leader and wrestler in the Igbo tribe of Umuofia in pre-colonial Nigeria, he was determined to cleanse his tribe of what he saw as the polluting influence of Europeans.

> "Let us not reason like cowards", said Okonkwo. "If a man comes into my hut and defecates on the floor, what do I do? Do I shut my eyes? No! I take a stick and break his head. That is what a man does. These people are daily pouring filth over us, and Okeke says we should pretend not to see." Okonkwo made a sound full of disgust. This was a womanly clan, he thought. Such a thing could never happen in his fatherland, Umuofia (Achebe, 1958, p. 112).

As the cultural and religious transformations piggybacking on the colonizers gain traction, Okonkwo finds himself increasingly alienated. His efforts to rally his people in resistance to the new ways are met with indifference and resignation. In a final act of rebelliousness, Okonkwo kills a colonial messenger, hoping to preempt a war against the Europeans. However, realizing that his fellow villagers are not willing to support him, Okonkwo, the man nicknamed the "Roaring Flame", sees no way to restore his status or his community's traditions. In anguish over the irrevocable changes to his world and the loss of his traditional way of life, Okonkwo takes his own life. In Igbo culture, however, his suicide is considered a taboo and intolerable by his own people, emphasizing the acute and tragic impact of the cultural disruption imposed by colonial forces on his society.

The contemporary social and cultural landscape in Europe bears limited comparison with the themes explored in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, where the old ways jostle with the ebb and flow a shifting modernity. As the demographic landscape of Europe becomes progressively multiethnic, the traditional identities that have long defined its nations are challenged by the pulsating existence of new cultures, evocative of the colonial encounter between Okonkwo's Igbo society and European influence. In this fluid situation, there's an option not unlike the one Achebe offered: Will the rejoinder be one of confrontation and insularity, as embodied by Okonkwo, or can there be an opportunity to intertwine diverse cultural strands into a richer, more harmonious quilt? This quilt would not jettison tradition but would augment it by acknowledging and embracing the contributions of minority cultures. The resolve to either oppose or integrate denotes a critical juncture. Europe's historical narrative, modeled partly by its colonial past, must reckon with the presence and inputs of non-Western cultures. Recognizing this debt is part of understanding the endless process of becoming, where identities and cultures are not static terminuses but evolving entities.

Jacques Derrida's cynicism about the subjective "I" and his conception of the "death of the subject" suggests that identities should be viewed as fluid, constantly in formation. Derrida's deconstruction is a critical approach that seeks to unpack and disrupt the implicit hierarchies and assumptions underpinning texts and concepts, accenting the elasticity and flux of meaning. It challenges the idea of fixed, binary oppositions (such as speech/writing or presence/absence) by revealing how these dichotomies are co-dependent and mutually influential. Through this process, deconstruction demonstrates that meaning is not constant but rather open to interpretation, conditional upon context, and perpetually evolving. Engaging with this evolving sense of self challenges the idea of fixed cultural boundaries and embraces a world where identities are tributaries flowing into a greater sea, just as diverse cultures can enrich the broader European identity.

> Jacques Derrida was one of the first to blow up structuralism's pretensions to have answered all exsting questions… Derrida says that epistemological terms and metaphysical terms are based on binary oppositions that suppress certain terms and privilege others—like "male" and "female". Rather than telling truth philosophy constructs meaning by suppressing, excluding, or marginalizing other terms. He sets out to "deconstruct" the history of

> philosophy in order to see what was repressed, hidden or marginalized (Osborne, 1992, pp. 178, 179).

Derrida's critique of structuralism's grandiose pretense to having settled all truths is salutary to the task of forging a new way forward for western societies desperately in need of a new definition of nationhood, one that incorporates the process of *becoming* among minorities who neither subscribe uncritically to their parents' cultures nor are beholden to that of their adopted countries. Derrida's deconstruction strikes both ways and interrogates "binary oppositions that suppress certain terms and privilege others – like "male" and "female" (Osborne, 1992, p. 179). Minorities from cultures that disempower females must introspectively lock horns with this enduring problem. Note, for instance, the sexism and misogyny replete in Achebe's protagonist:

> Okonkwo was very lucky in his daughters. He never stopped regretting that Ezinma was a girl. Of all his children, she alone understood his every mood. A bond of sympathy had grown between them as the years had passed… "I wish she were a boy", Okonkwo thought within himself. She understood things so perfectly. Who else among his children could have read his thoughts so well? With two beautiful grown up daughters his return to Umuofia would attract considerable attention (Achebe, 1958, p. 122).

Indeed, things mercifully fall apart in the kingdom of ancient prejudices dictated by iron codes of conduct—a falling apart of the chains that belittle women's worth. There can be no "nostalgia" for ways of life that debase and suppress females who make up half the population. From within such a framework, the "missionaries" of change are welcome. Under no circumstances do we condone colonization. Its legacy is clear. Colonization enforced foreign domination and control, obliterating indigenous cultures and exploiting native people and resources for economic gain, leaving permanent scars on societies around the world. It upended traditional ways of life, instilled systemic inequalities, and sowed the seeds of deep-seated conflicts, many of which continue to resonate in postcolonial societies today. However, through the sweeping narrative of Achebe's classic novel, the metaphor of colonization crystallizes as a powerful pivot, inducing both the colonizer and the colonized to reckon with their intertwined destinies. As the drums of globalization gather strength, they bring dissimilar peoples into close quarters, challenging them to confront their deep-seated prejudices and the haunted echoes of history. For instance, the white missionary Mr. Brown, "built a school and a little hospital in Umuofia. He went from family-to-family begging people to send their children to his school… He said that the leaders of the land in the future would be men and women who had learned to read and write" (Achebe, 1958, p. 128). In this grand tapestry of human interaction, the old allegiances and devotions blur, and a new mandate emerges: to forge a path of coexistence and mutual understanding in a world that grows smaller with each passing day, demanding unity where once separation reigned. It is this inescapable fact that led Stuart Hall to write:

> Since cultural diversity is, increasingly, the fate of the modern world, and ethnic absolutism a regressive feature of late-modernity, the greatest danger now arises from forms of national and cultural identity—new or old—which attempt to secure their identity by adopting

> closed versions of culture or community and by the refusal to engage…with the difficult problems that arise from trying to live with difference. The capacity to live with difference is, in my view, the coming question of the twenty-first century. (Hall, 1993, p. 361).

Stuart Hall's emphasis on the "capacity to live with difference" resonates strongly within the Norwegian context, where increasing immigration and cultural diversity test the "sameness" (Gullestad, 2002) historically associated with Norwegian identity. Hall cautions against the risks of ethnic absolutism—where groups withdraw into closed cultural systems to preserve identity—and advocates for open, adaptive cultural encounters. This view suggests that for Norway to thrive in a globalized world, there must be an institutional and societal willingness to embrace diversity, welcoming new cultural influences while re-evaluating and expanding existing notions of national identity.

Following Achebe's analysis of colonization's effects, there are lessons to be drawn with how hegemonic cultures within nations, like Norway, relate to minority groups. Achebe's novel highlights the importance of mutual reflection and understanding between contrasting cultures. For Norwegians, this means acknowledging the historical and ongoing impacts of cultural dominance and laboring to free up spaces where minority voices are not only heard but valued. This approach urges Norwegians to engage in a form of cultural exchange that respects and preserves minority traditions while allowing them to contribute to the national cultural mosaic. The importance of this dialogue becomes apparent when considering the social cohesion and economic vitality required in a global landscape. As Norway continues to be shaped by globalization, fostering a society that values diversity and multiculturalism can alleviate social tensions and enhance communal bonds. It encourages minorities to see themselves as integral parts of the national story, promoting a sense of belonging and shared purpose. Globalization has created a world rich in the symphonies of a cornucopia of voices and identities. Clinging to single rigid labels that deride the dance of identity is an exercise in futility, as Edward Said reminds us:

> No one today is purely *one* thing. Labels like Indian, or woman, or Muslim, or American are no more than starting-points, which if followed into actual experience for only a moment are quickly left behind. Imperialism consolidated the mixture of cultures and identities on a global scale. But its worst and most paradoxical gift was to allow people to believe that they were only, mainly, exclusively white, or black, or Western, or Oriental (Said, 1993, p. 433).

We come to the crux of the problem in regard to integration. On the one hand, the majority must refrain from incarcerating minorities into predetermined categories, while on the other hand minorities must not expect remnants of their parents' cultures which are undemocratic to go unchallenged. Both groups (if it is helpful at all to speak in such terms) must acknowledge that they are evolving together into an unchartered unfinished future "Norwegians". There are several components that are indispensable to a keen sense of belonging. Some argue that belongingness can be almost as compelling a need as food, placing it on the same level as physiological requirements in Maslow's (1968) hierarchy, such as air, water, sleep, and shelter. In

their article "Thwarting the Need to Belong: Understanding the Interpersonal and Inner Effects of Social Exclusion", Baumeister et al. (2007) examine the grave impact of social exclusion on behavior and emotional processing.

Although the need to belong is a fundamental human drive, social rejection can lead to higher levels of aggression, diminished pro-social behavior, and a regression in self-regulation and rational thought. Remarkably, emotional anguish, initially expected as a primary response, is often absent in short-term reactions, which instead exhibit emotional numbness and a decrease in empathy. This numbness impedes social interactions and empathy, deteriorating an individual's ability to connect positively with others. The researchers suggest that while socially excluded individuals exhibit a cautious interest in forming new connections, they are often too wary to initiate interactions due to a fear of further rejection. Laboratory methods highlighted that socially excluded individuals fail to show typical emotional or empathetic reactions, leading to antisocial behavior and reduced intellectual performance, unless offset by positive social interactions. The article ultimately posits that the undesirable behaviors observed in socially marginalized groups might not be inherent traits but rather natural reactions to prolonged exclusion. Consider the following quote from the lead author's research at the "ghetto" school:

> That this is a school with many immigrants doesn't make it a bad school. This is media propaganda. I was told the school is a ghetto school and I heard many bad rumours. Actually, this is a good school and the teachers are clever (Female of Turkish origin, 16)

In his book *Goodbye Eastern Europe: An Intimate History of a Divided Land* (2023), Jacob Mikanowski begins with these intriguing words, "This is a history of a place that doesn't exist. There is no such place as Eastern Europe anymore. No one comes from there. People come from countries: Slovakia Latvia, Bulgari. Or they come from cities. Sarajevo, Łódź, Mariupol… But wherever they come from, people don't identify as Eastern Europeans" (Mikanowski, 2023, p. xv). Like the nonexistent Eastern Europe, the female student of Turkish origin calls out the lies inherent in mediascapes use of terms such as "ghetto" schools. We have showed how the students wrestled the term back and transvaluated this pejorative into a term of endearment. However, one must keep in mind the original malicious intent behind the coinage of such an adjective in the first place.

In the student's explanation, she contests this label by asserting that the school is, in fact, a good one with intelligent teachers, draw attention to the discrepancy between media depiction and reality. This echoes a broader phenomenon where stereotypes and identities are imposed on communities, similar to how Jacob Mikanowski illustrates the dissolution of the overarching cultural identity of Eastern Europe in favor of specific national or city identities. Just as Mikanowski notes that people don't self-identify with the broad and obsolete markers forced upon them, students and communities can reclaim derogatory terms like "ghetto" and redefine them with positive associations, transmuting them into symbols of pride and resilience. However, it's crucial to critique the original intent behind these terms, which is to ostracize and devalue. By understanding and addressing these ingrained biases and challenging misleading representations, we can foster more inclusive narratives

that celebrate diversity and recognize the strengths of all schools, including those with diverse immigrant populations. Mikanowski (2023) deftly pops the balloon of stereotypes with a piercing observation in the passage below:

> The phrase Eastern Europe is an outsider's convenience, a catchall used to conceal a nest of stereotypes. Some of these stereotypes—poverty, gangsterism, ethnic strife—are genuinely damaging. Others are merely sad: A friend of mine, a professor of Polish and German history, once had a student ask, in all seriousness, whether it was true that Eastern Europe was a "gray place, where no one laughed" (Mikanowski, 2023, p. xv).

The biblical proverb "In those days they shall say no more, the fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge" (Jeremiah 31:29; King James Version) serves as a distressing allegory for the generational transmission of stigma and stereotypes that unfairly burden second and third-generation minority students. This proverb traditionally suggests that individuals should not be held accountable for the sins or failings of their ancestors, yet the realities of societal prejudice often disregard this wisdom.

Instead, children of immigrants find themselves inheriting the prejudiced narratives created by broader society, which redefine their identities through the defective lens of their parents' perceived shortcomings. In this context, the stereotypes attached to various immigrant groups—like the notion that Pakistanis carry a distinct odor of garlic, Somalis are inherently violent and reliant on welfare, Arabs and Muslims are dangerous fanatics, and East Europeans are "soulless" or humorless—reflect not only ignorance but also a troubling societal tendency to generalize the attributes of entire communities based on the actions or behaviors of a few. These caricatures become so deeply ingrained within social consciousness that they overshadow the individuality and complexity of those labeled. A Norwegian hotel manager states:

> The Eastern Europeans work really hard, but they don't have the service attitude. They work for 14 hours straight, they don't have to smile or think, they are like horses, you know. In many ways that's good, but it can be a bit much. They are too hard. The social part is also important, right? I have noticed that the Eastern Europeans, they just don't have that. That's why they will never do really well here in Norway. The Swedes have done really great. I don't think the Eastern Europeans will ever get to that level (Friberg & Midtbøen, 2018, p. 1472).

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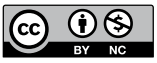

Chapter 14
Rethinking Teachers' Roles in Segregated Schools

> Many students, especially those who are poor, intuitively know what the schools do for them. They school them to confuse process and substance… Obligatory schooling inevitably polarizes a society; it also grades the nations of the world according to an international caste system. Countries are rated like castes whose educational dignity is determined by the average years of schooling of its citizens, a rating which is closely related to per capita gross national product, and much more painful.
>
> *Deschooling Society*, (Ivan Illich, 1970, pp. 1, 9).

A system that is broken must be changed. To administer more of the same in the hope that a change will somehow occur is as futile as conjuring up gold through alchemy. In his iconoclastic *Deschooling Society*, Ivan Illich asserts, "In other words, schools are fundamentally alike in all countries, be they fascist, democratic or socialist, big or small, rich or poor. This identity of the school system forces us to recognize the profound world-wide identity of myth, mode of production, and method of social control, despite the great variety of mythologies in which the myth finds expression" (Illich, 1970, p. 74).

At the time Illich penned these words, Scandivian educators could be forgiven for construing Illich's scathing indictment as a rebuke targeted primarily at the educational frameworks of Anglo-American contexts. More than five decades later, Illich's (1970) dystopian characterization of educational systems applies to Norway too, particularly his assertion "obligatory schooling inevitably polarizes a society" (Illich, 1970, p. 9). Seventy years after *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* in the USA, when the U.S. Supreme Court declared state laws enforcing racial segregation in public schools to be unconstitutional, it might be assumed that the Norwegian ethos of equality would preclude such practices. However, the current racially segregated educational landscape suggests that the situation in Norway mirrors the racialized forces that prevailed before *Brown*, perpetuating a form of segregation that contradicts the nation's commitment to equality.

No amount of pontificating about the the country's commitment to equality and inclusion can convince the children who attend racially segregated schools about the sincerity of such a commitment, especially when their educational environments

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starkly manifest as isolated enclaves of "shades of black" amid a predominant expanse of whiteness—an arrangement aptly described as chessboard racial segregation. The preeminent educational theorist John Dewey presciently captured the dilemma inherent in failing to account for the disparate experiences of children—the failure to account for the sources outisde and individual which give rise to experience:

> No one would question that a child in a slum tenement has a different experience from that of a child in a cultured home; that the country lad has a different kind of experience from the city boy, or a boy on the seashore one different from the lad who is brought up on inland prairies (Dewey, 1938, p. 40).

Dewey goes on to state that the above obliges educators to "recognize in the concrete what surroundings are conducive to having experiences that lead to growth" (Dewey, 1938, p. 40). It is obvious that the current educational policy in Norway appears oblivious to Dewey's call for educators to be aware of and harness the experiences of minority-background students in implementing a progressive education. Dewey draws a sharp distinction between what he referred to as "traditional education" and "progressive education". Traditional education hid behind the paraphernalia of school authority such as desks, blackboards and a small school yard, among others, projecting authority but failing to genuinely engage with the lived realities of students as they were shaped by their environments and unique experiences. Dewey argues that the latter, progressive education, is much more difficult to facilitate because it places "a tax upon the educator" (Dewey, 1938, p. 40).

> There was no demand that the teacher should become intimately acquainted with the conditions of the local community, physical, historical, economic, occupational, etc., in order to utilize them as educational resources. A system of education based upon the necessary connection of education with experience must, on the contrary, if faithful to its principle, take these things constantly into account (Dewey, 1938, p. 40).

Following Dewey, we draw attention to the absence of a progressive educational mindset in University and college-level courses in teacher education. It is left to the discretion of teacher educators to incorporate literature that reflects the kind of experience Dewey (1938) calls for. Sadly, some teacher educators have had no experience at the "chalkface" at all while many others were schoolteachers several years ago before the emergence of racially segregated schools. There is hence a double dearth of experience: teacher educators and student-teachers. We argue that this dearth of harnessing valuable experience is commensurate with Illich's (1970) castigation of the "institutionalization of values" that arises when nonmaterial needs such as education "are defined as the result of services or 'treatments'" (Illich, 1970, p. 2). The services or treatments are the inert perceptions of growth as synonymous with results in tests and the ability to imbibe and reproduce learning aims and objectives specific to every grade level. Consider national tests which have become a lightning rod issue in the Nordic countries for instance.

> This week, the Education Association decided at its national meeting that they want to abolish national tests and replace them with a professional-pedagogical tool for use by teachers… In the interim report they presented earlier this year, they concluded that the current system is very resource-intensive and contributes to "target displacement" in training. It also shows that pupils' results have not improved during the nearly 20 years Norwegian schools have been running national tests (Ruud, 2023).

National tests have become a controversial issue across the Nordic countries, generating intense debate concerning their reliability, potential for exploitation, and general impact on education. This discussion has led to substantial calls for change; for instance, the Norwegian Teachers' Union recently supported replacing national tests with more pedagogically sound assessment tools adapted for educators. Critics argue that the current system is resource-intensive and contributes to a "objective distortion" in teaching, asserting that it fails to improve student outcomes, which have remained stationary over nearly two decades. While each Nordic nation has adopted different approaches—Sweden faces criticism for high-stakes testing, Denmark plans to introduce new digital assessments, and Finland opts for voluntary testing—the predominant concern is that national tests might unduly influence teaching practices, leading to a narrowed educational focus. In this complex landscape, where various methods and objectives are in flux, the underlying goal remains clear: to create a more equitable and effective educational system that genuinely serves the diverse needs of all students.

The above services and treatments (Illich (1970) are commensurate with the lead author's findings in another co-authored study which examined the implications of the "English revolution" (Thomas & Breidlid, 2015) in Norway, particularly through the lens of high-stakes English testing in education and the phenomenon of "Anglobalization". It highlights that the growing prominence of English within Norway's educational framework conflates with broader EU standardization efforts, often disadvantaging students from immigrant backgrounds who lack the necessary English proficiency and cultural capital, thus creating a new English underclass. The study argues that such educational policies perpetuate symbolic violence (Bourdieu) by prioritizing English language acquisition at the expense of facilitating Norwegian language skills among minority students, ultimately intensifying educational inequality. The authors contend that a more localized and culturally relevant English syllabus is essential to address the needs of a diversifying student population and urge a reconsideration of the roles of government and educational institutions in the context of globalized language policies.

Clearly, while there have been phenomenal technological advances since Illich's critique, one notes the roles of teachers evinces little change. Some might contend that the teaching profession has relinquished even more of its already limited autonomy. "School, by its very nature, tends to make a total claim on the time and energies of its participants. This, in turn, makes the teacher into custodian, preacher, and therapist" (Illich, 1970, p. 30). The first role as *teacher-as-custodian* is one where pupils are initiated into the rigmarole of school rules and rituals. "At his best, he sets the stage for the acquisition of some skill as schoolmasters always have. Without illusions of producing any profound learning, he drills his pupils in some basic routines" (Illich, 1970, p. 30). Indeed, this was plain to see in the "ghetto" school in Oslo. Several teachers perceived their role as one where they were to inculcate Norwegian values in a school perceived as "severely deficient" in such values on account of the area's demographic.

Next, Illich (1970, p. 30) describes another of the roles envisioned and conferred upon teachers as "teacher-as-moralist" which "substitutes for parents, God, or the

state. "He [sic] indoctrinates the pupil about what is right or wrong, not only in school but also in society at large. He stands *in loco parentis* for each one and thus ensures that all feel themselves children of the same state" (Ibid). Once more, it is not difficult to comprehend the pervasive apathy exhibited by students at the so-called "ghetto" school. They perceived the white Norwegian teachers as moral arbiters imposed by the state, tasked with "remedying" the alleged flaws in knowledge, values, and attitudes that are, to their detriment, attributed to their non-white backgrounds. The school experience, in stark contrast to John Dewey's wise counsel, turns into a comedic farce starring both teachers and students. The teachers make their daily pilgrimage from their cozy white suburbs to the non-white "ghetto", putting on a show as they pretend to "Norwegianize" the students. Meanwhile, the students, with all the enthusiasm of actors in a poorly written play, feign "gratitude" at the unusual appearance of these white outsiders in their predominantly non-white neighborhood and tolerate a few hours of the spectacle. Both, according to Dewey, would be unfree:

> It is, then, a sound instinct which identifies freedom with power to frame purposes and to execute or carry into effect purposes so framed. Such freedom is in turn identified with self-control; for the formation of purposes and the organization of means to execute them are the work of intelligence. Plato once defined a slave as the person who executes the purposes of another, and, as has just been said, a person is also a slave who is enslaved to his own blind desires (Dewey, 1938, p. 67).

Clearly, both teachers and students are reduced to a state of unfreedom by the powers that be. While not the only reason, the feeling of powerlessness as a teacher no doubt has exacerbated the recent crisis in recruitment to the teacher profession in Norway. Recruitment for teacher education programs for secondary school in Norway, particularly for grades 5–10, is experiencing a significant decline, with 24 out of 33 programs having fewer than one applicant per available spot (Khrono, 2023). The national application reduction of 35 percent from the previous year has led to many vacant positions for the upcoming semester, with students at the Western Norway University of Applied Sciences in Stord reporting only 0.3 applicants per spot. Students believe among others that the long duration of the training, the demanding nature of the profession, and its negative reputation are influencing career choices, while the pandemic and last year's (i.e. 2022) major strike may have also deterred potential applicants. Surveys indicate that smaller educational institutions are struggling more than larger ones, and there is growing concern about declining application numbers nationwide, with several education leaders calling for measures to boost interest in the teaching profession. "It is a tough profession with a lot of responsibility. The long education is not in line with the working conditions and salary. The teaching profession has gradually gained a bad reputation" (Khrono, 2023). The third role assigned to a teacher is that of teacher-as-therapist, according Illich.

> The *teacher-as-therapist* feels authorized to delve into the personal life of his pupil in order to help him grow as a person. When this function is exercised by a cusotodian and preacher, it usually means that he persuades the pupil to submit to a domestication of his vision of tuth and his sense of what is right (Illich, 1970, p. 31).

The concept of the "teacher-as-therapist" within the context of a racialized and segregated ghetto school throws up acute questions about the machinations of power, authority, and the consequences of personal intervention in students' lives. In such surroundings, teachers often assume a role that stretches beyond academic training, engaging deeply with the personal experiences of their students in the name of fostering personal growth. While this intention may stem from a desire to support students, the actual outcomes can be counterproductive, especially in environments marked by systemic racism and socio-economic disparity.

In these schools, the power dynamics at play can be significant. Teachers who take on this healing role hold substantial authority over their students, who may be navigating challenging life circumstances. In their zeal to remedy any and every ailment in such "ghetto" schools, the municipality of Oslo permanently placed psychologists, representatives from the job center, nurses and minority advisors, to mention some of what we dubbed the "dream-team of troubleshooters", in the schools. As teachers, we often felt like our teaching space was invaded and compromised. Often, students who struggled academically would avail themselves liberally of these services when they were supposed to be in class. When challenged in the corridors, they would hold up a note from one of the members of the "dream-team" with a look of triumph.

It did not seem to bother these students that the slew of therapists clientalized and hence further disempowered them. Ultimately, they were in school to attend classes and learn rather than spend time consulting psychologists, nurses, minority advisors and even employment advisors. Not least, and commensurate with Illich's contention, teachers also play the role of therapists. This dependence can create an imbalance where students feel compelled to rely on their teachers for guidance and validation. Consequently, there is a risk that these students might be pressured to conform to the teacher's vision of truth and morality—a concept captured by Illich's idea of submission. Such a dynamic can lead to a situation in which students are encouraged to suppress their own identities and perspectives, prioritizing the dominant narrative that the teacher espouses.

Furthermore, the concept of cultural domestication becomes particularly relevant in this context. When teachers transplant their own beliefs and values, they may unconsciously shape their students' perception of the world in ways that validate mainstream cultural norms. This bias can sideline the rich cultural identities and histories that students from diverse backgrounds possess. In neighborhoods characterized by racial segregation, students come with an array of experiences embedded in their unique cultural backgrounds. If a teacher, especially one who may not fully appreciate or understand these complexities, encourages students to adopt a more sanitized or "acceptable" worldview, they risk contributing to cultural deletion and reinforcing negative stereotypes.

> The claim that a liberal society can be founded on the modern school is paradoxical. The safeguards of individual freedom are all cancelled in the dealings of a teacher with his pupil. When the schoolteacher fuses in his person the functions of judge, ideologue, and doctor, the fundamental style of society is perverted by the very process which should prepare for life. A teacher who combines these three powers [i.e. custodian, moralist and

> therapist] contributes to the warping of the child much more than the laws which establish his legal or economic minority, or restrict his right to free assembly or abode (Illich, 1970, p. 31).

The dissonance between the therapeutic environment intended by the teacher and the actual needs of the students can lead to additional difficulties. While the intention is often to offer support, students in ghetto schools face a plethora of challenges that extend far beyond personal progress. Issues such as poverty, violence, and systemic discrimination require attention that is not solely focused on individual growth but also on addressing the source of these problems. Thus, the triumvirate of teacher-as-model may overlook the necessity of fostering collective agency and critical consciousness among students, which are essential for navigating and challenging the structures that perpetuate their circumstances. The role of a teacher in a racialized and segregated school setting is fraught with complexities. The attempt to engage with students on a personal level can lead to unintended consequences, particularly when it involves imposing a dominant cultural narrative. Instead, it is crucial for educators to recognize the value of their students' diverse backgrounds, as Dewey advocates, and labor to foster an environment that respects and uplifts those identities, and to engage in practices that address the systemic issues that contribute to their students' challenges. Dewey and Illich remind us about the distinction between education and school, which are not necessarily linked at all, according to professor of education Gary Thomas:

> In fact, most famous quotations about education point to the putative connection between education and schools and are distinctly rude about the latter. For example, Mark Twain quipped, "I have never let my schooling interfere with my education". That's similar to Winston Churchill's "The only time my education was interrupted was while I was at school". And Albert Einstein asserted that "Education is what remains when we have forgotten everything that has been learned at school". Their message? Schools aren't necessary for education; in fact, they may get in the way of it (Thomas, 2013, p. 2).

The quotations from luminaries such as Mark Twain, Winston Churchill, and Albert Einstein shine a critical spotlight on traditional schooling, suggesting that the structured environment of schools can often constitute an impediment to genuine education. This perspective becomes particularly relevant for white Norwegian teachers who are working in progressively diverse classrooms. By identifying the inferences behind these opinions, educators can implement strategies that promote humility and truly empower their students. At the outset, white Norwegian teachers must acknowledge the limitations inherent in their experiences and within the traditional schooling system. This appreciation summons a sense of humility that is crucial for successful teaching.

Instead of positioning themselves as the sole arbiters of knowledge, teachers should view their roles as facilitators of learning. This shift in perspective encourages educators to listen to and value the perspectives of their students, particularly those from different cultural backgrounds. By doing so, teachers can foster an environment where students feel respected and heard, which is essential for their empowerment. We have often shared with our student-teachers at the University that pupils are adept at detecting whether teachers genuinely care about their

wellbeing and development or whether the teachers mechanically perform their "jobs" as teachers only to take home a paycheck. Plato preempted progressive educators millennia ago when he rejected compulsory education.

> "A free soul ought not to pursue any study slavishly, for while bodily labors performed under constraint do not harm the body, nothing that is learned under compulsion stays with the mind." "True", he said. "Do not, then, my friend, keep children to their studies by compulsion but by play" (Thomas, 2013, p. 4).

Furthermore, humility in the classroom means recognizing that students bring unique experiences and knowledge to their learning. Teachers should actively seek to learn from their students and incorporate those diverse perspectives into the curriculum. This approach helps demolish the traditional power dynamics that often see teachers as the primary source of knowledge. Instead, classrooms can become spaces of mutual learning, where teachers and students collaborate to co-create knowledge. Gary Thomas (2013) reminds us that the incentive for compulsory schooling was tied to the expectation that it would lead to industrial and military success. "And as mass production took over in the factory, it is far from fanciful to suggest that schools themselves began to look more like factories, with standardization of practices, specialization in the curriculum, and professionalization of the workforce" (Thomas, 2013, p. 149).

The teaching profession must always guard against the risk of becoming "another brick in the wall", to borrow a phrase from the rock band Pink Floyd, and is particularly pertinent in an era where the education system increasingly mirrors industrial production models. The transformation of schools into institutions that valorize efficiency and standardization can lead to a sense of alienation among teachers. Karl Marx's analogy of alienation in the factory provides a compelling lens through which to examine the contemporary educational system and the teaching profession. In Marx's critique of capitalism, he described how workers in industrial settings become increasingly alienated from their labor, themselves, and their fellow workers. This alienation arises primarily from the dehumanizing effects of mass production, where individuals are reduced to mere components in a larger machine, their roles narrowly defined and repetitive. The laborer becomes disconnected from the product of their work, the creative process, and ultimately from their own humanity.

> The life-long speciality of handling one and the same tool now becomes the life-long speciality of serving one and the same machine. Machinery is put to a wrong use, with the object of transforming the workman, from his very childhood, into a part of a detail-machine… In the factory we have a lifeless mechanism independent of the workman, who becomes its mere living appendage. The miserable routine of endless drudgery and toil in which the same mechanical process is gone through over and over again, is like the labor of Sisyphus (Marx, 2013, p. 292).

This nexus between machinery and alienation offers a disturbing and critical lens through which we can scrutinize the role of white teachers in racialized ghetto schools, where they may unsuspectingly become agents of the state rather than true advocates for their students. In the setting of racialized schools, particularly in

urban ghetto settings, white teachers often work within a structure that valorizes compliance, conformity, and standardized outcomes. This compliant state can mirror Marx's description of the factory, where the focus shifts from genuine education and individual student needs to simply implementing bureaucratic obligations. As a result, these teachers may find themselves performing as instruments of a larger institutional machinery designed to maintain the status quo, rather than as empowered educators advocating for their students.

When teachers identify their roles narrowly through the prism of state requirements—often focusing on standardized test scores and compliance with district policies—they risk becoming estranged from their real calling as educators. Just as Marx describes the worker as an appendage to a lifeless machine, teachers in these environments may feel detached from their enthusiasm for teaching and their devotion to nurturing student potential. The bureaucratic pressures can reduce their professional autonomy, relegating them to the status of functionaries who implement policies without critically engaging with their implications for their students. While the conditions prevalent in the days of Marx and Engels is a far cry from the most deprived "ghetto" in twenty-first century Norway, we would be rash to think the sordid schools and educational conditions that Friedrich Engels wrote about [in *Lage der Arbeitenden Klasse Englands*] and Marx referred to in his *Capital*, cannot return someday if schools become victims of untrammeled capitalism:

> On one occasion, on visiting a place called a school, from which certificates of school attendance, had issued, I was so struck with the ignorance of the master, that I said to him: "Pray, sir, can you read?" His reply was: "Aye, summat!"… To this is to be added scanty school furniture, deficiency of books, and other materials for teaching, and the depressing effect upon the poor children themselves of a close, noisome atmosphere. I have been in many such schools, where I have seen rows of children doing absolutely nothing; and this is certified as school attendance, and, in statistical returns, such children are set down as being educated (Marx, 2013, p. 276).

"Vulture" capitalism refers to the predatory practices of commercial entities that lust after profit over social good, often to the detriment of public services, including education. In a context where conservative and right-wing ideologies promote private schooling, high-stakes testing, and market-driven approaches, the educational landscape can become warped. This shift, primarily motivated by the belief that competition will lead to better outcomes, risks replicating historical injustices within a modern framework, and pertinent to our study, further exacerbate schooling for people of color.

Engels and Marx's observations about ignorance among teachers and deplorable conditions in schools highlight how a lack of investment can lead to educational failure. If schools become commodified and prioritized for profit rather than educational quality, we could witness a regression to circumstances where educators are underqualified, classrooms are poorly equipped, and even teachers are semi-literate. Wealthy private institutions may continue to flourish, further exacerbating disparities in access to quality education. Meanwhile, public schools, especially in disenfranchised areas, may be left struggling to meet even the most basic educational standards.

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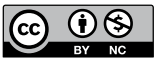

Part IV

Chapter 15
Populist Rhetoric and School Segregation

> In the letter, dated 8 July 1987, Mustafa was cited as having written that Hagen "was fighting in vain" against Muslims, since "Islam will conquer Norway too", and that "one day, mosques will be as common in Norway as churches are today" and the "heathen cross in the flag would be gone". And the reason for this was that "we" Muslims "give birth to more children than you" and that "many right-believing Muslim men in fertile age" come to Norway each year. If this political rhetoric now sounds like an early version of the "Eurabia" hypothesis, it is simply due to the fact that this is exactly what it is.
>
> —*Anders Breivik and the Rise of Islamophobia*. Sindre Bangstad (2014, p. 121).

"Children of the Alley" (1959) is a novel by Egyptian Nobel laureate Naguib Mahfouz that explores intricate themes of social, political and religious nature in Egyptian society through an allegorical narrative. The story is set in a Cairo alley and follows the lives of several characters representing different social classes and ideologies. The novel triggered some unrest and censorship due to its critique of religious themes and was seen as a rebuke of the political and social systems of the time, making it a major work in Mahfouz's literary oeuvre. In the novel, the character Arafa ibn Gahsha symbolizes a complicated blend of human ambitions and moral ambiguity. His name, derived from the Arabic word for "to know", positions him as a seeker and exponent of truth and understanding amidst the societal upheaval in the alley. This pursuit of knowledge echoes the struggles of ordinary people facing external forces like crime and corruption, emphasizing the impact such realities have on their lives.

Arafa is also portrayed as a fraudulent character whose deceptive moral compass muddies his journey. He navigates a world endemic with treachery, manipulation, and moral decay, often adopting deceitful tactics in pursuit of his objectives. His actions can embody the darker sides of ambition and survival, revealing that the quest for knowledge and improvement can sometimes lead individuals down morally dubious paths. This complexity makes Arafa a deeply flawed character who illustrates the precarious balance between the pursuit of a better life and the ethical compromises that often accompany such endeavors.

> It seemed to him that even the flies avoided him out of scornful protest. Boys turned provocatively toward him, and some of them walked close to him, while others loaded their slingshots or searched the ground for a stone to throw. He smiled warmly at them and slipped his hand into his breast pocket. He drew out some mints and began to give them out, and the boys came closer to him gladly, sucking the mints and staring at him curiously. He smiled as he spoke to them (Mahfouz, 1959, p. 336).

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The dichotomy of Arafa's character aptly captures the conflicting and hydra-like nature inherent in populist parties which fuels the lust for power and recognition at any cost. Just as Arafa grapples with his self-interest while seeking acknowledgment, populist politicians often exploit the fear and discontent of the populace while cloaking their own dubious motives. They can present themselves as champions of the common folk, promising solutions to complex societal problems, yet their actions frequently prioritize personal or political gain over genuine social progress.

For example, just as Arafa employed deceit to exploit his environment, populist leaders might manipulate narratives to rally support, casting immigrants or marginalized groups as scapegoats to divert attention from systemic issues. The citation in the beginning of this chapter from Sindre Bangstad's research into the rise of the Norwegian populist party, the Progress Party, is a case in point. Once the media exposed the party's then leader Carl I. Hagen's so-called letter of concern from the fictitious "Mustafa" as a hoax, the damage, which many argued was calculated, had been done. "However, many voters appeared to be undaunted by this scandal, and in the 1987 parliamentary elections the PP [Progress Party] received its best result to date: 12.1 percent of the national vote" (Bangstad, 2014, p. 121).

The strategic guile of populist skullduggery not only heightens societal divisions but also chips away at authentic efforts to foster inclusion and understanding within communities. The reality of Arafa's crooked character underscores the dangers of leadership that prioritizes narrow interests over the collective good, mirroring the tactics of populist politicians who thrive on dissatisfaction and promote simplistic solutions to deeply rooted problems. Ultimately, Arafa ibn Gahsha embodies the intricate relationship between personal ambition and ethical compromise, serving as a cautionary figure in the novel. His journey reflects how the pursuit of knowledge and power can become entangled in moral ambiguity, paralleling the ways populism exploits societal fears while perpetuating cycles of division and ineffectiveness. This connection underscores the necessity for critical engagement with both leadership and community responsibility to foster true understanding and progress.

> "Strange alley!" Said Arafa sharply. "Rest in peace, Mother. Look at us, for example. Everybody uses us, and no one respects us! They don't respect anybody." He set his teeth. "Except the gansters."
>
> Hanash laughed. "It's enough that you're the only person in the alley that everyone does business with—from Gabal, Rifaa and Qassem" (Mahfouz, 1959, p. 341).

In the cutthroat landscape of Norwegian politics, where parties across the spectrum—from the Conservatives to the Left Party and even the Christian Democrats—engage to varying degrees with the formerly "pariah" Progress Party, there arises a striking parallel to Arafa's role in Naguib Mahfouz's "Children of the Alley". Recent rhetoric from the Labor Party, which spewed unvarnished criticism and threats at "criminal" immigrants, echoes the discourses which are usually the reserve of the Progress Party. This suggests a broader configuration of alignment, albeit sometimes begrudgingly, with populist ideas.

Arafa' s blunt reflection on his status in the alley expressively captures this dynamic. He remarks, "Strange alley! Rest in peace, Mother. Look at us, for

example. Everybody uses us, and no one respects us! They don't respect anybody", emphasizing the transactional and transient nature of these collaborations. Just as Arafa finds himself indispensable yet insulted, populist parties in Norway, particularly the Progress Party, find themselves at the center of political shenanigans. While traditional parties may not fully respect populist ideals, they often engage with them, recognizing their influence and utility in tilting public opinion and acquiring votes. Arafa's acknowledgment that "everybody does business with us" reflects how, in a bid for relevancy and power, even the figures of Gabal, Rifaa, and Qassem, engage with Arafa's alchemist machinations. This reflects a reality where political survival often necessitates alliances or concessions that may contradict long-standing principles, as illustrated by the interactions in Mahfouz's timeless allegory.

Professor of politics, Jan-Werner Müller, warns in his book *What is Populism* (2017) that the term populist is difficult to pin down, and that there is no consensus on a theory of populism. He however offers a comprehensive array of strategies for identifying populist politicians (Müller, 2017, pp. 1–48):

1. Populist politicians often articulate strong disapproval of elites, alleging that they are disconnected from the concerns of ordinary people.
2. They tend to be anti-pluralist, rejecting diverse viewpoints and accenting a singular narrative.
3. These leaders promote the idea of a single, unified vision that supposedly serves the national interest.
4. They promote the concept of a homogenous, authentic population, claiming a moral mandate to represent the "true people".
5. Many live in a political fantasy world, constructing narratives that simplify complex realities to suit their agendas.
6. Colonization is conducted openly and with a sense of moral righteousness, justifying it as a means of progress or protection.
7. Populists often respond harshly to nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that offer criticism, viewing them as threats to their authority.

The Norwegian-Iranian Masud Gharahkhani is notable for being the first person of an immigrant background to be elected as the President of the Storting, which is the Norwegian Parliament. His election to this prominent position in 2021 highlights a significant moment in Norway's political history, reflecting increased diversity and representation in leadership roles. In his autobiography *Norway in my Heart: From Refugee to President of the Parliament* (2022), Gharahkhani writes about his pain when a populist politician duplicitously sought to capitalize on unfair rumors swirling about Gharahkhani's marriage. "Some of the arguments I encountered were way dirtier than I had anticipated. Rumors spread in town that my wife was my cousin, and that we married through an arranged marriage. The rumors also would have it that my wife wore a burka at home, and that I actually was a reactionary Muslim from Teheran" (Gharahkhani, 2022, p. 116). He goes on to write:

> These rumors and allegations were so farfetched that at first I did not take them seriously, but then they were legitimized by a political opponent. The deputy mayor Freddy Hoffmann from the Populist Party went out in the local newspaper *Drammens Tidende* and said about

> my marriage that "everything suggests that this is an arranged marriage in a way" (Gharahkhani, 2022, p. 116).

Gharahkhani mulls over the lengths to which some politicians will go to achieve their goals, implying that they may "stoop however low" to further their agenda. Such examples provide a gripping lens through which to view the disingenuous conduct of populist parties, particularly in the context of contemporary political dynamics in Norway. Like Arafa in Naguib Mahfouz's "Children of the Alley", who traverses a morally ambiguous landscape and acknowledges the transactional relationships within his community, populist leaders often give precedence to expediency over ethical considerations. The rhetorical and bombastic strategies deployed by populists commonly demonstrate a willingness to tap into societal fears and profit from divisions for political gain. This manipulation can distil a noxious political environment that weakens efforts toward building inclusive communities. For example, with the Progress Party (Fremskrittspartiet) recently garnering 24.2 percent of the national vote in a poll, and hence catapulting the party to Norway's largest (VG, 31.11.2024), their influence cannot be passed over. This electoral success represents a significant segment of the population that aligns with the populist narrative, often rooted in exclusionary rhetoric and anti-immigrant sentiments.

In the context of bridging bonds (Putnam, 2000) within racially segregated schools, the existence and power of a populist party become a liability. Their policies and rhetoric perpetuated social divisions, inhibiting integration efforts and shaping an environment in which resentment rather than understanding flourishes. The Progress Party's standing often frames immigrants and marginalized groups as scapegoats for the purported failures of society, one in which Arafa's sentiment, "everybody uses us, and no one respects us", now becomes the lament of minorities. Kundnani (2023) argues that Europe's self-understanding as "Europeans" was forged in the interstices of encounters with the populations of Africa, Asia and the Americas from the fifteenth century onwards. This distillation of a new identity was one where the religious was superseded by the racial.

> In particular, the development of modern European identity coincided with the emergence of the idea of whiteness and overlapped with it to a large extent. As David Theo Goldberg puts it: "Modern Europe imagined its Europeanity as constituitively white". (Of course, throughout this period, there were non-white people in Europe, but they were, in C.L.R. James' phrase, "in Europe but not of Europe" (Kundnani, 2023, p. 49).

For this reason, it becomes not just challenging but almost quixotic to sidestep an honest dialogue about whiteness—a dialogue that we assert is at the core of populists' uncanny ability to seduce the serpent of nativism, reminiscent of Arafa's derision of ghosts, "Are you afraid of demons, Hanash? We work with them the same way Gabal worked with snakes" (Mahfouz, 1959, p. 339). While populist parties may garner votes through these devious schemes, they concurrently impede meaningful dialogue and collaboration necessary for fostering inclusive education. Gharahkhani's observations highlight that, much like the moral panic faced by Arafa and his community, the actions of populist politicians can leave long-lasting

repercussions on civic solidarity, particularly in locations like schools where diversity should be embraced rather than vilified.

Until a candid debate in Norway, engaged in by the majority and minority, challenges and dissociates whiteness from Norwegianness, populists will continue to kindle flames of disunion that threaten to scorch the very fabric of belonging for Norwegians of color. Their rhetoric will serve as a ruthless gale, ripping up the embryonic bonds of community and sowing distrust where solidarity should flourish. By wielding the weapon of exclusion, they aim to build a citadel of homogeneity, where only those who meet the narrow definitions of acceptance find refuge, all the while consigning aspiring Norwegians of color into the shadows, forever interrogating their right to belong. In the absence of this necessary discourse, populists will perpetuate a landscape where belonging is a privilege granted solely to the few, leaving others to navigate a labyrinth of hostility and alienation.

> It was only towards the end of the seventeenth century that "white" emerged as a synonym for "European" in the Americas. Theodore Allen argues that the concept emerged specifically as a way to undermine the solidarity between indentured Europeans and enslaved Africans manifested in uprisings like Bacon's Rebellion in Virginia in 1676–77 (Kundnani, 2023, p. 51).

Norwegian populists did not arise in a vacuum. The waves of immigration from the Global South into western Europe in the aftermath of World War 2 may have had disparate socio-economic outcomes. However, more than mere demographic shifts, these changes catalyzed a latent consciousness within society, awakening what sociologists refer to as whiteness. This latent condition, which has long slumbered beneath the surface, was "woken up" to confront the specter of a changing cultural landscape, stirring fears and unease that populist movements would dexterously exploit. Allen (1994) asserts that the emergence of "whiteness" was a strategic response to the potential for unity among economically disadvantaged indentured Europeans and enslaved Africans, which posed a threat to the ruling elite in the USA. By creating the identity of the "white race", the ruling class sought to secure its power and control by devising divisions based on race, thus congealing a racial caste system that would later inform social, political, and economic relations in the United States. That the conflation of white and European is not merely a relic of the past but a foundational element influencing current socio-political landscapes, is captured in Kundnani's (2023) observation in regard to Brexit:

> […] for some non-white British citizens, their unique experiences of racism in continental Europe and perceptions of the racism of the EU itself contributed to their choices. Thus, for at least *some* British citizens, Brexit was not so much an expression of white anger as the opposite: the rejection of a bloc that was itself perceived as being racist…non-white Leavers often saw freedom of movement within the EU as a form of indirect discrimination against non-white people… As a result, they saw the EU as a "white fortress" that facilitated white immigration while obstructing the entry of non-white people (Kundnani, 2023, p. 160, 161).

Historically, divisions such as class and nationalism served as central markers of identity and boundary-making. The French Revolution, for instance, was initially grounded in among others class, political, social and economic struggle. Similarly, the world wars were characterized by a fierce nationalism that often defined itself

against perceived internal and external "others". These historical events show how rulers and political movements have incessantly exploited divisions to consolidate power. In the modern era, however, the lines of division have shifted significantly. While class and nationalism (e.g. Putin's invasion of the Ukraine) continue to play a role, the unspoken notion of race—specifically whiteness—has become a more prominent and potent demarcation tool for populist parties. As seen with leaders like Marine Le Pen in France, Viktor Orbán in Hungary, and the Freedom Party in Austria, there is a pronounced focus on race and ethnicity that seeks to protect a "pure" people.

The legacy of "Balkanization" is not just an ugly relic of the past but persists in the actions of contemporary leaders like Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić. Vučić has been accused of leveraging nationalist rhetoric and peddling in divisive politics to maintain power, repeating the tactics that led to the Balkan Wars and the collapse of Yugoslavia. This scheme of pitting ethnic or cultural groups against one another continues to sow discord and impede reconciliation in the region. For Norway, this offers a critical warning about the dangers of framing societal challenges as a conflict between the majority and minorities. Vučić's method illustrates how such tactics can exacerbate tensions, undermine trust, and destabilize societies. Norway must be watchful against political or societal narratives that cast minorities as a threat to majority interests, as these dynamics risk unraveling the social cohesion that underpins democracy and equality. The Balkan experience underscores the necessity of fostering dialogue, mutual respect, and inclusive policies to prevent fragmentation and maintain a united society.

In Hungary, Orbán's administration has made the most of this fear, depicting itself as a bulwark against an imaginary invasion of migrants. His administration has implemented policies designed to deter immigration while promoting a narrative that prioritizes ethnocentric values rooted in a historical conception of Hungarian identity. By leveraging cultural and racial fears, Orbán not only consolidates political power but also fosters a sense of entitlement among ethnically homogenous citizens, reinforcing the divide between the "us" and the "them." For instance, Hungary's Prime Minister, Victor Orbán extolled his country's self-appointed role as "defenders of Christian Europe" (Stanley, 2018, p. 107). To his mind, Europe's Christian identity is facing an existential threat. In classical populist fashion, he attacks the elites whom he singles out as the perpetrators of this treason:

> The manifestation of this potentially catastrophic indifference to Europe's Christian roots is generous European immigration policies: "A group of Europe's intellectual and political leaders wishes to create a mixed society in Europe which, within just a few generations, will utterly transform the cultural and ethnic composition of our continent—and consequently its Christian identity" (Stanley, 2018, p. 107).

Likewise, the Freedom Party in Austria employs populist rhetoric that takes advantage of unease around immigration, portraying the influx of non-white migrants as a fundamental threat to Austrian culture and societal stability. Their discourse often implies that true Austrians must unite to defend their way of life against these external forces. This mirrors historical patterns where populist leaders have invoked

nationalistic and exclusionary sentiments to galvanize support. Despite their antagonism towards the European Union, populist parties exploit its resources while positioning themselves as defenders of national sovereignty. Marine Le Pen's party, for instance, has been embroiled in controversy over charges of embezzling EU funds, revealing a stark contradiction between populist leaders' public contempt for the EU and their willingness to utilize its financial advantages. This hypocrisy illustrates how populists can strategically benefit from the very structures they condemn, all while perpetuating a narrative of victimhood that resonates with their base.

It is abundantly clear to us, both as educators from minority backgrounds, and years of experience teaching and researching students from minority backgrounds, that unless the discourse of whiteness as a marker of legitimacy becomes increasingly untenable in Norway, efforts at building bridges of understanding will flounder. Per Sandberg, for instance, a former politician, was previously a member of the Progress Party, where he served as Norway's Minister of Fisheries from 2015 to 2018. His autobiography, *Against My Will: Clarification of a Political Life* (2018) is 448 pages long. Consider some of citations from his book:

> Those responsible for the politics in parliament in the period I have been there will in a few years have to explain to our children and their children why they failed to take responsibility. Someone is gambling carelessly with Norway's future (Sandberg, 2018, p. 201).
>
> When we in addition allow extreme forces to use the educational institutions to recruit youth for Islam, it is not difficult to see that this will go wrong (Sandberg, 2018, p. 202).
>
> How many come with an education that can land them a job directly here in Norway? How many have to learn Norwegian first? How much of this education do we actually need in Norway? Every time a non-western immigrant comes to Norway, the state and taxpayers shoulder a future net cost of 4.1 million kroners [roughly half a million USD]. These figures destroy the myth and lie that immigration has been or is profitable for Norway (Sandberg, 2018, p. 206).
>
> When the husband comes to Norway, the girl's education is wasted because she will stay at home, produce children and care for her in-laws (Sandberg, 2018, p. 213).

Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum is an American psychologist, administrator, and educator, and the author of the book with the telling title, *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? And Other Conversations About Race* (2017). She states that black youth in the USA become more aware of the meaning of their skin color as they become adolescents. They are not keen to accept their parents' experiences as a road map in settling on their own identities in race-conscious America.

> Based on their fieldwork in US high schools, Signithia Fordham and John Ogbu described a psychological pattern they observed among African American high school students at this stage of identity development. They theorized that the anger and resentment that adolescents feel in response to their growing awareness of the systematic exclusion of Black people from full participation in US society leads to the development of an oppositional social identity. This oppositional stance both protects one's identity from the psychological assault of racism and keeps the dominant group at a distance (Tatum, 2017, p. 143).

The toxic rhetoric weaponized by populist politicians like Per Sandberg contributes significantly to the development of oppositional social identities among non-white adolescents in Norway, thereby destabilizing the educational mission to boost inclusion and integration. In his autobiography, *Against My Will: Clarification of a*

Political Life (2018), Sandberg concocts a doomsday plot laden with concern for Norway's future, suggesting that immigrants pose a threat to the nation's socio-economic fabric. He writes, "Someone is gambling carelessly with Norway's future" (Sandberg, 2018, p. 201), framing the issue of immigration as a bet that compromises the welfare of future generations. Such rhetoric inherently creates an "us versus them" mentality, prompting non-white adolescents to embrace identity positions that defend against external attacks, thus alienating them further from the dominant culture.

Sandberg's allegations regarding educational institutions serve to exacerbate these divisions. He argues that "extreme forces" use schools as recruitment grounds for radical ideologies, thereby painting schools as bastions of extremism (Sandberg, 2018, p. 202). This narrative reinforces the perception that non-white, immigrant youth are not only outsiders but impending threats, generating fear and hostility among the dominant group. As these teenagers navigate their educational environment, they may experience a profound awareness of their racial or ethnic identities—as Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum notes regarding black youth in the U.S.—becoming increasingly conscious of societal perceptions and expectations (Tatum, 2017).

In addition, when Sandberg questions the educational qualifications of immigrants, querying their immediate value to the Norwegian labor market and hinting at a burden on the state, he bolsters a narrative of economic threat (Sandberg, 2018, p. 206). This framing can lead non-white adolescents to internalize feelings of inadequacy and defensiveness. The psychological patterns described by Signithia Fordham and John Ogbu among African American students can be paralleled here; non-white Norwegian youths may react to prevalent societal segregation by adopting an oppositional identity that insulates them from the dominant culture (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). Sandberg's equally racialized views on gender roles also demonstrate a reductive view of immigrant families, suggesting that the education and potential of immigrant women are wasted within traditional domestic roles (Sandberg, 2018, p. 213). Such statements stoke the flames of tribalism and perpetuate stereotypes, reinforcing narratives that insult the multifaceted identities of individuals within immigrant communities and further entrenching social divides.

> The chief obstacle to having an intelligent, or even intelligble, conversation across the racial divide is that on average white Americans… talk mostly to other "white" people. The result is that most whites are not "socially positioned" to understand the experiences of people of color—with the police or on predominantly white campuses—because they are not part of their social networks (Tatum, 2017, p. 45).

In the context of education, this toxic rhetoric from populist figures poses a formidable obstacle to educators who are striving to create inclusive and integrated environments. As educators work to cultivate spaces where all students feel valued and empowered, the divisive language propagated by politicians like Sandberg fosters an atmosphere of mistrust and alienation, making it challenging for non-white adolescents to navigate their identities positively. In the years leading up to Anders Breivik's terrorist attacks which left the nation reeling, there was a national introspection during which the finger was pointed at the dangerous rhetoric of populist

politicians among others. Some of these politicians themselves expressed muffled mea culpas and promised to moderate their rhetoric. Hence, without addressing the harmful implications of such populist rhetoric, efforts to promote understanding and solidarity in schools risk being undermined, leaving minority youth caught in a cycle of exclusion and identity conflict.

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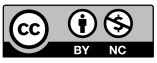

Chapter 16
Blurring Lines: Kandinsky, Chagall, Immigration & Populism

> "Degenerate Art" is conceived as a historical exhibition that presents the arts of the past as Judaized and that presents the German people as victims of the Jews insofar as their museums had become occupied by such art: their money spent on these works, their perceptions and interpretations distorted and confused by the discourses that explain and legitimize them as art. The "Degenerate Art" exhibition is predominantly structured by its contrast with the exhibition in the House of German Art, the "Great German Art Exhibition," which in turn pivots on the distinction between the sacred and the profane. Insofar as what is ultimately at stake in those oppositions is the Christological sacralization of Hitler's cultural and political authority, the figure of the Jew is important to Nazi aesthetics not only as a racial antitype but as a theological enemy, a heretical figure who refuses to recognize that sacred authority (Levi, 2014, p. 73).

"Entarte Kunst" was the German term coopted by the Nazi Party to disparage art that deviated from the propagandist ideals of Nazism. The "Degenerate Art" exhibition was hastily put together by the Nazi's Ministry for Propaganda and Popular Enlightenment spearheaded by Joseph Goebbels. The haste was on account of the inaugural "Great German Art "exhibition which opened its doors in the House of German Art on July 18, 1937. Goebbel's objective was to discredit the "Great German Art" exhibition by delegitimizing over six hundred modernist and avant-garde artworks seized from museums across Germany and opened the following day at Munich's Archaeological Institute. The location and event were carefully chosen and timed with the aim of consigning these art works to the dustbin of history before being auctioned or destroyed. "A reported 2,009,899 individuals visited the 'Degenerate Art' exhibition in Munich alone, after which it traveled to Berlin, then to locations including Leipzig, Düsseldorf, and Salzburg, continuing its tour throughout the Nazi Reich until 1941" (Levi, 2014, p. 52).

Goebbels and the Nazis intended to showcase the so-called "decadence" of the culture of Bolsheviks and Jews. Such was the purported and "manifest" decadence that Adolf Ziegler, the National Socialist president of the Reich Chamber for the Visual Arts, opened the exhibition with the words, "German Volk, come and judge for yourselves!" (Levi, 2014, p. 53). Pablo Picasso, Wassily Kandinsky, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, and Emil Nolde, were among the luminaries whose works were

P. Thomas et al., *Education and Cultural Evolution in Norway's Multiethnic Society*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-89018-5_16

displayed, revealingly, alongside paintings by psychiatric patients to cement the "degeneracy" of their art. "Degenerate art" of the kind associated with the Bauhaus school was subjected to harsh denigration by the Nazis for a plethora of reasons resonating with the regime's ideological convictions and cultural aspirations. To begin with, the radical departure of the Bauhaus avant-garde outlook was incompatible with the Nazis' vision for a Germany which romanticized an imagined return to a pristine past encapsulated in the slogan *Blut und Boden* in which the rural, among others, was perceived as the true embodiment of the German people as opposed to the urban. Nazi preference for art, on the other hand, revered conventional, representational art that promoted historical motifs, nationalism, and Aryan ideals. The very "soul" of what it meant to be German was fought on the turf of artistic expression, and the Bauhaus school was deemed an enemy in the same way that art by Jews, such as Marc Chagall, who synthesized the artistic styles of Cubism, Symbolism, and Fauvism, with the latter's influence paving the way for the emergence of Surrealism. Eric Hobsbawm writes in regard to the Bauhaus design school of Weimar:

> With the partial exception of Futurist-influenced Italian fascism, the new authoritarian regimes of both Right and Left preferred old-fashioned and gigantic monumental buildings and vistas in architecture, inspirational representations in both painting and sculpture, elaborate performances of the classics on stage, and ideological acceptability in literature. Hitler, of course, was a frustrated artist who eventually found a competent young architect to realize his gigantic conceptions, Albert Speer… Neither the German nor the Russian avant-garde, therefore, survived the rise of Hitler and Stalin, and the two countries, spearhead of all that was advanced and distinguished in the arts of the 1920s, almost disappear from the cultural scene (Hobsbawm, 1994, p. 187).

We argue that, while we in no way suggest that Nazis and populists are ideologically identical, certain commonalities they share can be refracted through the lens of the so-called "degenerate art" discussed thus far. The influx of immigrants from the Global South in recent decades into Europe is clearly perceived an "existential threat" in the conceptual universe of populists. This influx represents the modern—that which adds new colors, lines and shapes to the canvas of the "established" and "revered" European and Norwegian cultural landscape. Bauhaus artists such as Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, Gropius, Mies van der Rohe, El Lissitzky and Moholy-Nagy, among others, explored the theme of individualism, existentialism, and social critique, and were unafraid to clash with Nazi sentiments partial to an orderly, racialized and homogenized vision of society. Just as populists today secrete a constant diet of gloom and doom in regard to black and brown minorities, and then position themselves as the party of "law and order", the Nazis deemed modernist art as a calculated "Trojan Horse" bringing chaos, moral decay, and the perceived decline of German culture. Artworks were characterized as having lost their grounding in what the Nazis considered true German identity, thereby painting modernism as a threat to the nation's cultural integrity.

While populists couch their rhetoric in the language of standing up for human rights, democracy and the rule of law, they are fully cognizant of the subtle and not-so-subtle ways in which they feed into nativist prejudices. For instance, Christian Tybring-Gjedde, who has been a member of the Norwegian Parliament since 2005,

and has written a book with the telling title that plays on the theme of the *Titanic*, "While the orchestra continues to play" (2014), draws a Manichean distinction between multicultural and monocultural:

> An ethnic Norwegian can in the meantime never become multicultural. There are so many prejudices in the term that in reality it means a person who is not ethnic Norwegian and does not have his origin from a western country. This could include illiterates from Mogadishu or Islamists from Islamabad. Both are multicultural. And multicultural is as we know better than monocultural (Tybring-Gjedde, 2014, p. 129).

There are echoes of the "contaminating" effects of Bauhaus's internationalism (the trope of the wandering Jew) and cosmopolitanism as corrosive to the purity og the German nation. Bauhaus was rooted in a cornucopia of avant-garde movements that was inspired by a diverse array of artists from several countries—a fact that the Nazis perceived as compromising the "pure" German cultural landscape. It has always been the hallmark of parochial, xenophobic movements to operate in Manichaean terms: complexities and nuances are sacrificed on the altar of a simplistic good versus evil worldview. The unforgivable sin of the Bauhaus school was to celebrate cultural and ideological differences and experimentation, a notion anathema to the ilk of Nazis such as Hitler, Goebbels and Göring, among others. It comes as no surprise that the very same crusaders for exterminating degenerate art, such as Hermann Göring were in possession of extensive collections of art pilfered from Jews and Bauhaus artists among others, especially during the Holocaust. Göring's valuable collection attests to his eclectic taste that did not differentiate between contemporary and classic works, revealing the hypocrisy of any ideological commitment to moral high ground.

Purists' fearful of the erosion of the "old, familiar and wholesome ways" have always engaged in the Sisyphean task of fighting change, a task which is as futile as trying to hold back the tide with a mere sandcastle. Cultural change exerted by "similar" and comparable cultures has often been met with less resistance than that posed by more "alien" cultures. Consider the rose-tinted romanticization of predominantly European immigration to the United States, exemplified by the Statue of Liberty welcoming the "teeming hordes yearning to breathe free", in stark contrast to the contemporary demonization of brown and black immigrants. Donald Trump's inflammatory assertions, such as claiming Haitian immigrants "eat the dogs and cats" in Springfield, alongside his calls for a wall to stop Mexicans and his preference for Norwegian immigrants, highlight this disturbing shift in narrative.

> Donald Trump bemoaned a lack of immigrants to the US from "nice" countries "like Denmark [or] Switzerland", offering millionaire donors at a Florida fundraiser a reprise of infamous racist Oval Office remarks about people coming to America from "shithole countries"… "And when I said, you know, 'Why can't we allow people to come in from nice countries', I'm trying to be nice. Nice countries, you know like Denmark, Switzerland? Do we have any people coming in from Denmark? How about Switzerland? How about Norway?" (The Guardian, 2024).

As we previously mentioned, there can be no bridging the current chasm built on age-old phobias, be they xenophobia, Judeophobia, Islamophobia and related permutations, without locking horns with the rhetoric of populism which has

supplanted the earlier bald-faced racism, and now spearheads contemporary nativist sentiments. This is especially so in a time of seismic demographic change in the West. In *Bloody Foreigners: The Story of Immigration to Britain* (2004), Robert Winder writes in regard to the West Indian immigrants who came to England aboard the ship *The Empire Windrush* in 1948: "They could hardly help noticing how deeply they were resented: they only had to keep their ears open on a bus. Dispiriting signs that greeted their often vain search for lodgings: "No Blacks. No Dogs" (Winder, 2004, p. 342). One might be forgiven for concluding that, given the stream of grievances emanating from majority Western populations, immigrants and their children are perceived as the architects behind an existential threat to dominant cultures. It seems that in this narrative, immigrants are cast as the perpetrators in a dramatic cultural heist, adeptly orchestrating the removal of long-held traditions and values. Winder (2004) zeroes in on one of the most potent and enduring causes of the hatred of foreigners:

> But whatever lay at the root of British hostility to foreigners, through the slave trade it achieved a new, clearer definition. From now on, Britons would think of themselves as "white", as if this alone was a suggestive and meaningful quality. In the coming centuries, slavery dwindled, but racism did not. Anyone who did not possess this exclusive pigmentation would face bitter hostility (Winder, 2004, p. 145).

Peel away at the imbrications of xenophobia and one finds racism based on skin color. When the Norwegian populist Tybring-Gjedde basically supplants multicultural with "Islamists from Islamabad" and "illiterates from Mogadishu", he reveals that multicultural can only be perceive in terms of a reductionist pigmentation—a pigmentation that to his mind is a threat to the "monocultural" Norwegians. Islam can only be perceived as a nefarious anti-Western ideology which aims to overthrow the West under the guise of religion. Anders Breivik determined that his own white, liberal countrymen, who facilitated the entrance and subsequent flourishing of Islam in Norway, were the designated enemy that had to be eliminated. There are echoes of the previously mentioned Bauhaus school, with roots in Germany, and attacked by the Nazis. "The Book Thieves: The Nazi Plunder of Europe's Libraries and the Race to Return a Literary Heritage" by Anders Rydell examines the organized looting of libraries and literary works in Europe during World War II by the Nazis. Rydell explores how the Nazi regime targeted cultural institutions as part of their broader campaign against what they deemed "degenerate" art and literature, which included works by Jewish authors, modernists, and others whose works were incommensurate with Nazi ideology. The book investigates specific cases of book theft as well as the impact of these actions on cultural heritage and memory. He writes with respect to Bauhaus:

> The new movement could release its pent-up energy without restraint, finding essential oxygen for its growth in the existential vacuum left behind by the war. "This is more than just a war that has been lost. A world has ended. We have to find a radical solution to our problems", wrote the German architect Walter Gropius, founder of the Bauhaus school (Rydell, 2015, p. 45).

The convergence of Norwegian identity, immigration, and the conservation of cultural heritage creates a rich canvas for scrutiny, one that reflects both the challenges and the potential for growth in a multicultural society. In this perspective, purists who seek to protect what they see as the "old Norway" often coopt to themselves the role of "cultural bouncers", zealously guarding against influences from new, immigrant cultures, particularly those emerging from the Global South. This defensive posture bears a striking resemblance to the early twentieth-century ideologies that led to the demonization of modern art movements like Bauhaus, which sought to embrace diversity and innovation. The attempt by Norwegian populists to monopolize cultural narratives reveals a deep-seated intolerance, which, upon rigorous inspection, often holds a core of racial prejudice based on skin color. By framing multiculturalism in reductive terms—such as when populist politician Christian Tybring-Gjedde supplants the term with reproachful phrases like "Islamists from Islamabad" and "illiterates from Mogadishu"—the risk of reducing complex cultural identities to mere pigmentation becomes conspicuously apparent. This rhetoric positions immigrants not as potential contributors to a richer Norwegian tapestry but as threats to the so-called "monocultural" integrity of Norway, one that can only be imagined as in terms of whiteness.

In the mind of such populists, Islam goes beyond being purely a religion; it morphs into an ominous anti-Western ideology bent on subverting Norway's cultural and social fabric. This echoes the convictions of Anders Breivik, who viewed his fellow Norwegians—predominantly those who aided the arrival and integration of Muslim communities—as traitors. Breivik's violent actions emphasized a catastrophic response to what he perceived as an existential threat, embodying the extreme manifestation of xenophobic and racist ideologies. Drawing parallels to the Bauhaus movement demonstrates the hazards of such cultural purism. The Bauhaus, founded by Walter Gropius, aimed to innovate through the amalgamation of countless artistic influences, eventually redefining notions of art and architecture in post-World War I Germany. However, just as present-day Norwegian purists seek to inhibit the flow of new cultural influences, the Nazis targeted modernist and avant-garde art, labeling it "degenerate" because it undermined their racist ideological framework. As discussed in Anders Rydell's *The Book Thieves*, the Nazis' systemic looting of cultural institutions was part of a broader campaign to eliminate what they considered unacceptable, ultimately impoverishing Europe's rich cultural heritage.

> Yet, even though the old world seemed to be down for the count, it was never defeated. The modern movement had immediately divided Weimar and Germany into two entities. Modernism was met with animosity from the old Wilhelmian elite: the aristocracy, the reactionary bourgeoisie, and the universities, which regarded themselves as the guardians of tradition. The new movement was seen as depraved and immoral—and there were some that felt physcially sick at what they saw, heard, and read (Rydell, 2015, p. 45).

Rydell observes that the Bauhaus movement had the potential to thrive in the "existential vacuum left behind by the war", responding to an urgent need for artistic and cultural renewal (Rydell, 2015, p. 45). This hope of renewal through the integration of varied influences mirrors the ideas of modern Norwegians who wish

to welcome new immigrant cultures. However, the dangers of censure from conformists lead to an environment choking both artistic and cultural evolution, much as the Nazis suppressed artistic innovation. Accordingly, while the spirit of the Bauhaus invites the exploration of new cultural landscapes and the enriching forces of diversity, the backward-looking stance of populists produces an obstructive atmosphere grounded in fear and exclusion. The undertaking to embrace multiculturalism requires an intentional effort to dismantle these xenophobic ideologies and recognize the value of diversity as a crucial part of national identity. Only by peeling back layers of prejudice can societies like Norway foster an environment where new influences are not perceived as threats but rather as opportunities for growth, unity, and cultural vibrancy.

It is a truism that the ebb and flow of human culture, including art, always is characterized by a vibrant tapestry of interactions, exchanges, and transformations that transcends time and human-made boundaries. At the core of this phenomenon is the understanding that cultural identity is inherently fluid, molded by the continuous blending of ideas, practices, and expressions. Populists' rhetoric to the effect that culture is a phenomenon inherited through an unbroken and untainted ancestry, a disingenuous oversimplification of the dynamics of cultural evolution. The cross-pollination of diverse cultures has historically fostered innovation and reinvention, cultivating a rich tapestry that reflects the complexities of the human experience.

Art is perhaps the preeminent distillation of the creative energies that ensues at the confluence of human encounters. The works of modernist artists such as Wassily Kandinsky and Marc Chagall illustrate how artistic expression burst the banks of parochial forces that seek to terminate the so-called "degenerative" Slavic (Kandinsky was Russian) and "Judaizing" (Chagall was Jewish) threats to Nazi delusions of German grandeur. Kandinsky's abstract masterpieces are remarkably notable for their departure from traditional representational art. His employment of geometric shapes and intense colors serves as a medium for conveying emotional and spiritual experiences. The distortion of forms in his paintings advances a sense of uncertainty, inducing audiences to engage with art on a deeply personal level. This abstraction corresponds to not simply a stylistic choice but a philosophical stance: the theory that art can communicate deeper truths that lie beyond empirical observation. In this sense, Kandinsky's work can be seen as a revolt against the restraints of academic art, personifying the human desire to experiment and transcend the limitations imposed by the past. It is instructive that the Nazis appealed to traditional authority in the guise of none other than the German reformer Martin Luther.

> The Nazi Party's attack on literature fed into attacks already being carried out by groups of conservative, right-wing students. For these student groups, book burnings were a German tradition of defiance and resistance going back to the days of Martin Luther and the Reformation. In April 1933 the Deutsche studentenschaft announced an action against "un-German literature", casting Adolf Hitler as a new Luther. To evoke the Ninetey-five Theses with which Luther began the Reformation, the student federation published its own "theses" in the *Völkischer Beobachter*—twelve theses "Wider den undeutschen Geist!" (Against the un-German Spirit) (Rydell, 2015, p. 3).

Parallel to the demonization of Kandinsky is the work of Chagall, whose art is characterized by surreal imagery and a synthesis of realistic and fantastical elements. His floating bodies and radiant scenes capture an ethereal quality that echoes his Jewish heritage while concurrently breaking down the walls between reality and imagination. Chagall's distinctive amalgamation of folklore, religion, and personal narrative speaks to the human need for connection and belonging, as well as the desire to explore the spiritual and emotional complexities of existence. The dislocation of figures and the plasticity within his compositions resonate with the very essence of cultural cross-pollination; they represent the idea that identity is not motionless but rather an ongoing interplay of experiences that shape and redefine us.

Modernism, hence, cannot be reduced to the mere quest for artistic experimentation in the form of abstraction alone. There was a very good reason for the Nazi consternation and assault against this new and bold genre which embodied the human yearning to break free from the shackles of stifling tradition and dream up visions of a new future. The exponents of Bauhaus art employed their oeuvre as a transgressive vehicle traversing boundaries and thus making possible the reinterpretation and reinvention of narratives native to their identities while stretching out to external ones. The artistic journey of modernism captures a broader cultural phenomenon, where the act of creation becomes a dialogue between the past and the future—a possibility pregnant with hope, agony, and the complexities of existence. The disillusionment and fragmentation in the aftermath of World War I that the Bauhaus school endeavored to heal through unifying diverse artistic disciplines—architecture, design, painting and crafts—in favor of functionality and abstraction, is also present in T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922):

> The typist home at teatime, clears her breakfast, lights
> Her stove, and lays out food in tins…
>
> She turns and looks a moment in the glass,
> Hardly aware of her departed lover;
> Her brain allows one half-formed thought to pass:
> "Well now that's done: and I'm glad it's over".
> When lovely woman stoops to folly and
> Paces about her room again, alone,
> She smoothes her hair with automatic hand,
> And puts a record on the gramophone" (Eliot, 1969, p. 69).

Painters such as Marc Chagall sought to fill the void with spiritual significance, the kind which is tortuously portrayed in Eliot's typist whose life articulates this sense of meaninglessness. As a typist her life revolves around the monotony and drudgery of merely copying or repeating what others have said. Her food is processed and comes in tins, and she smooths her hair with "automatic hand" while listening to mechanical music encapsulated in the gramophone.

In analyzing this artistic development, one can also draw parallels to the process of cultural integration spawned by immigration. The expected merger of immigrant cultures with those of the majority society resembles the intermingling of artistic ideals, crystallizing into a cultural metamorphosis that enriches both communities. Just as Kandinsky and Chagall utilized their diverse influences to produce profound

artistic discourse, immigrants introduce new perspectives, traditions, and innovations that reshape the cultural landscape of their adopted societies. This fusion results in a dynamic exchange where both cultures change—adapting, evolving, and strengthening one another in the process. To reject the contributions of immigrant cultures or to regard them as "degenerate" impositions on a so-called national identity is to oversee the underlying reality that all cultures are, at their core, outcomes of migration, interaction, and synthesis. History is replete with instances where the most vibrant cultural expressions arise from the convergence of ideas across different backgrounds, whether through the adoption of culinary practices, musical styles, or art forms. The richness of cultural heritage is, therefore, deeply rooted in its multiplicity and its capacity for regeneration. We are also reminded that while the Nazis and other fascists denounced "degenerate art", they had no qualms about securing financial gain off these works.

> In Munich, "Degenerate Art" was not, for the most part, art produced by Jewish hands. And while the expulsion of these works from the German public sphere runs parallel to the removal of Jews from the arts and from public life, this parallel cannot be read as a simple prefiguration of the destruction of Europe's Jews. Most of the works classified as "degenerate" were auctioned off or sequestered, not destroyed. The Nazi project of annihilating Europe's Jews proceeded even at a cost to the larger German war effort; the "Degenerate Art" exhibition did not similarly override economic self-interest (Levi, 2014, p. 57).

Once again, we note the parallels with many uses and abuses immigrants have been subjected to by populist forces. While their influx, presence and cultural proliferation is constantly agonized over, there is a quiet acceptance of economic necessity of putting black and brown bodies to work in jobs that white bodies eschew. Cleaning, transport and elderly care, among others, have become the reserve of immigrants. This double standard reveals a systematic exploitation rooted in underlying racial and cultural biases. The labor that immigrants provide is often undervalued, reflecting a societal tendency to dismiss the critical roles that these workers play in maintaining everyday life, especially in times of crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The essential nature of these jobs is often masked by the prevailing narrative that seeks to restrict and vilify immigrant communities.

By analyzing this relationship between populism and immigration, we can identify a disturbing continuity with historical patterns of exclusion and exploitation. The Nazi regime's obsession on ridding society of those deemed undesirable resonates in contemporary concerns surrounding immigration, where populist forces marshal racist rhetoric to mobilize support while benefiting from the very labor they seek to disparage. As such, immigrants are relegated to a position that resembles that of disposable resources—valued only as long as their labor is economically advantageous and disregarded in discussions about social identity and national integrity. This situation raises wider questions about the principles that govern society's treatment of different ethnic and racial groups. The need for immigrant labor within certain industries, while concomitantly enacting policies that limit their rights and recognition, mirrors the inconsistencies evident in the Nazi approach toward Jews—where the illusion of racial purity coexisted awkwardly with the pragmatic needs of the state. The tragic irony lies in the dehumanization of these

individuals, whose contributions are essential to daily functioning and economic stability, yet they are frequently portrayed as threats to cultural continuity.

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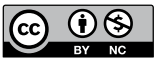

Chapter 17
Blame and Divide: The Populist Playbook

> In addition, our Sami policy received publicity. The context was that Tana municipality [in the extreme northeastern county of Finnmark] had passed a resolution stating that the Sami curriculum would form the basis for all teaching in school, including ethnic Norwegian children. The Progress Party's position was simply that everyone in Norway as much as possible should be treated equally. We therefore wished to shut down the Sami Parliament. The principle was actually the same as that behind the old apartheid system in South Africa. A minority would rule over a majority with another ethnicity. (Hagen, 2007, p. 298, 299).

The lead author has researched and published an article about select Norwegian populist leaders' penchant for writing autobiographies as a means of "direct communication with the grassroots" (Thomas, 2020). This aligns with their rhetoric, which posits that the elites and the media are in opposition to their interests, asserting instead that they alone serve as the authentic representatives of the people. Müller (2017, pp. 3, 4) reminds us that "The idea of the single, homogenous, authentic people is a fantasy; as the philosopher Jürgen Habermas once put it, 'the people' can only appear in the plural. And it's a dangerous fantasy, because populists do not just thrive on conflict and encourage polarization; they also treat their political opponents as 'enemies of the people' and seek to exclude them altogether".

In recent discourse, populist leaders such as Carl I. Hagen, who is perceived as the main architect behind the success of the Party (Bangstad, 2014), have devised a rhetoric that deliberately perverts historical injustices faced by the Sámi people, suggesting that the granting of a Sami parliament is tantamount to a form of inequality that is reminiscent of apartheid in South Africa (see citation above). Hagen's verbal posturing argues that granting the Sámi a parliament creates a scenario where a minority usurps power over a majority of another ethnicity, fundamentally twisting the historical context of Sámi oppression and self-determination. This duplicity is reminiscent of the themes articulated in George Orwell's "1984", where the Party thoroughly distorts reality to maintain its grip on power, ultimately reconfiguring the perception of truth to serve its political ends.

> Oceanic society rests ultimately on the belief that Big Brother is omnipotent and that the Party is infallible. But since in reality Big Brother is not omnipotent and the party is not infallible, there is need for an unwearying, moment-to-moment flexibility in the treatment of facts. The keyword here is BLACKWHITE. Like so many Newspeak words, this word has two mutually contradictory meanings. Applied to an opponent, it means the habit of impudently claiming that black is white, in contradiction of the plain facts. Applied to a Party member, it means a loyal willingness to say that black is white when Party discipline

P. Thomas et al., *Education and Cultural Evolution in Norway's Multiethnic Society*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-89018-5_17

> demands this. But it means also the ability to BELIEVE that black is white, and more, to KNOW that black is white, and to forget that one has ever believed the contrary. This demands a continuous alteration of the past, made possible by the system of thought which really embraces all the rest, and which is known in Newspeak as DOUBLETHINK (Orwell, 2001).

In "1984", the ruling Party warps language and historical narratives through the use of Newspeak and the concept of Doublethink. As the protagonist, Winston Smith, learns, "War is peace. Freedom is slavery. Ignorance is strength" (Orwell, 2001). This language serves to obscure the truth and control citizens, coopting them into a twisted universe which makes them susceptible to imbibing contradictory beliefs that enable the Party's dominance. Similarly, the Norwegian populist Hagen's rhetoric frames the Sámi Parliament, with the objective of historical redress and the aim of promoting Sámi self-governance, as a medium of oppression against the ethnic Norwegian majority. This perverse equivalence to apartheid not only trivializes the historical experiences of both the Sámi and the South African populace but also obscures the ongoing struggles for equality and recognition that the Sámi people have faced, including state-sponsored discrimination, cultural erasure, and socio-economic marginalization. One must keep in mind that figures such as Hagen and his acolytes are not fringe elements in Norwegian politics but have polled consistently among the top three political parties in opinion polls.

Hagen's contention that the commissioning of a Sámi curriculum within Tana municipality undermines the principle of equality articulates a deliberate attempt at upending the generally accepted meaning of equality. By suggesting that the Sámi's unique cultural and educational needs somehow weaken the rights of ethnic Norwegians, Hagen irresponsibly secretes an erroneous narrative that taints efforts to promote Indigenous rights as exclusionary. This stance echoes the ideology of the Party in Orwell's dystopia, wherein any deviance from the imposed standardization is framed as a menace to social cohesion. The Party's motto, "Who controls the past controls the future. Who controls the present controls the past" (Orwell, 2001), underscores the degree to which political power can manipulate historical narratives for ideological gain.

> Winston sank his arms to his sides and slowly refilled his lungs with air. His mind slid away into the labyrinthine world of doublethink. To know and not to know, to be conscious of complete truthfulness while telling carefully constructed lies, to hold simultaneously two opinions which cancelled out, knowing them to be contradictory and believing in both of them, to use logic against logic, to repudiate morality while laying claim to it, to believe that democracy was impossible and that the Party was the guardian of democracy, to forget whatever it was necessary to forget, then to draw it back into memory again at the moment when it was needed, and then promptly to forget it again: and above all, to apply the same process to the process itself. That was the ultimate subtlety: consciously to induce unconsciousness, and then, once again, to become unconscious of the act of hypnosis you had just performed. Even to understand the word "doublethink" involved the use of doublethink (Orwell, 2001).

Müller (2017) highlights the fundamental risks involved in the populist hypothesis of a singular, homogenous "authentic people", which bears striking similarity to the totalitarian ethos illustrated in "1984". By insisting on an iron-clad, unidimensional

national identity that delegitimizes the rich diversity characteristic of Norwegian society, populists like Hagen essentially pillory their political opponents as "enemies of the people". In "1984", the bogeyman notion of the "enemy" serves as a controlling tool for the Party to consolidate its power and eradicate dissent, buttressing the idea that those who do not kowtow to the dominant narrative are threats to societal stability (Orwell, 2001). Such rhetoric fails to recognize the multicultural nature of society and instead fosters an atmosphere of exclusion, where marginalized voices—such as those of the Sámi—are systematically silenced in favor of a distorted vision of national unity.

The notion of closing down the Sámi Parliament, as encouraged by Hagen, is an expression of this exclusionary ideology. It reveals an aversion to engage in the necessary and nuanced dialogue about governance, representation, and the historical contexts that demand special considerations for Indigenous rights. While the idea of equal treatment is superficially alluring, it oversees the greater injustices that have historically affected the Sámi communities and the socio-political realities that warrant a parliamentary framework to provide them with the autonomy to safeguard their rights and culture.

The context outlined above explains the reluctance of some Sámi individuals to openly divulge their identities. After a three-week project where students were introduced to the notion of oppressed identities, where among others, the history, suffering and empowerment of first nations was covered, a female high student stood up and made the following "confession": "I am Sámi. I have hidden this fact since I was a child but feel confident enough after this project to share my identity, which I will no longer be ashamed of." The entire class was stunned and at a loss for words. The girl looked phenotypically Norwegian and had given us no cause to believe she was anything other than ethnic Norwegian. The mother of the girl called the teacher (lead author) and emotionally expressed her gratitude for facilitating her daughter's decision to publicly share her identity. Given such evidence in twenty-first century Norway, however anecdotal, it beggars belief that the likes of Carl I. Hagen and other populists speak in terms of inequality and identity politics, going to the extent of comparing the creation of the Sámi Parliament to apartheid South Africa. In reality, the profusion of Newspeak and Doublethink is evident when one is reminded that the populist Progress Party has a history of supporting apartheid in South Africa:

> The precursor to the PP (Progress Party), Anders Lange's Party (ALP), was established in 1973… [and goes on to state] "Anyone supportive of black majority rule in South Africa is a traitor to the white race… three years after the Sharpeville massacre in which apartheid police forces massacred sixty-nine peaceful demonstrators… In the 1980s, PP chairman Carl I. Hagen warned against majority rule of "Hottentots and Bushmen" in South Africa in the party's internal newspaper, and the party's MP Fridtjof Frank Gundersen wrote letters to the editors in Norwegianmainstream newspapers expressing the party's opposition to the international sanctions against the apartheid regime and warning about an impending "one-party state and dictatorship" and threats to "white secuirity" should a black majority be allowed to govern a democratic South Africa (Bangstad, 2014, pp. 114, 115).

Hagen's distortion of Sámi parliamentary representation and the malicious comparisons to apartheid echo the oppressive mechanisms utilized by totalitarian regimes to consolidate power and manage the narrative. By appealing to a false sense of equality that neglects the lived experiences of the Sámi, populists are adept at giving the oxygen of publicity to a divisive and harmful discourse that not only diminishes the significance of Sámi self-determination but also erodes the potential for a truly inclusive society. Orwell's insights into the perverted handling of truth serve as a cautionary reminder of the substantial implications that language and rhetoric have in shaping public perception, especially regarding issues of race, identity, and representation within a diverse society.

Henrik Ibsen's play "An Enemy of the People" (originally published in 1882) is a powerful drama that explores the tension between individual morality and the will of the majority, a topic that is germane in contemporary discussions about populism. The protagonist is a Dr. Thomas Stockmann, a medical officer in a small Norwegian town that owes its economic fortune to a popular health spa. Dr. Stockmann finds out that the spa's water supply is contaminated and presents a dire health risk to the public. Assuming support from the town's leaders, including his brother, the mayor Peter Stockmann, Dr. Stockmann is astonished to encounter ferocious resistance. The mayor and other town leaders conceal the truth about the contamination because admitting it would result in entail expensive repairs and renovations and undermine the town's prosperity. Dr. Stockmann stands firm in his commitment to the truth and public safety, but he is branded "an enemy of the people" by the town's authorities and citizens. The play highlights the struggle between integrity and self-interest, as well as the challenges faced by those who go against the majority to uphold the truth.

> *Dr. Stockmann*. It is I who have the real good of the town at heart! I want to lay bare the defects that sooner or later must come to the light of day. I will show whether I love my native town.
>
> *Peter Stockmann*. You, who in your blind obstinacy want to cut off the most important source of the town's welfare?
>
> *Dr. Stockmann*. The source is poisoned, man! Are you mad? We are making our living by retailing filth and corruption! The whole of our flourishing municipal life derives its sustenance from a lie!
>
> *Peter Stockmann*. All imagination—or something even worse. The man who can throw out such offensive insinuations about his native town must be an enemy to our community (Ibsen, 2000).

Henrik Ibsen's play serves as an apt extended metaphor for the dynamics of truth and power within a community, corresponding to contemporary issues of populism and its influence on public discourse. Dr. Thomas Stockmann's obstinate pursuit of truth despite widespread denials and self-interest presents a lens through which we can scrutinize modern populist rhetoric in Norway, particularly with a view towards building bridges between majority Norwegians and marginalized black and brown communities. In Ibsen's narrative, Dr. Stockmann discovers a serious truth—the pollution of the town's defining resource—which he believes will galvanize the support of his fellow townspeople and authorities. However, his anticipated

appreciation morphs into disapproval as the mayor and other leaders prioritize economic fortune over public health. This agitation reflects the current climate where populist rhetoric serves to poison public discourse, masking truths necessary for genuine societal progress.

Populist figures often position themselves as the obvious representatives of "the people", disdaining those who challenge their narratives as enemies, much like Dr. Stockmann is labeled "an enemy of the people" and even his own familial ties are jeopardized. This antagonistic labeling acts as a deterrent to dialogue and reform, weaponizing truth and fostering division rather than understanding. The portrayal of those voicing uncomfortable truths as antagonists serves to protect the prevailing status quo, analogous to the town leaders in Ibsen's play who attempt to shield their community from the economic implications of confronting reality. In Norway, this rhetoric commonly rears its head in the unwillingness to confront racial inequalities and to fruitfully engage with the experiences and challenges faced by immigrant communities. Those who expose these societal "toxins" correspondingly face hostile responses, blamed for disrupting national prosperity or sowing strife. However, as Dr. Stockmann argues passionately, the moral and social foundation of society cannot sustain itself on lies, no matter how economically convenient these may appear.

The play delivers the important message that the challenges faced by those who question the dominant narrative are not merely individual but systemic. Dr. Stockmann's clash with his brother, Mayor Peter Stockmann, exemplifies the struggle between long-term integrity and short-term economic gains—a parallel to the current imperative for Norwegians to confront and dismantle the disruptive rhetoric that destabilizes efforts to bridge cultural rifts. The progress of the Progress Party and similar populist factions appears built on a shallow success that is parasitic upon discord and shuns the vital work of reconciliation and equality.

For sustainable change, it is imperative that a critical mass of Norwegians assumes the mantle of Dr. Stockmann, opposing the lethal rhetoric that is deleterious not just to individual morality but communal integrity as well. By confronting these "poisoned" narratives, Norway can move towards a more inclusive society where healthy intercultural relations are built on the edifice of truth and shared dignity rather than selective prosperity that hides fissures of underlying social ailments. Ultimately, the lessons of Ibsen's timeless play remind us of the daring required to pursue truth and justice in the face of formidable opposition, urging us to disassemble barriers erected by fear and prejudice, and to build bridges based on understanding and mutual respect. Failure to do so will only deepen segregation and widen racial divides, threatening the very core of societal cohesion and harmony.

Stuart Hall theorizes racial discourse as a framework for interpreting one of the fundamental aspects of human society, which he refers to as "the fact of difference" (Hall, 2017a, b, p. 48). Hall expounds by describing race as a trope symbolizing the ultimate, irreducible difference between cultures (Hall, 2017a, b, p. 48). Leaning on Ernesto Laclau, he employs the concept of a "chain of equivalences" to examine how hegemonic forces couple unrelated elements over time and history. This

process serves to metastasize a specific narrative of reality through discourse, juxtaposing nature and culture to produce what Marx called…

> "the naturalization effect" that arises when discourses about culture and history, which are variable across space, time and circumstances—and, which, because they are socially variable, are thus amenable to change—come to represent themselves as warranted, guaranteed in place, and hence permanent, fixed, unmovable, and transhistorical by virtue of nature. (Hall, 2017a, b, p. 58).

Stuart Hall's (2017a, b) adaptation of Laclau's concept of the "chain of equivalences" provides a valuable framework for understanding race as a floating signifier, which is pertinent when probing the views articulated in the memoirs of members of the Progress Party. Their assertions suggest a not-so-subtle belief that immigrants, especially those from non-Western countries, possess intrinsically unchangeable cultures and are therefore put beyond the pale unassimilable. In this context, culture is equated with "nature". Furthermore, market forces are celebrated and deemed faultless for structural inequalities that may disadvantage immigrants, as exemplified by proposals such as implementing monetary rewards for "efficient" teachers.

Stuart Hall's use of Ernesto Laclau's "chain of equivalences" helps clarify how certain ideas or elements—often unconnected—become fused together in discourse in the service of dominant narratives. This strategy works by tying different concepts in ways that make them seem obvious or self-evident, even though they are socially constructed and mutable. Hall applies this idea to racial discourse, showing how race is positioned as the ultimate, immutable marker of difference between cultures. At its core, the "chain of equivalences" describes how seemingly disparate ideas—such as culture, nature, and market forces—can be merged together in ways that make them appear as part of a single, permanent reality. This imposition of a nexus gives these ideas an illusion of permanence, making socially constructed inequalities seem as though they are "natural", an extension of the "natural" in a social Darwinian sense.

In some traditional discourses, gender roles are presented as a "natural" extension of biological differences. For instance, women might be linked with nurturing and domesticity, while men are associated with power and leadership. Through a chain of equivalences, ideas about biology are connected to cultural norms, economic roles (e.g., women as caregivers and men as breadwinners), and even moral frameworks (e.g., what a "good mother" should be). This makes these roles seem permanent and inevitable, even though they are shaped by historical and social factors and could be changed.

Hall's insights resonate with the schemes employed by populist politicians in Norway. Many of them openly esteem figures like Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher as "strong role models" and advocate policies inspired by economist Milton Friedman. The party's founder, Anders Lange, historically warned against an "invasion of Jews" in Norway and supported South Africa's apartheid regime, as was previously mentioned, until his death in 1974 (Møllersen, 2017). This historical context aligns with the party's tendency to racialize crime and portray itself as the

"law and order" party, a move Hall describes as "authoritarian populism" (Hall, 2011, p. 713). This approach not only reaffirms traditional power structures but also exploits racialized narratives to consolidate political power.

It is significant, and commensurate with Orwell's notion of Newspeak and Doublethink, that the Progress Party which styled itself the "law and order" party—meaning they will address the problem of "criminal immigrants"—ended up with a disastrous record while in charge of the justice department during their four years in power. During the Progress Party's tenure at the helm of the Justice Ministry in Norway, from 2013 until their withdrawal from the coalition government in January 2020, they advertised themselves aggressively as a "law and order" party. The period, however, was stained by several scandals and controversies that severely hurt their reputation and tested their political claims—there were five Justice Ministers from their party during their tenure. One of the most damaging incidents involved Tor Mikkel Wara, who served as Norway's Minister of Justice and Immigration from 2018 to 2019. The controversy erupted when Wara's partner, Laila Anita Bertheussen, was found to have deliberately orchestrated a string of false threats and attacks on their home. These actions were at the outset believed to be racially aggravated attacks against Wara due to his political stance, and they aroused considerable public and media attention. However, the narrative untangled when it was exposed that Bertheussen herself had fabricated these attacks, including incidents of arson and vandalism. Her conviction for these actions was a significant embarrassment for the Progress Party, as it contradicted their public image of promoting strict law enforcement and accountability.

This scandal was not an isolated incident for the Progress Party during their time in government. The party saw regular turnovers in the Justice Ministry, with sensational resignations further unsettling their leadership. Per Sandberg's appointment as interim Minister of Justice in Norway garnered international attention, given his controversial past, including a criminal conviction for assaulting an asylum seeker in 1997. The French news agency AFP drew attention to this in its coverage, noting social media satire over Sandberg's appointment. Despite this, within Norway's Progress Party, many viewed Sandberg, known for his controversial political style and history of confrontational (at times racist) statements, as a fitting successor to Sylvi Listhaug. Sandberg was seen as the personification of a specific faction within the party, often associated with hardline views on immigration and justice. His candidacy was polarizing, with critics suggesting it could intensify tensions in the coalition government, especially given his past verbal clashes with figures such as Christian Democrats leader Knut Arild Hareide and indefensible racist actions like wearing a "Good Journey" T-shirt amid the Mediterranean refugee crisis (NrK, 2018).

Furthermore, in typical Newspeak and Doublethink discourse, members of the Progress Party have resorted to attacking one of their favorite scapegoats—women. Recent statements by Simen Velle, the leader of Progress Party Youth, underscore how populist elements have subverted feminist discourse, showing biases indicative of figures like Andrew Tate and Jordan Peterson. Velle triggered controversy by suggesting that a societal problem arises from a small number of men having exclusive access to several women, framing women as commodities to which men are

entitled, not unlike Sultans with access to harems of women. This perspective undermines feminist ideals by reducing women to objects rather than recognizing their autonomy and agency.

> Fascist opposition to gender studies, in particular, flows from its patriarchal ideology. National Socialism targeted women's movements and feminism generally; for the Nazis, feminism was a Jewish conspiracy to destroy fertility among Aryan women… In fascist attacks on universities, the universities play the role of Nazi "Jewish conspiracy" behind the women's movement. Universities subvert masculinity and undermine the traditional family by supporting gender studies (Stanley, 2018, pp. 43, 44).

Notwithstanding later expressing regret for his phraseology and admitting to clumsiness in his articulation, Velle's comments unveil an alarming attempt to link men's issues, such as loneliness and educational gaps, to criticisms of feminism and gender equality. Indeed, general concerns like the lower graduation rates of boys in education and the higher suicide rates among men are real issues warranting solutions that improve welfare and educational environments. However, misallocating blame onto women's sexual independence is a misinterpretation of these deeper social challenges. The controversy stresses the problematic influence populist rhetoric can have when it parrots anti-feminist sentiments, potentially influencing young male audiences. Velle's statements call for a discussion that addresses the real challenges faced by young men today but also establish the persistent need for a robust women's rights movement. In highlighting societal injustices, such as gender-based violence and the need for equity, the discussion points to a broader vision for a strong, inclusive social policy that benefits all individuals, irrespective of gender.

In the exploration of belonging and the building of bridges (Putnam's bridging) between majority populations and minority communities, it is essential to consider the influential role of populist parties that are gaining traction in the Western world. These parties often capitalize on fears and anxieties about increasing immigration, depicting cultural and demographic changes as dangers to national identity and social cohesion. Their rhetoric typically emphasizes nationalist, nativist and separationist sentiments and constructs an "us versus them" storyline, which can undercut efforts to foster inclusivity and mutual understanding between diverse groups. As populist parties whip up more support, they shape public discourse and policy approaches, often prioritizing divisive strategies that marginalize minority voices instead of integrating them into the broader social fabric.

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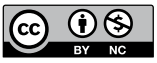

Chapter 18
Populist Grievances: Neoliberal Roots

> I am not the only one skeptical to a development in which Norwegians will in the long run become a minority in their own land, as researcher Asle Toje has shown (Listhaug, 2018, p. 93).
>
> – Sylvi Listhaug, current leader of the Progress Party in her autobiography *Where Others are Silent* (2018) (Listhaug, 2018).
>
> Demographic studies show ethnic Swedes becoming a minority in Sweden within the lifespan of most people currently alive, which raises the fascinating question of whether Swedish identity has any chance of surviving this generation.
>
> – Douglas Murray, *The Strange Death of Europe: Immigration, Identity, Islam* (Murray, 2018, p. 263)

As often has been the case, the pink elephant in the room in debates over immigration and demographic changes, has been the fear of the loss of whiteness, particularly in nations like Norway and Sweden. Authors such as Sylvi Listhaug and Douglas Murray candidly communicate a growing unease among some native populations about the possibility of becoming minorities in their ancestral lands. This apprehension is not simply about numbers but also about a presumed attrition of cultural and national identity. For countries with traditionally homogeneous populations, the idea that the ethnic majority might become a minority can feel terrifying to established cultural norms and traditions.

This demographic apprehension often morphs into xenophobia, where fear of displacement feeds a concentrated focus on statistical measures that depict immigrants in a negative light. Statistics such as birth rates, crime statistics, and employment rates become instruments used to rationalize fears that immigrants may change the social fabric of society. This mania reflects a deeper anxiety about losing control over national identity and cultural purity. At the heart of these concerns lies a fear one can describe as an "atavistic phobia", where the mounting presence of non-white populations is perceived as a contamination of "whiteness". This fear suggests a loss of what is perceived as pure and good, pandering to centuries-old narratives that equate cultural homogeneity with national strength and virtue. In this climate of alarm, any shift in demographic patterns and behavior can be seen as a threat to the existing social order. Consider once again the parallels between Norway's Sylvi Listhaug and the UK's Douglas Murray's essentializing of Western cultures and the practices they highlight as yardsticks of measure in regard to integration.

P. Thomas et al., *Education and Cultural Evolution in Norway's Multiethnic Society*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-89018-5_18

> As long as you can, you must work. If they are against pork or alcohol, they must stay away from these industries. Or change, and say to yourself that now I'm in Norway, here people eat pork, drink alcohol and show their faces, says Listhaug.
>
> For example, pubs very often close in those areas of the United Kingdom where Pakistani and other Muslim migrants have moved in large numbers. If the newcomers were becoming as "British as anybody else"—as government ministers and others insist that they are—the the pubs would remain open and the new arrivals drink lukewarm beer like everybody else who had lived on the street before them (Murray, 2018, p. 112).

Douglas Murray and Sylvi Listhaug's approach to cultural integration distorts the rich and intricate tapestry of Western societies by reducing it to certain lifestyle practices, such as eating pork or frequenting pubs. This reductionist perspective merits a deeper critique, as it masks the manifold nature of identity and belonging in diverse communities. Their argument begins with a faulty assumption: that specific behaviors or practices are absolute markers of cultural identity. This viewpoint adopts a stationary, monolithic understanding of Western culture that does not reflect its true diversity. Western societies incorporate a broad continuum of beliefs, practices, and values, which cannot be amply captured by a checklist of lifestyle choices. By essentializing cultures in this way, Murray and Listhaug overlook how cultures are dynamic and evolving, influenced by a host of historical, social, and individual factors.

Using exclusive practices as benchmarks for integration fundamentally creates exclusionary standards. It indicates that those who do not conform to these specific cultural norms are failing to integrate, discounting the complex realities of multicultural societies where multiple identities can coincide. These sweeping statements marginalizes individuals who, while desisting from certain behaviors for personal or religious reasons, contribute substantially to their communities through entrepreneurship, civic engagement, and cultural enrichment. Authentic integration is a dynamic, reciprocal activity that involves participation and contribution to society, respecting and upholding shared values, and fostering mutual understanding. It is about engaging in the social, economic, and political life of a country, not merely becoming clones of superficial cultural markers. Integration should be seen as a two-way street, where both immigrants and the host society adjust and learn from each other, contributing to a more vibrant and cohesive community. Murray's vision of the ideal process of integration is hamstrung by what Edward Said referred to as cultural imperialism:

> It is the same with churches. If the incomers were indeed to become as "British as anybody else", then they would fail to turn up to church most Sundays but would be there for weddings, occasionally christenings, and most likely just once a year for Christmas. But that is clearly not what has happened. The churches have closed like the pubs and these buildings have had to be put to other uses (Murray, 2018, p. 112).

This assessment favors certain cultural practices as the gold standard of belonging, implying that integration means embracing the dominant culture's distinctive behaviors and traditions. Murray's assertion that attending church on specific occasions is a marker of being "as British as anybody else" highlights an attempt to hijack and standardize cultural identity. This view fails to recognize that behaviors

and cultural practices evolve over time and that there are numerous rightful ways to express British identity. It promotes the bluff that cultural traditions are static, and by this means neglects the restless and pluralistic nature of modern societies. The idea that integration should involve joining in specific religious traditions disregards the fact that religious adherence diverges considerably, not only among immigrant communities but within the native population as well. Many British individuals identify as secular or non-religious, reflecting a broader cultural drift of declining traditional religious practices. By using church attendance as a yardstick, Murray enforces a narrow framework that fails to accommodate the complex reality of how people choose to express their identities.

Antonio Gramsci's concept of "common sense" refers to the predominant beliefs and assumptions within a society, which often articulate the values of the dominant culture and function to sustain existing social structures. In the context of Douglas Murray's assertion regarding church attendance as a measure of integration for Muslims in Britain, Gramsci's common sense underscores the limitations and paradoxes inherent in such a view. By proposing that minimal church attendance defines "being British", Murray reinforces a hegemonic narrative that equates British identity with specific cultural rituals rooted in Christian tradition. This is a reductionist distillation of cultural identity and silences the diverse ways in which individuals, including both immigrants and long-standing residents, choose to express their belonging.

> But it should be noted that in all countries, though in differing degrees, there is a great gap between the largest ones, and the those nearest to the peripheries of national life, like priests and schoolteachers. The reason for this is that, however much the ruling class may affirm to the contrary, the state, as such, does not have a unitary, coherent and homogenous conception, with the result that intellectual groups are scattered between one stratum and the next, or even within a single stratum… Common sense is a chaotic aggregate of disparate conceptions, and one can find there anything that one likes (Gramsci, 1988, pp. 342, 345).

Moreover, Gramsci's idea of common sense affords a framework to appreciate how immigrant communities can resist these hegemonic norms by valuing their own cultural practices and redefining integration as a dynamic process that acknowledges and celebrates multiethnic contributions rather than sticks strictly to a parochial standard of cultural conformity. Thus, the debate surrounding integration is not merely about adopting certain behaviors but about recognizing the evolving and pluralistic nature of societal identity. Antonio Gramsci's concept of "common sense" captures how the dominant beliefs in a society often parallel the values of those in power, shoring up existing social hierarchies. However, this "common sense" is not a neat and coherent ideology—it's an assortment of ideas, often inconsistent, that are treated as natural or self-evident by society at large. This perspective helps explain how debates around cultural identity and integration are shaped by discursive narratives and the ways they are challenged.

For instance, in discussions about national identity in France, the emphasis on secularism (laïcité) is often described as an essential component of "being French." This portrayal privileges a specific historical and cultural perspective that crystallized from Enlightenment and revolutionary traditions, which are closely tied to the

dominant culture. However, immigrant communities—such as those from North Africa—may valorize religious expression as a central part of their identity. Gramsci's concept of common sense helps us see how these norms of secularism act as a hegemonic tool, enforcing compliance while banishing alternative expressions of identity. Resistance to these norms, such as debates over the right to display religious symbols in public, represents an effort to redefine what it means to belong in a pluralistic society.

Another example can be seen in the United States, where "common sense" often equates patriotism with distinctive rituals, such as standing for the national anthem or exhibiting the flag. These practices, linked to dominant narratives of national identity, can dismiss or stigmatize those who express dissent, such as athletes taking a knee to protest racial injustice. Through Gramsci's lens, this reveals how dominant norms are not universal but are contested and reshaped through acts of resistance. By challenging what is presented as "common sense," these protests force a reexamination of whose values and experiences are centered in defining the national identity. Gramsci's framework thus highlights that integration and identity are not about strict feasance to a fixed set of norms. Instead, they involve an ongoing negotiation, where marginalized groups can assert their own values and practices to reshape the broader cultural narrative. This underscores the dynamic and pluralistic nature of societal identity, where what is "common sense" is always up for reinterpretation.

Populist rhetoric about immigration often reflects an acute misunderstanding of cultural integration and a thinly veiled demand for immigrants to "become white", which profoundly is at loggerheads with the goals of a multicultural society. This perspective is indicative of a broader, deeply rooted anxiety regarding identity and belonging in the face of demographic changes. Populists recurrently verbalize their frustrations by advocating for an impractical vision of integration that demands newcomers conform to a narrow set of cultural norms, thereby ignoring the rich diversity and contributions that immigrants bring to society. What Toni Morrison stated about the "cultural mechanics of becoming American" applies clearly in the Norwegian context also.

> The cultural mechanics of becoming American are clearly understood. A citizen of Italy or Russia immigrates to the United States. She keeps much or some of the language and customs of her home country. But if she wishes to be American—to be known as such and to actually belong—she must become a thing unimaginable in her home country: she must become white. It may be comfortable for her or uncomfortable, but it lasts and has advantages as well as certain freedoms. Africans and their descendants never had that choice, as so much literature illustrates (Morrison, 2017, p. 49).

Toni Morrison's contention that to genuinely belong in America necessitates an adoption of "whiteness" speaks volumes about the cultural mechanics of identity that can similarly be seen in Norway, especially in the rhetoric of politicians like Sylvi Listhaug. Morrison suggests that for immigrants from countries such as Italy or Russia, assimilation into American society involves a repudiation of certain aspects of their original cultures in favor of espousing characteristics predominantly associated with whiteness. This concept is echoed in Listhaug's claim that

immigrants must accept specific cultural practices—such as drinking alcohol and eating pork—to be considered genuinely integrated into Norwegian society. The inference is clear: to be accepted and recognized as part of the national fabric, immigrants are expected to conform to a narrow, predominantly white cultural identity that is linked to these particular behaviors.

Regrettably, and on account of the attribution of "whiteness" to such cultural practices as drinking alcohol in a pub and "going to church" on certain days of the year such as Christmas, students in racially segregated schools in Oslo often associated such practices as inextricably linked with whiteness. Stuart Hall speaks of "splitting" or "dualism" in such machinations of stereotyping. "Far from the discourse of the 'the West and the Rest' being unified and monolithic, 'splitting' is a regular feature of it. The world is first divided, symbolically, into good/bad, us/them, attractive/disgusting, civilized/uncivilized, the West/Rest. All the other, many differences between and within these two halves are collapsed, simplified—i.e., stereotyped" (Hall, 2019, p. 171).

Previously we mentioned Stuart Hall's critique of populism through the lens of market fundamentalism. Both in their public discourse and discussions with the authors, populists appear impervious to any suggestion that their neoliberal worldview and actions may have contributed to the influx of immigrants into the West. This aspect of populism is salutary if one is to understand the Janus-faced and contradictory stance of this phenomenon vis-à-vis immigrants. Most have imbibed the comforting notion that immigrants are either greedy individuals eyeing the riches of the West or dangerous jihadis with nefarious agendas. In their autobiographies, Norwegian populists unabashedly mention their admiration for Conservative politicians such as Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher.

> Hall writes, "Even today, the market/free enterprise/private property discourse persists cheek by jowl with older conservative attachments to nation, racial homogeneity, Empire and tradition" (Hall, 2011, p. 713). Hall et al.'s (1978, p. 2011) observations are germane with respect to populist politicians' strategies in Norway. Indeed, several of them profusely praise Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher; Carl I. Hagen calls them "strong role models" (p. 84) and mentions policies gleaned from the economist Milton Friedman (p. 84) (Thomas, 2020, p. 8).

There is a certain perverse logic in populism that is difficult to reconcile with the tenets of reason. On the one hand, they are beholden to laissez faire market principles of the Washington Consensus ilk (e.g. the World Bank's structural adjustment policies in the Global South) which have wreaked havoc on black and brown people, while they simultaneously struggle to accept that adherence to this school of "trickle-down-economics" invariably necessitates the presence of brown and black bodies to carry out the "dirty jobs" that white Europeans eschew. One arena where populists appear inoculated against the ability to see the connection between market fundamentalism and immigrants knocking on the door of Norway is climate change. Consider the statement below on the website of the Progress Party in regard to their climate policy:

> The Norwegian climate and environmental debate is far too much characterized by political symbols, a lack of impact assessments and too little faith in the market. The result of this is

> many meaningless orders, bans and regulations that bother people in everyday life and that hinder growth and value creation in Norway…. The Progress Party will also oppose a policy that is based on tormenting its own citizens with symbolic policies that have little or no impact on global emissions, but which make everyday life more difficult for most people. Examples of this are a ban on the sale of new petrol and diesel cars by 2025, a tax on the production of red meat, creative aviation taxes, electrification of the continental shelf that will require massive development of new wind turbines on land, or environmental taxes without effect that only raise money for the state treasury. Nor is it a solution to impose taxes such as an increased CO2 tax before alternative technology is available. This will affect the transport industry and the maritime sector, among others (Fremskrittspartiet, 2020).

There is a vital framework for recognizing the duplicitous nature of populist rhetoric, particularly regarding their handling of climate change and the intersection of race and economic exploitation. Consider the lexis coopted in the excerpt above which inverts the perpetrator-victim calculus with words such as "tormenting its own citizens" and making "everyday life more difficult for most people". Instead of black and brown people in the Global South, white Norwegians are cast in the role of victims—all this coming from one of the world's largest exporters of crude oil. In her book *This Changes Everything* Naomi Klein (2014) observes that "Overwhelmingly, climate change deniers are not only conservative but also white and male, a group with higher-than-average incomes. And they are more likely than other adults to be highly confident in their views, no matter how demonstrably false" (Klein, 2014, p. 46).

At first glance, populists may seem to champion the welfare of their constituents, yet a closer examination reveals a troubling contradiction: while they champion laissez-faire market principles that have historically exacerbated inequalities for black and brown people, they also rely on the labor of these same marginalized groups for the economic systems they purport to defend. This paradox demonstrates not only a fundamental indifference towards the wellbeing of non-white individuals but also highlights inherent contradictions in the populist manifesto. Naomi Klein is pessimistic in regard to her own question: How will we treat climate refugees who arrive on our shores in leaky boats?

> We know the answers because the process is alreay under way. The corporate quest for natural resources will become more rapacious, more violent… And rather than recognizing that we owe a debt to migrants forced to flee their lands as a result of our actions (and inaction), our governments will build ever more high-tech fortresses and adopt even more draconian anti-immigration laws. And in the name of "national secuirity", we will intervene in foreign conflicts over water, oil, and arable land, or start those conflicts ourselves. In short, our culture will do what it is already doing, only with more brutality and barabrism, because that is what our system is built to do (Klen, 2014, 49).

By adhering to market fundamentalism—a system that prioritizes profit and deregulation over human and environmental concerns—populists perpetuate the very conditions that render black and brown populations vulnerable. The abandonment of climate change is characteristic of a broader pattern where the consequences of these market-driven policies unduly impact marginalized populations, who often lack the political power or economic resources to adjust to environmental changes—a push factor for seeking greener pastures in the West. This indifference is evident

in the way populist parties, such as Norway's Progress Party, frame their climate policies. Their emphasis on battling any policies perceived as opposed to the market, while snubbing the long-term consequences of climate change, shows a hierarchy of values where the interests of privileged white citizens are accorded primacy over the suffering of those from black and brown communities. Moreover, the tacit recognition that non-whites are necessary for performing the "dirty jobs" underpinning the machinations of vulture capitalism underscores a troubling relationship between populist ideology and racial dynamics.

> More likely, immigrants take the jobs that local workers shun, such as street cleaning and pizza-delivery, and thus do not compete with natives at all. So it is not surprising that studies fail to find any evidence to confirm the prejudiced view that immigrants harm the job prospects of local workers: immigrants are not taking jobs from native workers (Legrain, 2007, p. 137).

While populists may vocalize opposition to immigration or the influx of racial minorities, they simultaneously depend on these communities to fulfill labor demands—thus maintaining a system of exploitation. This reliance gives rise to a cognitive dissonance in which populists grapple with their need for black and brown bodies while simultaneously perpetuating narratives that dehumanize them. Naomi Klein's observation that climate change deniers tend to be predominantly white, male, and affluent resonates strongly here, suggesting that the ideological foundation of populist movements is inextricably linked to a worldview that prioritizes the interests of a select demographic while rendering marginalized populations invisible or expendable.

In this context, populist rhetoric becomes a disruptive force in discussions about bridging the gap between majority and minority communities in Norway. By proliferating unsubstantiated assertions and a heartless nativist discourse that ignores the lived experiences of non-white individuals, populists sow dissention rather than contributing to constructive dialogue. Their narratives tend to undermine the necessity for a collective approach to addressing systemic inequities exacerbated by climate change, thereby hindering progress toward addressing environmental and social injustices.

Ultimately, the prevalence of populist ideology in public discourse exacerbates societal divisions, making it ever more challenging to cultivate understanding and cooperation. Their labored discourse reflects a deep-seated schizophrenia: a concurrent dependence on and aversion to the labor of black and brown populations, driven by market fundamentalist policies that both exploit and marginalize. In order to address the longstanding inequalities faced by these communities, it is critical to challenge the populist narrative and advocate for solutions that recognize the intrinsic connections between economic policies, environmental sustainability, and social equity. Only through a genuine commitment to inclusivity and justice can society begin to rectify the harm inflicted upon those who are disproportionately affected by both capitalist exploitation and climate change. "After all, immigrants are not an invading army: they come in search of a better life. They are no different to someone

who moves from Manchester to London, or Oklahoma to California, because that is where the jobs are. Except that a border lies in the way" (Legrain, 2007, p. 43).

We labor this point because, as several critics of the neoliberal world order have argued, we live in a world where laissez-faire economics of the kind championed by Milton Friedman and Friedrich Hayek will ensure a perverse global inequality where wealth and resources are concentrated in the hands of a privileged few, predominantly in Western nations, while the burden of economic exploitation and environmental degradation is disproportionately borne by black and brown communities in the Global South and marginalized groups in developed countries. This dynamic amplifies the suffering of these communities, who are often left susceptible to the impacts of climate change, lack of access to essential services, and the flux of low-wage labor markets. The neoliberal emphasis on market efficiency over social welfare perpetuates a system that values profit over people, thereby entrenching systemic inequalities and making it increasingly difficult for black and brown individuals to achieve economic and social equity. This inequitable distribution of wealth and opportunity underscores the moral imperative to critically reevaluate and challenge the structures that perpetuate these inequalities, ensuring that all individuals, regardless of race or geography, can thrive in a just and equitable world.

Immanuel Wallerstein's (1974) world-systems theory presents a valuable lens through which to understand the unending flow of refugees and immigrants from poorer countries to wealthier Western nations. According to this theory, the global economic system is divided into three tiered zones: the core, the semi-periphery, and the periphery. The core represents the developed, industrialized countries that control the world economy, the semi-periphery consists of countries that are in the process of industrializing and have characteristics of both the core and periphery, and the periphery is made up of underdeveloped countries that are economically exploited by the core through systems of unequal exchange and labor exploitation. "World systems theory sees spatial relations among zones as exploitative, involving the flow of surplus from periphery to core (as in dependency theory). For world-systems theory most of the surplus, accumulated as capital in the core, comes from local sources through the exploitation of local workers" (Peet & Hartwick, 2015, p. 199).

The core countries gain from the economic and political structures that conserve this global inequality, extracting resources and labor from the periphery at insignificant cost, while acquiring significant profits. This dynamic intensifies underdevelopment in the periphery, leaving these nations with limited economic opportunities, widespread poverty, and political instability. Consequently, individuals from these regions often feel compelled to seek better economic prospects, safety, and stability in the core countries, propelling migration and refugee flows. Populist rhetoric, which often contests immigration and presents it as a threat to national identity and security, is ultimately untenable within this global context. Such rhetoric fails to address the systemic inequalities that drive migration in the first place. Instead of proposing sustainable solutions to the root causes of migration, populists often resort to policies that focus solely on border control and exclusion, ignoring the interconnected nature of global economies.

Unless the world-systems structure changes—addressing the economic exploitation and lack of development in periphery countries—the flow of immigrants and refugees to wealthier nations will continue. The rhetoric of populists not only fails to acknowledge these difficulties but also poses a danger by promoting fear and division rather than encouraging cooperative, global efforts to create more equitable and sustainable economic systems. In the long run, addressing the systemic inequalities highlighted by world-systems theory is essential. Crafting policies that focus on equitable development, fair trade, and global cooperation can create conditions where individuals from periphery countries have the resources and opportunities to thrive in their own nations. This would reduce the pressures driving migration, fostering global stability and prosperity while challenging the simplistic and ultimately ineffective narratives offered by populist rhetoric.

These are macro issues that dwarf the more modest and manageable aims of educators and other interlocutors committed to better relations between the majority and minorities in Norway in an educational context. Nevertheless, it is worth the while to remind all parties engaged in this dialogue to understand the broader transnational issues which serve as push and pull factors that are responsible for the rise in immigration and concomittant efforts at integration. Langston Hughes's portrayal of the black maid Cora in *Cora Unashamed* in *The Ways of White Folks* (1934, 2022) offers a poignant metaphor for exploring the challenges faced by racially segregated schools in Oslo and their connection with the majority white society. The narrative illustrates the complexities of racial integration and identity, capturing how minority communities are often left to navigate the bridge between two unequal worlds without adequate support or recognition.

> Melton was one of those miserable in-between little places, not large enough to be a town, nor small enough to be a village—that is, a village in the rural, charming sense of the word… Cora was the oldest of a family of eight children—the Jenkins niggers. The only Negroes in Melton, than God! (Hughes, 1934, 2022, pp. 3,4).

Cora's experience of bearing a child with Joe, a white man from a different social sphere, embodies both hope and vulnerability—hope through the potential of the child as a "living bridge" between race-divided worlds, yet vulnerability because of the systemic barriers that challenge the survival and flourishing of such a bridge. Similarly, in racially segregated schools, students from minority backgrounds often find themselves in educational environments primarily shaped by the dominant culture's curricula and values. Like Joe, white teachers may come into these schools to impart knowledge reflective of white society, but then return to their own worlds, detached from the everyday realities and challenges faced by their students. No black pupil wants to be the only one in an all white Melton, and no white pupil relishes the propect of being the only one in a black Melton.

> Cora didn't go anywhere to have her child. Nor try to hide it… She had grey eyes, and Cora called her Josephine, after Joe. Cora was humble and shameless before the fact of the child. There were no Negroes in Melton to gossip, and she didn't care what the white people said. They were in another world. Of course, she hadn't expected to marry Joe, or keep him. He was of that other world, too. But the child was hers—a living bridge between two worlds. Let people talk (Hughes, 1934, 2022, p. 7).

Just as Cora's child metaphorically corresponds to a bridge between two worlds that could flourish under the right circumstances, the knowledge and cultural infusion in schools could indeed bridge societal divides. These children carry the Norwegian cultural imprint through education, attempting to integrate into a society that remains, in many aspects, divided. However, as Hughes's story tragically reveals, this potential can wither if neglected—if systemic support, understanding, and genuine integration efforts are lacking. "But in a little while they didn't need to tell Cora to leave her child at home, for Josephine died of whooping-cough. One rosy afternoon, Cora saw the little body go down into the ground in a white casket that cost four weeks' wages" (Hughes, 1934, 2022, p. 8). For the "baby" of culturally integrated education to survive and thrive, all parties involved must engage in deliberate and sustained efforts. This means fostering an educational environment where the experiences, histories, and identities of minority students are not only acknowledged but celebrated. It requires a commitment from educators and policymakers to go beyond tokenistic engagement and to invest in resources, curricula, and teaching that reflect the diversity of the student body and society.

Additionally, it involves enabling genuine socialization opportunities between students of different backgrounds to cultivate mutual respect and understanding. White teachers and students must recognize their roles not merely as transmitters of knowledge but as active participants in a shared journey toward an inclusive society. Without such an effort, there is a genuine risk that the cultural and educational connections between minority students and their Norwegian identity will disintegrate. Much like the dream of Cora's child as a bridge between races vanished, ignoring school integration can lead to cultural alienation, where the richness and value of diverse identities are diminished or lost. However, with genuine collaboration and an unwavering commitment to integration, educational spaces can indeed become vibrant, living bridges that enhance societal cohesion and mutual respect. This requires a collective willingness to ensure that every child not only finds a place in society but thrives as a recognized and valued part of its future.

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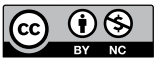

Conclusion

> The parts of a machine work with a maximum of cooperativeness for a common result, but they do not form a community. If, however, they were all cognizant of the common end and all interested in it so that they regulated their specific activity in view of it, then they would form a community. But this would involve communication… The intermingling in the school of youth of different races, differing religions, and unlike customs creates for all a new and broader environment. Common subject matter accustoms all to a unity of outlook upon a braoder horizon than is visible to the members of any group while it is isolated.
>
> —John Dewey (1916, 2011, pp. 7, 16). *Democracy in Education*

Throughout this book, we have explored the plethora of ways race, culture, and media narratives cross to guide the experiences of non-white students in segregated schools, drawing upon literature, sociological insights, and historical parallels to illuminate these dynamics. Our exploration distils themes common to a Western society coming to terms with a significant influx of immigrants in a relatively short span of time. We have considered the manner in which labels, whether simplistic, disparaging or reductive, seek to pigeonhole non-white students in a web of divisive narratives. One such epithet is "ghetto school". We have drawn attention to the coping strategies these students have galvanized to weave together a new and hybrid identity that is strong enough to withstand the disparagement and, as Goffman notes, "play golf" with the assigned stigma. The study is located in the interstices of a society experiencing visible phenotypical changes and the accompanying sense of unease this erosion of white homogeneity portends. This unease is exploited and intensified by populist rhetoric that reinforces stereotypes, scapegoats immigrants, and undermines efforts to foster inclusive educational environments.

Central to our inquiry is the importance of identifying and dismantling apparatuses of power and privilege that sustain these dynamics. In the spirit of Foucault, we argue that the nexus of knowledge-power is especially germane to the realm of schools and education. In *Discipline and* Punish (1977), Foucault includes schools, along with prisons and asylum centers, as institutions designed to forge docile bodies through the twin action of knowledge-power. In the Norwegian schooling context, we argue that platitudes such as inclusion, equality, equity, multicultural and diversity, to name a few, can serve to mask the machinations that perpetuate "white

P. Thomas et al., *Education and Cultural Evolution in Norway's Multiethnic Society*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-89018-5

flight" and stigmatize the presence of non-white bodies. In an academic reinterpretation of the *Titanic* allegory, we contend that it is the majority stakeholders who continue to play the serene notes of "color blindness", acutely aware of the impending dangers facing both the ship and its passengers. While they maintain this soothing rhetoric, the fact of the ship's distress becomes increasingly manifest, as the vessel begins to list and show signs of structural compromise.

Dewey's call for communication and communal consciousness underscores the necessity of creating educational environments that do not merely coexist cheek-by-jowl but proactively cultivate community through cooperation. In doing so, schools can transmute into dynamic spaces where diversity is not merely tolerated but embraced, ultimately promoting genuine democratic values and fostering a sense of belonging among all students. Educators must be trained and equipped with the tools and required to apply culturally responsive teaching practices. This implies recognizing and appreciating the diverse cultural backgrounds of students and incorporating these perspectives into the curriculum. Specialized development programs should stress the importance of creating inclusive classrooms where every student's identity is acknowledged and celebrated.

What role do educators play in either reinforcing or undermining the media's often skewed portrayal of non-whites? It is incumbent upon every teacher, principal and stake holder in education to query the potential uses and abuses of opinion pieces, interviews or visits to non-white schools by the media. As an extension of this, educational institutions should actively encourage students to critically analyze the media narratives that shape public perceptions of race and culture. By merging media literacy into the curriculum, students can cultivate the skills to critique and deconstruct harmful stereotypes and engage in informed discussions about representation and identity. This empowerment will produce a generation of students who are not only conscious of societal narratives but are also equipped to challenge and reshape them.

Draconian recommendations, such as the "forced bussing" of students from non-white schools to white schools, should be approached with caution. As Dewey has argued, proximity does not equate to community. Not only would such coercive measures intensify the feeling of otherness on the part of non-white students but could trigger a new "exodus" or "white flight" in the receiving area on the part of white students whose parents may have initially left the "ghetto school" neighborhood. Schools should valorize community-building initiatives that foster intercultural dialogue and collaboration among students from different backgrounds. Programs that encourage joint projects, cultural exchanges, and community service can create opportunities for students to connect on shared interests and goals, breaking down the barriers that segregation reinforces. There is an urgency, given the proliferation of the phenomenon of white flight that the authorities undertake a thorough review of existing educational policies that intensify segregation and marginalization. A commitment to equity should be at the forefront of educational reforms, not just in intention but action, warranting the fair allocation of and that schools serving predominantly non-white populations are not stigmatized or underfunded. Much has been done in this regard, but it is of the essence that racially segregated

schools do not suffer further—if this is unfortunately the new status quo, then it is important that funding and the quality of these schools is carefully monitored.

By promoting a culture of open dialogue, schools can provide platforms for students to share their stories and experiences, contributing to a richer understanding of diversity. Creating safe spaces for discussions around race, identity, and belonging can help chip away at the edifice of stigma correlated with difficult topics and advance healing through shared understanding. Developing leadership programs for students from minority backgrounds can boost their agency and engagement in the school community. By arming them with the skills to agitate for their needs and contribute to school governance, we can nurture a generation of student leaders who are empowered to challenge systemic inequalities and foster collaboration among diverse cultural groups to develop inclusive solutions for their communities. Schools should embrace the complexity of hybrid identities that many minority-background youth personify.

Reference

Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*. Penguin.